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## How to Pray! Part III

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### The Pattern of Prayer

#### Mathew 6: 9-13; Luke 11:1-4

First off, there is no “method” or process on how to pray, as there is no specific principle on how to talk to your mom or best friend. We just do it. Yes, there is edict, attitude, and good ways versus bad ways to communicate. Thus, God does give us a pattern as a checklist to make sure our time and attitude are lined up to more of His will and less of ours. We must make sure we use our prayer time with purpose and effectiveness.

The disciples had trouble understanding what prayer was all about! During their day, prayer was about mere rituals and complicated liturgy that was not understood by the people, and it was greatly misused. The Sadducees did not believe in prayer and the Pharisees made a convoluted show of it. Thus, prayer by the religious leaders of the day was regulated to meaningless, elaborate rituals intended to entertain the public or to make themselves look good. These “pre-made” prayers seemed unapproachable to the people because they themselves did not know how to pray!

Jesus starts out telling us that prayer is not a mystical mystery; rather, we can, by ourselves and without a priest, go before our Holy God and make our petitions and our heart known to Him and commune with Him. Jesus is basically showing us how to relate to Him through intimacy, emptying our will so our heart is exposed to Him as we would with any true, intimate encounter. Thus the mortar of prayer built the Early Church until it disintegrated into the chaos that it was in Jesus’ day. Prior to the Reformation, prayer had reverted again to mere ritual and meaningless rhetoric. The prayers were all in Latin and contained elaborate theological terms that the people did not understand. No one was given an opportunity to be educated to learn it unless he was a priest or a physician. Luther and Calvin were challenged to seek Christ; in so doing, they relearned what prayer was all about and communicated that to us.

This model of prayer from Mathew 6: 9-13 and Luke 11:1-4 place the emphasis on God and His glory (as all models must be), not on man! This is called *brevity* (brief and sincere). We ask that God be glorified before we can seek our request in a clear and concise manner. However, being brief does not mean being limited in the time you spend with Him. The more time you spend in prayer the more you will grow in your Christian formation. The point is to be sure you are not praying in circles with *vain repetitions*. Rather, cover more ground with requests for others and praise for God.

#### Let’s look at some of the key words from Matthew:

- **Father** is the Aramaic word for *daddy* or *papa*—a very dear, intimate, personal reference of honor to the head of the family. It includes endearment and love without fear of reprisal. In our prayer life, we are to first see God as God, to reverence Him,

and be devoted to Him. For us, this means we have been called to intimacy with Him. This does not mean to be taken as we say *daddy*. It is not a cheap saying, or a word to put God in just a *friend* category. We need to realize that we are adopted in His family, and He loves us ever so deeply. We must see God as Sovereign and Holy, to be feared with reverence and respect. Yet, He is still God, Creator, and Sovereign (Duet. 7:21; Neh. 4:14; Psalm 48:1; 86:10; 95:3; 97:2; 145:3; Dan. 9:4; 1 Cor. 13:12; Heb. 12:28,29)!!

- **Hallowed be Your Name** means our prayer life is to focus on His holiness, mightiness, and the omnipresence (He is everywhere transcending time and space), and omnipotence (all powerful) of God. He is the holy Judge, Creator, Savior, and Sustainer of all things; yet, He personally knows and loves us with deeper and more love than we could ever comprehend. So, we are commanded to keep His name holy, as in the first two commandments. This helps us understand the wonder and majesty of our incredible God (Isa. 5:16; 29:23; Ezek. 36:23; 38:23; 39:7, 27; Zech. 14:9)! Reverence is the true response that leads to worship for all who come before God (Psalm 89:5-18; Prov. 1:7, 29: 3:5-9; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:21; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:13-14; 3:15a). It is recognizing and honoring the authority of God with awe and fear because He is God, and He is more awesome than anything or anyone—period! This helps us to take the incredible knowledge of His majesty and apply it to our lives so we will walk with confidence in our Lord, and operate with respect to Him and to the others whom He knows and loves. This is essential in how we pray so we will not be anxious or fearful of what will happen or distrust God.
- **Kingdom come** is an essential theme in Matthew. It means government; it means our prayer life is to see Him as God and the One in charge. It is the need to be organized for purpose and direction. This means we are to yield to the exercise and implementation of our God's "Lordship," that He is our King, and hence the name, "Kingdom of God." He is sovereign; He is the total monarch of the universe. His rule is absolute. When we refuse to be governed and controlled, anarchy and chaos will result because of our sinful nature, and will cause harm to others. Thus, it is our responsibility to obey God. This characterizes our personal identification and relationship to our Lord and Savior! Our need is to bow to His Lordship for our betterment and growth! This will keep us going on the right path through the pandemonium of life (Matt. 4:23; Eph. 2:18; 2 Pet. 3:13-14)!
- **Your will be done** further expounds that in our prayer life, we are to seek His character and sovereignty in all things, and not attempt to bully or manipulate what we want over what He has called us to do! His needs must precede our needs because He wants what is best for us! Then, we can take comfort in the awareness that God is not hidden, nor is His will so mysterious that we cannot find it. He has our back and our best in mind! God's influence, glory, and presence are all around us; God is *all present*, "omnipresent," and we have no escape from Him. He reveals His presence to us in countless ways. Understanding this helps us to know from whence our direction in life comes. This is foundational for all aspects of who we are and what we do. What motivates us and creates in us our actions and behaviors will translate in our relationship with God and how we are with those around us. This will help us become the person that God desires and calls us to be.

- ***Give us our daily bread*** means we can go to God. Our prayer life does not consist of just requests for food and stuff, but also a seeking of what is necessary for now and in the future (Prov. 30:8; Matt 6:19-34). It is imagery, comparing to the manna for the wandering Jews. Just as God provided for them, He will also provide for us. As our life becomes more fulfilled in the coming Kingdom, we can come before God and request His provision for our needs. He wants to take care of and provide for us, so let Him!
- ***Forgive*** means our prayer life is to seek reconciliation with others. We have to realize that we are all sinners; we still have sin and we still do sin. Thus, we must always not only be aware of it, but also always repent from it and seek forgiveness. This is a must, a daily act, not just when we think about it or wait to be convicted of it. We must be willing to *daily* seek forgiveness from God and others (Matt. 5:22-25)! Our behaviors are reflections of our motives, each one leading to another, as a chain reaction. Our refusal to deal with sin through repentance will have lasting and dire consequences, both here on earth and for eternity to come! We also must be aware of the serious, destructive nature of anger and how it blocks our relationships, growth, and prayer life with God (Psalm 37:8; Prov. 6:16-19; Rom. 12:18-21; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 1 Pet. 3:7)! Do not neglect your motives and the root causes of broken relationships, sin, and murder. By being persons who seek reconciliation, we will avoid needless strife and stress in our lives—especially in the church. Having an unforgiving attitude is fatal to worship and prayer; we cannot truly worship God or pray to Him with a heart of anger, contempt, or bitterness! When we seek to worship Him in that state, it too is an extreme insult to Him! This bad attitude will have lasting consequences into judgment and eternity! If you are not able or willing to forgive others, God will be able, but unwilling to forgive you! If we truly desire to be His disciples and be committed to prayer, we will be as committed to reconciliation with others as He is with us (John 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:22-23)! We are to forgive others in response to the fact that we have been forgiven. However, the forgiveness we may give to others will never compare to the forgiveness Christ has given us! (See our Character study on *Forgiveness*.)
- ***Do not lead us into temptation*** means our prayer life will greatly help us not sin when we are tested or we go through trials, and will help us through them (Psalm 141:3-4). In fact, I have seen many studies over the years that stated that married couples who pray together regularly rarely divorce! Prayer keeps us in His will and away from temptations. Trials are primary means for growth and maturity. That does not mean prayer will keep us from them altogether. If that were so, we would never grow spiritually. We have to be persons who have received grace and have the knowledge of what we have in God first in our mindset. Then, as we are able to see how we have been forgiven, we can really, truly forgive others.

We can see from these passages a clear pattern of prayer that will please our Lord and God, and that acknowledges Him as Sovereign, so we can trust and grow in Him. True prayer comes from a sincere and humble Christian, offered with a merciful spirit, who is not interested in making a public display for the sake of pleasing others or seeking prestige. Prayer will help us see His perfection and receive His mercy and

grace to help us, and others through us, in times of need, so we can find that peace that guards our hearts and mind (Phil. 4:6-7; Heb. 4:14-16). In order for this to happen, we must be willing and able to open and surrender our heart and Will to Him. If not, we will be living on the wrong floor of life!

## Questions to Ponder

### Read Matthew 6: 5-15; 7: 7-12

1. Have you ever considered that the Lord's Prayer is a systematic, *how to do it* checklist, a model on how to pray, and not a prayer in and of itself?
2. Why do so many Christians and churches use this passage as a mantra, a repeated prayer? In addition, is using it this way a direct contradiction to what Jesus is saying about prayer? If so, why do we do it?
3. Our private prayers are the ones that shape us. So, how can your public prayers also help others to be shaped?
4. *Your will be done*, further expounds that we are to seek His character and sovereignty in all things, not bully what we want over what He has called us to do! His needs must precede our needs, because He wants what is best for us! What is in your life and in your church that would keep this from fully happening?
5. *Give us our daily bread* is not just a request for food, but a seeking of what is necessary now and in our future. What would be some of the other things you can, and should be praying for?
6. We are to forgive others in response to the fact that we have been forgiven. However, the forgiveness we may give to others will never compare to the forgiveness Christ has given us! So, what blocks your seeking forgiveness from Christ and others?
7. Many people are surprised to find out that *Do not lead us into temptation*, refers to keeping us from sinning when we are tested or are going through trials, and helping us through them, not just keeping us from them. Why would people be surprised to discover this, given the fact that trials are a primary means for growth and maturity? All the disciples, as well as Christ, suffered greatly, as did countless saints over the last two thousand years.
8. How can you make sure that your prayers to the *Father, daddy, or papa* stay very dear, intimate, and personal yet remain honoring, not putting God in just in a friend category (i.e. He loves us ever so deeply, yet He is still God and sovereign)?
9. What can you do to keep your eyes on God, not on people? If you only seek God for your needs, you will never understand God, yourself, or His wonderful plan for you! Your faith will be on your terms only. How sad that would be! How much you

will lose! How could that be so; what can you do to get back on track with your prayer life?

10. Prayers are not just selfish wish lists to get God to cater to our needs and whims; rather their true purpose is for us to be shaped by what He has revealed, and to grow in character, perseverance, and maturity. So, how can this be made real in you and your church?

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