
Spiritual Formation Part 30

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Matthew 6: 5-15

The Model Prayer Part 1

This passage gives us the quintessential template on how to pray. Jesus is calling us to seek Him with the emphasis on our sincerity so our public prayers are as genuine as our private ones. To make this real and effective, He gives us a systematic *how to do it* checklist. We can then know how and for what to pray, so our own needs do not get all of the attention, and we will not grandstand ourselves with pride and hypocritical actions. This passage is called the *Lord's Prayer*, but it is not a prayer in and of itself; rather, it is a pattern on how to pray. To recite this as a prayer is like giving a recipe to your dinner guests and forgoing the preparing of the meal.

Jesus often taught His disciples about the importance of perseverance, faith, and humility in prayer (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-14). That prayer is directed to God, not people, and to be heard by God, not others (Psalm 65:2; Heb. 11:6), so make sure you are offering up the kind of prayer that will please God!

- *Do not be like the hypocrites!* Prayer is the two-way communication between we, the created beings, and God, our Creator! We are made for relationships, and communication is essential for effective relational growth. For us as Christians, prayer is one of the main ways we can grow in faith and maturity in our Christian formation, alongside getting into the Word with personal study and devotions, solid group Bible study, teaching, and the various disciplines of the faith.
- The great wonderful fallout from our redemption is the ability for us to pray real and effective prayers to which God actually hears and responds! God speaks to us through His Word and the Holy Spirit teaches and convicts us through the Word. Thus, through our prayers we can be taught, grow, and be convicted, so we can apply His precepts to our lives that will affect those around us. 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, to grow in character, perseverance, and maturity.
- Jesus is not condemning public praying; rather, He is condemning self-gratifying prayers with improper motivations that seek approval from people and are unconcerned about God (Matt. 11:25; John 11:41; Ac 27:35).
- Prayer is not to be a liturgical exercise of rhetoric! *Do not use vain repetitions* refers to rhetoric speech, having no value or meaning, saying something to catch the attention of others, or just having to say something so we are heard. This is empty and vacant in the call of our Lord! This is not to say we should not persist in asking God for something, as long it is Biblical (Luke 18: 1-8), but we are not to be

wrapped up in our words, how we say it, trying to fit a pattern (other than Jesus pattern), or impress someone. Prayer must be sincere, heartfelt, and real! God is impressed by what is in our heart, not with our quantity or quality of words. This is not condemning repetition, but *vain* words, which are insincere and meaningless repetition. Jesus repeated Himself in prayer at Gethsemane; Paul did the same with his *thorn in the flesh* (Matt. 26: 36-44; 2 Co 12:7-8). God is sovereign; you do not need to use superfluous words! God is not swayed the by quantity of our words, but by the quality of our heart, offered with a merciful spirit (Matt. 18:21-23; James 2:13).

- To get what they wanted, the Greeks used ‘overload prayers’ to tire out their gods with many prayers and formulas that were repeated over and over again. It seems some of the Jewish leaders gave this a try too!
- *Chamber* or *your room* meant a storeroom, as most people did not have an extra room with a door. Standing was the most popular way to pray in Jesus time! The posture however is not important. Prayer is a manner of the heart and Will.
- Jewish religious leaders were expected to teach their disciples how to pray! This was of paramount importance. However, the Romans did not consider prayer important.
- The Lord’s Prayer in Luke differs slightly due to the fact that Jesus is responding to a question, whereas in Matthew, He gives this prayer as a sermon on how to pray (Luke 11:1-4).
- This model is one of intimacy, not a ‘business model’ as the pagans and Greeks saw prayer. To the Jews, God knew everything. Thus, Jesus was challenging their hearts and motivations, not their knowledge.

Keep your eyes on God, not on people! If you only seek God for your needs, you will never understand God or yourself, or His wonderful plan for you (John 17:22)! Your faith will be on your terms only. How sad that would be! How much you will lose! Our private prayers are the ones that shape us; our public prayers are the ones that are to help others be shaped, and be in spiritual agreement to express praise, worship, seek forgiveness from God and each other, confess sins, make petitions for each other, and teach one another (Luke 11:2-4; Acts 1:14; 4:24).

Prayer as A.C.T.S.

A = ADORATION. *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.*

- Not as duty, but desire; not as law, but love; not as demand, but delight; not as necessity, but privilege; not as ritual, but relationship; not *in order to*, but *because of*.

C = CONFESSION. *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

T = THANKSGIVING. *For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever.*

S = SUPPLICATION.

- **Petition.** *Give us today this daily bread . . . Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*
- **Intercession.** *Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Petition is the seeking of needs, personal as well as for others. It probably accounts for over 95% of all prayer requests. It is sharing our requests before God with the attitude that He does provide, but it may not be what we want or think we need. We need to learn how to depend upon Him, and to express and develop real impacting faith. This is not to be our only aspect of prayer. We are to intercede for others, seek forgiveness of our sins, seek His will, and most importantly, we are to praise and adore Him! Whereas “Intercession” is the understanding of the needs of others and bringing those before God. This is the exercising of love and kindness, and showing our unity in the Body of Christ (John 17). We need to know that not all prayers are acceptable to God (Prov. 28:9; Isa. 59: 1-2; Luke 18:9-14; 1 Pet. 3:12) God looks for our motivations, which are crucial.

Questions

1. With what emphasis is Jesus calling us to seek Him? Why would that emphasis be important?
2. 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? If so, why do so many Christians and churches use this 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. How is reciting this passage as a prayer like giving a recipe to your dinner guests and forgoing the preparing of the meal?
4. What can you do to make sure that how you pray and the things for which you pray are not just for your own needs, or that you are not using prayer to get attention?
5. Have you ever seen people--even pastors and church leaders--use prayer to grandstand (promote) themselves, displaying prideful and hypocritical actions?
6. Why is the importance of perseverance, faith, and humility in prayer essential? Can you think of other essential aspects of prayer?

7. Jesus often taught His disciples about prayer, that it is directed to God, not people, and is to be heard by God, not used for show to others. So, how can you make sure you are offering up the kind of prayer that will please God?
8. Our private prayers are the ones that shape us. So, how can your public prayers also help others to be shaped?
9. How much time in your prayer life is dedicated to praying and worshiping God? Remember, singing in church is only a small aspect of worship; worship is also prayer, an attitude, and a lifestyle!
10. How, and why is prayer a form of communication, which is essential for effective relational growth?
11. How do you pray? How much time is spent each day? What methods do you use?
12. 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?