



Lesson 30 / December 17, 2017

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6

Key Verse

“Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.”

Matthew 6:9-13

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to pray?
2. Why role does prayer play in our discipleship?
3. Read Matthew 6:5-8. How should we *not* pray?
4. What does the Lord's Prayer teach us about God and our relationship to him?
5. What kinds of things do we pray *for* in the Lord's Prayer? What kinds of requests are missing?
6. How do we balance the private nature of prayer with corporate practice?
7. What are your prayer habits?
8. What specific steps can you take to grow in how you pray?

Question 59: What is prayer?

Short Answer: *Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God.*

Full Answer: *Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.*

Question 60: How shall we pray?

Short Answer: *We shall pray fervently, continually, and expectantly.*

Full Answer: *We shall pray fervently, continually, and expectantly, in the name of the Lord Jesus, guided by the Holy Spirit, as we have been taught to pray in the Lord's Prayer.*

Summary

Prayer is undoubtedly one of the greatest mysteries of our faith, and indeed of all of life. Are we really so audacious to think that we can speak to the God of heaven and he will hear us? Yet prayer by its very essence is the communion of God with man and man with God. Scripture tells us to pray continually (1 Thess 5:17) with the simple trust that because God hears our prayers, our prayers have a mysterious power and effectiveness (James 5:16).

In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches us how to pray. He tells us to “pray like this,” then he gives to us what we often call the Lord’s Prayer as our prayer guide (Matt 6:9-13). The Lord’s Prayer begins by teaching us to address God as “our Father in heaven.” We approach God as children approach their father, respecting his authority and trusting that he is a good Father who desires to bless us with his best gifts (see Luke 11:11-13).

Notice also that the Lord’s Prayer is in the plural (e.g. *our* Father in heaven, give *us our* daily bread, forgive *us*, etc.). Prayer should certainly become our personal habit as we learn to enjoy private communion with God (see Matt 6:6), but the Lord’s Prayer teaches us to also pray *together* as a community of disciples. Prayer should be a common practice whenever we gather together in Jesus’ name, whether we are a large group or small.

The Lord’s Prayer includes six requests to guide us in what we ought to pray. First, we pray “hallowed be your name.” The old English word *hallowed* (= holy) reminds us of the holiness of God, that God is exalted far above us, and that we are his worshippers. We pray for his name to be honored in the entire world, but first and foremost among us, not only by our songs of praise but also by the obedience of our lives. May our lives bring honor to his name.

Second, we pray “your kingdom come.” His kingdom is that place where he reigns as king, and his kingdom comes even as his reign increases. We pray for his kingdom to come in the world as more people become his disciples and for his reign to increase in our hearts as we submit to him as our king, and we pray with longing for the coming day when Jesus will return and establish his kingdom once and for all.

Third, we pray “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and we remember the sovereignty of God whereby he is in control of all things. In heaven, God’s will is done perfectly, completely, and cheerfully, and we pray for his will to be done in this same way here on earth. Like Jesus, we also pray with deep surrender to our Father, for *his* will to be done in our lives rather than *my* will (see Matt 26:39, 42).

Fourth, we pray, “give us this day our daily bread,” and we acknowledge God as our sustainer and our dependence upon him for our daily existence. We pray that he will sustain us each day with the strength, skills, and provisions we need to survive, even as he sustained Israel in the wilderness with daily manna (see Exod 16). Indeed, we depend upon him for the very breath we breathe even as we read these words.

Fifth, we pray, “and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” We acknowledge our sinfulness, and we ask for his mercy to forgive us. When we pray with humility rather than hubris, we find mercy and forgiveness (see Luke 18:9-14) and we are thereby empowered to show mercy to others by forgiving their sins against us. We pray for forgiveness, both that we might receive it and that we might be empowered to give it away.

Finally, we pray, “and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Here we look to God as our shepherd and we recognize that we are his sheep (see Psalm 23). Left to ourselves, we are as helpless as sheep in the face of peril and we are prone to wander into the snares of temptation. But when we follow God as our shepherd, he guides us away from evil and enables us to live obediently before him. So we pray that he will lead us and teach us to follow.

Jesus teaches us to pray; let us learn to pray, and let us learn to pray in the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer. For 2000 years, Christians have memorized and recited the Lord’s Prayer as a regular habit, and we should do the same. This is the best way to begin learning how to pray. But remember that Jesus does not merely tell us to pray this prayer, but to pray *like* this prayer. May the Lord’s Prayer guide us in how we pray to our heavenly Father.