

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

October 18, 2009

I trust that your desire in hearing this series on prayer is the desire of the disciples – *Lord, teach me to pray*

- I want this series on prayer to change your life
- I want this series on prayer to change the way you pray

I trust that you understand that we are all in need of learning in this area

- No one – outside of Jesus Christ – has fully understood the value, priority, and specifics of prayer

Jesus is giving us a model of how to pray

- Not when to pray
- Not where to pray

We began looking at this last week

- We see that the Model Prayer consists of six (6) petitions broken down into two (2) main categories

Three petitions related to God's glory

- Relational prayer – “**Our Father who art in heaven**”
- Reverent prayer – “**hallowed by Thy name**”
- Receptive prayer – “**Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven**”

Three petitions related to man's need

- Requesting prayer – “**Give us this day our daily bread**”
- Repentant prayer – “**And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors**”
- Rescue prayer – “**And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil**”

Even in prayer, Jesus is demonstrating the need to put God first!

I. Relational prayer (6:9a)

We noticed last week that not everyone can pray as Jesus instructed

- Only those who are children of God can call Him “**Father**”

The only sense in which an unbeliever can refer to God as “**Father**” is in the sense of Creator

- That is what every human being has in common

But only those who belong to God can pray this Model Prayer since they are the only ones who have a relationship with God

So the first petition of this Model Prayer presupposes that you are rightly related to God

- If you are not a believer, you don't need to learn how to pray
- You need to cry out to God for forgiveness of your sins

II. Reverent prayer (6:9b)

Even though we enjoy the privilege of calling God “**Father**,” we should not equate this with carelessness and a casual approach to God

- We still need to acknowledge God as holy, separate, and distinct from us

He is the Almighty God

- We need to be reverent and acknowledge Him as such

III. Receptive prayer (6:10)

We also need to acknowledge God as being the Ruler and Sovereign of our lives

- We should pray for His will to be done

We should desire that God's will be done above everything else

- More than our own will (illustrated by Jesus Himself in the garden)

Having looked at the first three petitions, which relate to the glory of God, we now switch focus

- Let's now look at the three petitions which relate to man's need

IV. Requesting prayer (6:11)

Give us this day our daily bread.

It is mind-boggling to think that in this Model Prayer, Jesus Christ provides an opportunity for the disciples to *ask* for things

- In some religions, the idea of asking is foreign
- But not so in Christianity

Time and time again, we are invited to pray

- Part of prayer is asking

There are different elements of prayer

- Some different acronyms help us to make sure that our prayers are balanced

ACTS is one option

- Adoration
- Confession
- Thanksgiving
- Supplication

There is also CATS

- Confession
- Adoration
- Thanksgiving
- Supplication

Again, I wouldn't get too caught up in which item comes first

- The key is to include all of these elements (be well-balanced)

We certainly don't want to go to the extreme of asking only, right?

- No adoration
- No confession
- No thanksgiving

That would be a totally imbalanced view of prayer

- Yet it is very easy to fall into this trap

In the society in which we live, it may seem strange to ask for “daily bread”

- We don’t go to the store every day
- We don’t get paid every day

We need to understand this in light of the context of Jesus’ day

- Don’t view this from an American perspective

In that day and age, many people didn’t have steady jobs

- They would work as day-laborers
- Each day, they would wait and see if they would be selected for work
- If they didn’t work, they wouldn’t be paid
 - o *No sick time*
 - o *No vacation time*

It reminds me of the provision of manna in the OT

- God supplied the needs for Israel, one day at a time
- The only exception was the day before the Sabbath, when God gave enough for two days

Think about this

- How different would your attitude be if you (or your spouse) was paid every day? (instead of every week or every other week)?

How would this affect your prayers?

- I would venture to guess that this would cause us to become more dependent upon God, right?

So Jesus instructs His disciples to ask for “daily bread”

- “daily” – a believer was to be dependent upon the Father every single day
- “bread” – this definitely covers literal bread but is probably intended to cover all of our basic needs

So this prayer would be for our needs – not our greeds¹

- Let’s turn to the words of Agur recorded in Proverbs 30, “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion,⁹ lest I be full and deny Thee and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ Or lest I be in want and steal, and profane the name of my God.” (30:8b-9)
- This is a wonderful prayer of contentment

As our Father, God delights in meeting our needs

- He knows our needs before we even ask – food, drink, clothing
- Instead of being anxious (Mt 6:25-34), we should pray with an attitude of trust

Of course, the idea of asking God to “give” does not take away the mandate for work

- “For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.” (2 Thess 3:10)
- Prayer is not a substitute for work!

¹ D.A. Carson, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Matthew*, 171.

This prayer is an acknowledgement that God is the Source of blessing

- “But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth” (Deut 8:18)
- “what do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Cor 4:7)
- “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.” (James 1:17)

V. Repentant prayer (6:12)

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

What is the primary problem with mankind?

- Sin

So what is the primary need of man?

- Forgiveness
- Deliverance from sin

Both here and in Luke 11, the Model Prayer places a significant role upon forgiveness

- It is mentioned six times in eight verses (including 6:14-15)²

This Model Prayer is given to believers – those who already have a relationship with Jesus Christ

- So why is the issue of forgiveness discussed?
- Aren't our sins already forgiven?

Of course, when we come to Christ for salvation, He declared us forgiven, justified, and pardoned

- But we still sin after salvation
- Hence, we need to ask forgiveness on a continual basis

“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8-9)

Jesus displayed something rather unusual when He washed the disciples' feet

- More than an example of humility, Jesus' act was a picture of the forgiveness that God gives
- “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” (John 13:10)

Those who have been born-again do not need to be saved again every time they sin

- They only need to ask forgiveness for the daily sins that they have committed
- We come to God as Father – not as Judge

Asking forgiveness assumes that we understand that we have wronged God and others³

- It implies that we understand that we are sinners
- This is very humbling!

² MacArthur, 392.

³ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the NT, Vol. 1*, 54.

When we ask for forgiveness, we are also declaring to God that there is *no other way to be cleansed*

- It is a plea for grace and help⁴
- We come to the only One who can cleanse us and forgive us

“Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling. If, on the other hand, we have an exaggerated view of the offences of others, it proves that we have minimized our own”⁵

- Big picture of our sin against God, little picture of the offenses of others
- Small picture of our sin against God, enlarged picture of the offenses of others

Listen to this Puritan writer, “Grant me never to lose sight of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the exceeding righteousness of salvation, the exceeding glory of Christ, the exceeding beauty of holiness, and the exceeding wonder of grace”

- “I am guilty but pardoned. I am lost but saved. I am wandering but found. I am sinning but cleansed. Give me perpetual broken-heartedness. Keep me always clinging to Thy cross.”⁶

That is a picture of a believer who has been broken over sin!

- We need to have a similar mindset

Also notice that Christ taught His disciples to pray, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

- This is a dangerous prayer to utter
- We are inviting God to treat us in the same manner in which we have treated others
 - o *Any volunteers?*

If we have forgiven others, then we will be forgiven

- If we have not forgiven others, we will not be forgiven

“For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 “But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions” (Mt 6:14-15)

- Why will God not forgive us?
- Because we have not been willing to forgive others!

This reminds me of the parable of the two men who had debts (Mt 18)

- One had a debt of 10,000 talents
- The other’s debt was 100 denarii

The first man was forgiven

- He could have never repaid that debt

But after being forgiven so much, he refused to forgive his slave who owed him 100 denarii

- Granted, that was still a lot of money to someone who was broke
- But it was a very small price to be paid when compared to his original debt

⁴ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Matthew*, 334.

⁵ Carson, 173.

⁶ Arthur Bennet, quoted in MacArthur, 394.

That is precisely Jesus' intent

- We have been forgiven much – we deserve to suffer God's wrath, judgment, and punishment for all eternity
- Yet we have been forgiven

When you and I intentionally withhold forgiveness, we are refusing to extend the same grace and mercy to others that God has shown to us

- That is unChristlike!

“And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”
(Eph 4:32)

- Christ is our Example!

Would you want God to treat you in the same manner that you treat others?

“If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Ps 66:18)

- Unrepentant sin in my heart will prevent the Lord from hearing my prayer
- *The Lord will not forgive us until we have forgiven others of their sin*
- *How can we expect God to be gracious to us when we haven't been gracious to others?*

May God grant to us an attitude of repentance as it comes to sin

VI. Rescue prayer (6:13)

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

This sixth and final petition may seem strange when we first read it

- It's a prayer that God would not lead us into temptation

A little boy once prayed, “Lord, lead me not into temptation; I can find the way myself!”

- Funny, but true, isn't it?

We know from James 1 that **“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.”** (1:13-14)

- So God does not tempt anyone
- He does not purposely lead us into temptation

But God does test His people

- But He never tempts His people
- He never is the active agent in subjecting us to temptation

“So why ask Him not to do what He would never do anyway?”⁷

This is a paradox

- On the one hand, we know that trials build our faith – strengthening us and making us more like Christ
- On the other hand, we know that we don't welcome trials – they are intense and oftentimes painful

⁷ MacArthur, 395.

This is a plea – an urgent plea – for God to spare us from our own ignorance

- It is a reminder of the power of sin and the weakness of our own flesh
- It is a safeguard against a false sense of security, stability, and sufficiency in ourselves

As the apostle Paul confessed, “**Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God**” (2 Cor 3:5)

We should pray that we would not be lead into temptation

- But we also need to pray, “**deliver us from evil**”
- Literally, it is “from the evil” or “from the evil one”

I think that Jesus has the Devil in mind here

- Evil, in itself, is not our enemy
- The devil, however, is our enemy

Satan is the mastermind behind sin

- He is the father of lies and deception

We dare not go into spiritual warfare in our own strength, abilities, and resources

- We enter into war with Satan only with the spiritual armor given to us by our Commander in Chief

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

This last part of the prayer is in the form of a doxology

- Its wording is found in other sections of the Scriptures (1 Chr 29:11)
- It is theologically sound and harmonized with the tenor of the Bible⁸

But this last part of the Model Prayer is ***not*** found in the oldest manuscripts

- The earliest Greek manuscripts that we have found do not have this as part of the prayer
- You should either have a footnote or sidenote – some of your Bibles may have this Text in italics or brackets

So while this doxology is certainly theologically sound, it is ***not*** to be regarded as being the original teaching of Jesus

- The Model Prayer of Luke 11 does not record this doxology, either
- It was probably inserted by a scribe since it harmonized with other portions of the Bible

I have oftentimes thought about teaching a class on where our English versions came from

- It is a fascinating study of God’s working throughout history
- We have to remind ourselves that God did not speak His Word in English
 - o It was delivered in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek
- Our English versions seek to translate accurately what God conveyed in those original languages

This is the Model Prayer

- I trust that you will learn from it
- Model your prayers around these six petitions
- Learn from the Master Himself

⁸ Carson, 174.