

# Learning to Pray

## Matthew 6:1-13

Introduction:

### Read Matthew 6:1-6

Consider the teachings of Jesus here about false religion. False religion gives to the poor in order to be seen by men and praised for their gifts. False religion prays in order to be perceived by others and pious and righteous. True religion demands that we give and pray in secret so that we are not tempted to seek the praise of men. God will reward us for our good deeds in His time.

### Read Matthew 6:7-8

Saying words without thoughts or quoting the prayers or thoughts of others is not prayer. God wants us to talk to Him from our hearts. Prayer is talking to God, not quoting holy books or chanting. God desires that we open our hearts to Him, not because He needs information—for He already knows everything before it even takes place—but so that we can place our trust in Him. Saying the same things over and over again is not prayer.

APPLICATION: Warning: Do not use prayer to teach or confront others! We do not pray in order to speak to people, but to talk to God. Warning: Do not use prayer to gossip or spread information or news about others. Prayer is for opening our hearts to God.

How then should we pray? God gives to us an example prayer in order to show us the kind of prayer that pleases God. This example prayer is not a magical prayer or a prayer that we must use in our prayer time. It is an example for us to follow. Let us consider what Jesus teaches us about prayer through this example prayer.

### Read Matthew 6:9-13

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name”

- **True prayer is reverent.** When we come before God we must remember that He is holy. God is the Only One True God who hears prayer. There is none like Him in heaven and in earth. He is perfect and without sin. He is the God of heaven, the God who rules over all.
- **True prayer is intimate.** When we pray to the Almighty Holy God in reverence, we must not forget that He is also our Father. Through the blood of Jesus Christ we have been adopted into God’s family and we are now His children. He desires that we pray. Not only this, He commands that we pray to Him!

“Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”

- **True prayer remembers that God is King and that we are His servants.** We are servants who lovingly seek to know and do their master’s will. God is not our genie that exists to do our bidding; we exist to love and obey God.
- **True prayer longs to see God’s reign over the earth when Jesus comes again.** True prayer remembers that this life is not what is most important but that God’s rule is most important. We must pray for Jesus to come again and bring all the nations of the earth under His reign that justice and righteousness would come.

- **True prayer submits to God in faith.** Prayer that pleases God imitates the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not my will but yours be done.” One of the main reasons that we pray is to submit our thoughts and actions to God and remember that He is God and that we are His people.

“Give us this day our daily bread”

- **True prayer depends upon God for daily material needs.** God desires that we trust Him to provide for our needs. This example prayer shows us that God wants us to ask Him to take care of our daily needs. We must not feel like God is bored or disinterested in these prayers.

APPLICATION: Warning! Many Christians only know this kind of prayer. They only know how to ask God for their needs. They do not remember who God is in prayer, they do not reverence Him, seek His will, or submit to His control of their lives. All they do is ask for things. Warning! Other Christians feel like they can only praise God and that they do not have a right to ask God for help with daily needs. This too is wrong. We have the right to ask because of the blood of Jesus and because God tells us to ask Him—not because He does not know, but because He wants us to actively trust Him.

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”

- **True prayer includes confession of sin.** Even though we have been redeemed, we must continually realize our need for forgiveness of cleansing so that we can have a close relationship with God.
- **True prayer is not hypocritical.** If we are unable to forgive those who sin against us or have hurt us in some way, how can we dare go to God and ask Him to forgive us? We must forgive others if we want God to forgive us. We cannot have a close relationship with God if we are angry and bitter with those who have sinned against us.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”

- **True prayer seeks holiness and freedom from sin.** An important part of prayer is praying to be kept from temptation and for victory when temptation comes. Just as we cannot be saved from the guilt of our sins without God’s grace, neither can we have freedom from sins in our lives as Christians apart from God’s grace.
- **True prayer seeks protection from Satan.** We must pray to be delivered from evil. Satan is the god of this world and he walks about seeking whom he may devour. Though we do not fear Him because of the Spirit who lives within us, we should be fearful of his deception and leading us into sin and broken fellowship with God.

“For yours in the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, amen.”

- **True prayer is filled with praise to God.** Recognizing who God is when we begin our prayer and also when we end it is a good way to keep our hearts focused on what is right and true. Prayer is all about God and His will and work in this world, not really about us.

**Tips concerning prayer meetings:**

- When in group prayer, be sure to pray loud enough so that everyone can hear you. If they cannot hear you they cannot unify their hearts with you in prayer to God.
- When in group prayer, if your mind keeps wandering or if you are ill or too tired and cannot concentrate on the words of others praying, then pray silently to God by yourself. Don't waste the prayer meeting!
- When in group prayer, each person does not have to pray for every request that has been given. Pray as God leads you, emphasizing those requests that God burdens you to pray for.