

Last week, we considered Jesus' teaching on **how not** to pray. That was part 1 of a 2-part section on prayer within the Sermon-on-the-Mount. Today, is part 2 about **how to pray Matthew 6:9-15**.

This prayer has been described as the most well-known prayer in the world. Recorded in both Matthew's and Luke's gospels, it has been suggested that the Lord's prayer could be more fittingly described as the Disciples' Prayer or God's children's prayer for some reasons. 1) Jesus used it to instruct His disciples and us in **how to pray in an appropriate way**. 2) Luke 11:1 records that *one of the disciples requested that He teach them to pray.*" 3) In the model prayer there is a slot seeking forgiveness of sins whereas Jesus has no sins to seek forgiveness for. (Our Lord's prayer is actually in John 17 when Jesus prayed just before going to the cross.)

There's nothing wrong with memorising this prayer as it is Holy Scripture, however, Jesus had no intention that His followers repeat it verbatim and thoughtlessly. That would be missing the point Jesus was making.

It can be split into 2 sections: First, God's concerns: His glory His name, His kingdom and His will. Then follows, our personal concerns; our needs, hopes and dreams.

Section 1: Start by praising God for who He is: V9- Our Father in heaven, (vv. 9-10)

Jesus starts with who we should pray to - Our Father. Jesus knows that if we get this wrong the whole of our prayer life will be misaligned. But **can a Christian pray to any member of the Trinity?** Yes. Each member of the Trinity is distinct from the others and is as equally divine.

It's vital to realise that only Christians can pray the Lord's Prayer. Many people around the world pray it without any commitment to following Jesus. **However, Jesus didn't teach this prayer model to all humanity in general, but to his followers.** Calling God *our Father*, is describing a **personal intimate relationship** with God. God is Creator of everybody, but only Father to those who are adopted into his family; through faith in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14-17.

We are all born as sinners, but Jesus came to die on the cross for your sins and mine, so that whoever would put their trust in His atoning sacrifice will become a child of God and live by His grace. (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-10). As your heavenly Father, God hears your prayers, like a loving dad listens to His child. In this relationship, there is freedom, openness, love and acceptance.

In heaven-And He resides in heaven, far above all temporal powers, principalities, those things that hold you captive, your fears, your weakness. If your god is smaller than your problems, you are really in big trouble. But our Father is above all. Hallelujah!

Hallowed be Your name –God our Father never ceases to be holy even though He lovingly stoops down to hear our heartfelt prayers. Therefore, we will honour, exalt and magnify Him. He should be treated with all respect, as He is acts to defend his honour in judgement and salvation. As we consider God in His greatness and Sovereignty, sometimes we do this by singing songs of praise and worship.

V10- Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

How is God's will being done in heaven? In joyful obedience. Do I reflect that in my life? For His kingdom to come, implies asking God to bring more people into his kingdom, under his saving kingly rule; that more people would become Christians.

My greatest desire in life is to reveal the name of Jesus and the character of God to others. Whatever service you or I may undertake, our first thought would be, "Is this for His glory?" I will apply it in my daily choices and how I treat people.

God's will may not always be easy, but Jesus has promised to be with you & I all the way. When we face tough times, which we do not understand, **our faith and trust in God** who knows all things and wants the best for us will be the only foundation on which we stand. **You see, prayer is not an avenue to get what you want; but to get what God wants; not just to tell God what's on your mind; but to find out what's on His mind. The purpose of prayer is not to get God in line with your will; it's to get your will in line with His will.** You are not asking God to change His will or to bless your will, but you are asking Him to help you find and do His will in your life. "Your will be done", is a prayer of submission. Because we trust God, we can submit to His will even when it is hard or confusing, because His ways are best.

Section 2

With God given His supreme place, we turn to our needs; whether physical, spiritual or social.

The second part of the prayer covers 3 essential human needs and the **3 spheres of time within which we all move**. First, it asks for **bread**, the **present** need. Second, it asks for **forgiveness** bringing our **past** to God.

Third, we seek for **help in temptation**, thereby committing the **future** to God's hands. In these three brief petitions, we are taught to lay the present, past and future before the throne of God.

V11-**Give us today our daily bread**, we can now petition the Father for our daily needs, as an act of faith, showing that we depend on Him to meet all our needs. (1 Peter 5:7) 1) Note that, *this request keeps God central*. In our world, secularisation has the effect of marginalising God, thereby creating the illusion that he is functionally irrelevant. We think most what is ours is through our *own* efforts: we plough the land, sow the seed, tend plants and gather the harvest in. The result is that it is **we** who are central and God is peripheral, we are big and God is small. But the Bible tells us that the reality is the exact reverse. (Imagine all human action without rain.)

(2) In prayer for our daily bread, we learn to live one day at a time, without being anxious about the unknown future, but that does not preclude planning for the future. (Matthew 6:33)

(3) Note that Jesus did not teach us to pray: 'Give *me my daily* bread.' but: 'Give **us our daily** bread.' Note the saying, '*The problem of the world is not that there is not enough to go round; there is actually enough and spare. The problem is not the supply of life's essentials; it is the distribution of them.*' **How well are you helping in that distribution?**

Re- daily bread: when our jobs are cut in a corporate downscale, or when a dip in the stock market threatens our retirement savings or when the economy worsens as we've heard in the news this week, so that unexpected demands stretch our financial resources, it's easy to worry. Jesus here teaches us to Trust God who is able to meet every need.

V12- And forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.

If there is sin in your heart, there will be a leak in your prayers. Remember, your heavenly Father, is also a Holy Father, so any stubbornness or refusal to let go of sin, will render your prayers ineffective. Sin short-circuits the power of prayer (Psalm 66:18).

V14-15 There is a strong connection between God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of other people. Our Father is a God of outrageous forgiveness and we are to be like Him. If we are not, then there's a question mark on whether we are truly children of God. **Are your personal relationships with other people marked by forgiveness?**

Jesus is saying that the **one who has truly received God's forgiveness will be a forgiver of others**. Jesus drives the point home in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18. You can check that out.

In his book, "Forgive and Forget", Lewis Smedes wrote about forgiveness: "When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumour out of your inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself."

Vs 13-: Deliver us from the evil one. We are to pray every day to be delivered from the evil one. You are engaged in a spiritual warfare right now whether you can hear the shots being fired or not, and your war is with the devil. Even as I'm preaching this message the devil is doing everything he can to discourage, distract and defeat you. Your only protection in this spiritual war is prayer. As you pray, you will experience victory over sin, victory over self, and victory over Satan.

I believe that as we say the Lord's prayer henceforth, we will be more mindful of all that it entails and should mean to us.

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Questions:

1. (a) In Jesus model prayer (VV9-13), what three concerns related to God did he mention first and (b) what personal concerns follow?
2. "Our Father in heaven" points to God's majesty and power. How does the fact that God rules in heaven over all things make you feel about coming to him with your needs and requests?
3. What is the relationship between forgiveness and prayer?
4. If our Father knows what we need before we ask why pray? (Heb. 4:16; James 4:2-24; 1 Thess. 5:17)