

How to Pray – Unpacking “The Lord’s Prayer”

In Matthew 6:5-15, Jesus is teaching His disciples how to pray, and He includes examples of what to do and what not to do. Jesus isn’t providing them with a boxed-in prayer that must be recited, but rather demonstrating the value of the heart of prayer, and a template of things to consider when praying. This essay isn’t an exhausting look at the subject of prayer from the Bible, but only a view at one of the more significant passages on prayer.

Outline of Matthew 6:5-15

Vs. 5-6 The RIGHT HEART (Why should I pray?)

Vs. 7-8 The RIGHT CONTENT (How and Why should I pray?)

Vs. 9-13 The RIGHT EXAMPLE (“Pray then in this way”)

Vs. 14-15 The RIGHT WAY TO FORGIVENESS (Why should I forgive?)

Unpacking Matthew 6:5-15

6:5-6, ***“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”***

- **“Hypocrite”**: actor, one who wears mask. Here, Pharisees (the religious leaders of Israel in Jesus’ day) were called hypocrites because they did the right thing, prayer, but for the wrong reason – to be appear righteous before men, for public awe.
- **“Reward in full”** – The Pharisees gained improved favor with man, but not God. God’s not opposed to public prayer, as Jesus did this all the time. The issue is one’s heart; motives matter!

6:7-8, ***“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”***

- 2 issues – First, meaningless repetition (saying the same thing). Example – Catholic rosary prayer beads, *“Pray ten Hail Mary’s and ten Our Fathers”*. Repeating a prayer doesn’t make it efficacious. Second, meaningless duration (praying at length to gain favor). The key here is not the length of a prayer, but the sincerity. Prayer does not become more efficacious or meaningful if one prays for thirty-minutes instead of three-minutes. A one-sentence prayer can be significant, *“God, help me!”*
- One might ask, *“If God knows what I’m thinking and what I need, then why pray?”* We don’t pray to change God’s mind, but to change our mind; to align our will with His. We pray to confront ourselves with truths, and to expose our need to the Lord, as an act of reverence and humility.

6:9, ***“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.’***

- Verses 9-13 is what the Christian Church refers to as, *“The Lord’s Prayer.”* It’s a famous piece of Scripture which covers some key issues as demonstrated below.
- **“In this way”** – This means, as an example, not necessarily to recite or quote this prayer, but let this prayer be an example of things to consider when you pray. One can quote the Lord’s prayer, but one should only recite it in prayer when it reflects the attitude of one’s heart, not simply as meaningless recitation. When we pray with our lips but not our engaged minds, prayer is meaningless.

- ***“Our Father who is in heaven”*** – Begin by focusing on the relationship. If one is a Christian, then one begins a prayer by acknowledging who he’s speaking to and focusing on the adopted love relationship that the Lord has with us, as His adopted son.
- ***“Hallowed be your name”*** - Worship God for who He is; even His name is holy!

6:10, ***“Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”***

- ***“Your kingdom come. Your will be done...”*** – What is a kingdom? A kingdom is any place a king reigns. Just as God’s will is being executed perfectly in heaven, a Christian entrusts himself to letting the Lord govern his life today, here on earth. It’s a way of saying, *“Lord, I’m offering my life to be available today. Include me in your plans. Reign in me, here on earth!”*

6:11, ***“Give us this day our daily bread.”***

- ***“Give us this day our daily bread”*** – Just as the Lord provided daily bread (manna) to the Israelites in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt, teaching them His dependency, provision, and care, this prayer focuses one’s heart by essentially praying, *“God, I’m trusting you to meet all my needs.”*
- This heart of this prayer also says, *“Help me to recognize what doesn’t matter in life.”* We don’t want to crave after things that God knows we don’t need.

6:12, ***“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”***

- ***“Forgive us...”*** – As a Christian has received forgiveness from God, he should then be a forgiver. Forgiveness means to let go of what is owed you. One might pray, *“Lord, having received Your forgiveness, I release others.”* A Christian shouldn’t expect to turn to the Lord for forgiveness of today’s sins when he won’t forgive his neighbor.

6:13, ***“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”***

- ***“Lead me not into temptation...”*** – God isn’t going to temp us, but Satan will. This prayer asks God to give us the strength to have victory today; to be alert to the enemy’s schemes and to have godly wisdom to navigate the day.
- This prayer echoes this thought, *“Don’t let times of my testing, turn into occasions for temptation.”*
- ***“For yours is the kingdom and the power and glory forever”*** - Declare His victory and stand firm in your victory through Him!
- ***“Amen”*** – let it be so.

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

- Jesus ends the prayer after verse thirteen, but revisits a key instruction that He just mentioned in verse twelve. Why do this? Perhaps because we’re inclined to revenge. The Lord forgives those who are truly repentant and who respond in a godly way when they themselves are wronged.
- I’m not repentant when I don’t forgive others. Those having received God’s mercy ought to be merciful. Those having received God’s grace ought to be gracious. Those having received God’s forgiveness ought to be forgivers.