

# Sermons on Matthew

## The Lord's Prayer

Part Two  
In This Manner Pray  
Matthew 6:9a

*With Study Questions*

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In this \_\_ manner, therefore, pray: \_ Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your \_ name. <sup>10</sup>□ Your kingdom come. \_ Your will be done On earth \_\_ as *it is* in heaven. <sup>11</sup>□ Give us this day our \_\_ daily bread. <sup>12</sup>□ And \_\_ forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup>□ And do not lead us into temptation, But \_\_ deliver us from the evil one. \_\_ For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. -(Matthew 6:9-13).

## Preface

### The God Who Prays

Of all the people who ever lived, it would seem that Jesus—the God/Man, would need to pray less than anyone. He had infinite wisdom, power, holiness and goodness. And yet Jesus prayed continuously. He prayed: At His baptism (Luke 3:21); when He chose His disciples (Luke 6:12); for Peter’s faith (Luke 22:32); in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:40-44); on the cross (Luke 23:46); when He was alone (Luke 5:16; 9:18); with others around (Luke 9:28, 29); and on and on.

Jesus’ prayer life, no doubt, had a considerable effect upon His followers. We see an example of this in the eleventh chapter of Luke. After Jesus had spent some time in prayer, one of His disciples said to Him, **“Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1).**

How would Jesus respond to this question? As we learned previously, in Matthew’s account of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus spent a bit of time talking about the improper prayers of the heathens. But what would His positive injunction be? How should people pray?

### Introduction

I have three goals in this early portion of our study of the Lord’s Prayer: First, I’d like us to all recognize that Jesus seems to have a deep concern for the content of our prayers; secondly we will briefly survey the content and purpose of the Lord’s Prayer; finally

we will discuss how should be prayer be used. Is it a model for prayer or is it a prayer to be recited?

## **Jesus' Concern for Content**

### **How (What) Should People Pray?**

Let's go back to the question of how people should pray. Jesus was asked to give a lesson on prayer. Of what would this lesson consist? How, according to Jesus, should people pray?

The author of Hebrews records a notable aspect of Jesus' prayer life. He wrote that Jesus had, "**offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears**" (Hebrews 5:7).

Would Jesus speak of the great passion which attended His, and should attend our, prayers? Jesus prayed fervently, passionately and earnestly. Clearly the Bible instructs us to engage in fervent, earnest and even passionate praying. Jacob wrestled with the Lord (Genesis 32:26); Moses pleaded with the Lord (Exodus 32:11); James instructs us to be fervent in prayer (James 5:16).

### **A Propositional Answer**

But when asked how to pray, man's passion and fervency were (at least here) omitted from Jesus' answer. Jesus gives a propositional answer. That is, He doesn't tell us *how* to pray, as much as He tells us *what* to pray.

Ancient Christian literature contains prayer books. In these books we often find beautiful, biblical prayers. Today instead of prayer books we find books on prayer. How to pray has taken the place of what to pray. I don't wish to turn this into a false, either/or, dichotomy; how we pray and what we pray both have their place. Suffice it to say, at least in our current context, that Jesus is not merely concerned with how we pray, but what we pray. Jesus answers the question of how we should pray by giving, what has come to be called, the Lord's Prayer.

## **A Brief Overview**

### **Three Sections**

So what is the Lord's Prayer? It is approximately seventy words in length and can be broken into three sections. First there is the invocation (to call upon) **"Our Father in heaven"**.

The invocation is followed by six petitions (requests). Three relate to God, three to man. We are to pray that God's name be **"hallowed"** (set apart as holy), God's **"kingdom come"**, and God's **"will be done"** on earth as in heaven. We are also to pray for our **"daily bread"**, **"forgiveness"** of our debts and **"deliverance"** from the evil one.

Finally there is a doxology (words of praise) **"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."**

### **Unified Aim**

Let us recognize at the onset that the Lord' Prayer is not a group of unrelated praises and petitions. There is a unified aim in the prayer (as there should be a unified aim in the church and in the lives of God's people) which is to give glory to God.

Even the six petitions have a singular purpose. The hallowing of God's name and the advancement of His kingdom and will are not unrelated to His children receiving their daily bread, forgiveness of sins and protection from evil. In a very primary sense, even the mundane request for bread relates to the overall glory of God. Man exists to bring glory to God. Therefore, the primary reason we should desire bread is not so we can merely continue to exist, but that in the prolongation of our existence we may continue to bring glory to God.

We should have a similar frame of reference when we consider the forgiveness of our sins and protection from evil. The primary reason that God forgives our sins and protects us from evil is for His own glory—the glory of the cross of Christ. In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians we learn that the inheritance that Christians receive via the forgiveness of sins and protection from evil, has, as its chief design **"\_the praise of His (God's) glory" (Ephesians 1:12—parenthesis mine).**

Later in Ephesians the Apostle Paul gives an explanation as to the purpose (or intent) behind his ministry to reach the world for Christ; that purpose is God's glory. He taught that it was...

**...to the intent that now \_\_the \_\_ manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church \_\_to the \_\_principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*,<sup>-11-</sup> \_\_according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ephesians 3;10, 11).**

The Lord's Prayer is not a scatter-brained prayer. Nor should Christians be scatter-brained in their prayers and lives. Whether we make boots or Bible, whether we teach science or soteriology (the study of salvation), we are to do all things to the glory of God—this includes our prayers.

### **In This Manner**

#### **A Model or a Prayer?**

It is my desire that our study of the individual aspects of this prayer will widen and deepen our thoughts and hearts when we are engaged in the praying of it. This brings us to the much asked question, "Should we, as individuals, or as a congregation, actually recite this prayer?" What did Jesus mean when He introduced this prayer with the words "**In this \_\_manner, therefore, pray?**"

There is a great debate as to whether or not we should pray this prayer verbatim or whether it should merely be a constructive model for our prayers in general. This is no new debate. Over three hundred years ago the authors of the Westminster Catechism gave their answer and I tend to agree with it.

#### **How is the Lord' s prayer to be used?**

**The Lord' s prayer is not only for direction, as a pattern, according to which we are to make other prayers; but may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty of prayer. (Matt. 6:9, Luke 11:2)<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup>*The Westminster larger catechism : With scripture proofs.* 1996 (Question 187). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Should the Lord's Prayer be a model for prayer or should it be said verbatim? I think the answer is *both*. In Matthew when Jesus says pray "**in this manner**" the Greek word *houto* is a pretty loose term. It can mean verbatim, but it can also mean "along these lines."

On the other hand, in Luke, when Jesus says, "**When you pray, say**" (Luke 11:2). The word "**say**" *lego* is regularly translated "say". So in Matthew we have "pray like this" and in Luke we have "pray this." Frankly, this doesn't give us a definitive answer.

My children are at the age where they are learning how to do financial transactions with vendors. At McDonalds my son may want French fries so I'll give him some money. He'll often ask, "What should I say." I'll say, "Say 'May I please have a small order of French fries.'" For the sake of accuracy he may repeat my words just as I said them. On the other hand, if he fully grasps the concept, he may alter the words a bit. If the salesperson is very busy, my son may just say "small fries please." If he made that adjustment I would not view it as inaccurate or disobedient. In short, linguistically speaking, neither "**in the manner**" nor "**say this**" necessitates or prohibits praying the prayer verbatim.

## A Vain Repetition

Some may well argue (as I have in the past) "Didn't Jesus just teach against babbling, vain repetitions and wordiness in prayer" (Matthew 6:7, 8)? He certainly did. But, as we discussed previously, this does not mean that all repetitious and long prayers are necessarily wrong. Psalm 136 is a very repetitious prayer. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane "**prayed the third time, saying the same words**" (Matthew 26:44). Three times the Apostle Paul prayed for the removal of the thorn in his flesh (2 Corinthians 12:8).

Jesus' criticism of the heathen's babbling, vain, wordy and repetitious prayers was that they thought they would "**be heard for their many words**" (Matthew 6:7). In other words, their faith was in the prayer rather than the recipient of the prayer. Certainly reciting the Lord's Prayer can become an empty exercise but so can partaking in Lord's Supper or attendance at church. But that's not a good argument for missing church or neglecting communion. Telling my

wife I love her can become a vain enterprise as well if I don't mean it or live a life inconsistent with the words.

## A Valuable Recitation

### By Heart

On the other hand, there can be great value in reciting the Lord's Prayer on a regular basis. First, we come to know the words of Jesus by heart. If I could trade every rock 'n roll song engrained in my memory for the words of Christ I'd have most of the gospels memorized by now.

### Same Words—Deeper Understanding

Secondly, the more I come to understand what these words mean, the deeper the prayer becomes. The eighty year old who has developed a keener sense of the vile nature of his own sin can pray the same words "**forgive us our debts**" that he had prayed seventy years earlier with an immensely richer sense of gratitude. This principle can extend to every word in the prayer.

### Praying Together

There is yet another advantage in reciting the prayer; one that cannot be known through merely using the prayer as a model. God's people can pray the prayer together. There is something to be said for the fact that Jesus gives us this prayer in the first person plural—"**Our Father.**"

I once attended a church service where the leader sought to have the entire congregation pray the Lord's Prayer in the first person singular—"*My* Father who are in heaven...give *me* this day *my* daily bread, etc." The unity of God's people praying the same prayer in harmony became a mass of selfish confusion.

One simple yet significant fact is there are no singular personal pronouns throughout the entire prayer. This is not to say that I cannot pray this prayer by myself. But it is to say that the Christian faith (especially as it relates to the advancement of God's Kingdom and glory of His Name) is not to be thought of as some

individualistic enterprise. The Christian is always to view himself as part of a body.

All this to say that although the Lord's Prayer is certainly a model for prayer in general, it is not only permissible, but valuable as a prayer to be recited as well.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus has granted us access to our Father in heaven. Having done this it appears that He has a deep concern that we participate reverently and wisely in our interaction with the Father. This is not a matter of mere etiquette. This is not something as vain as which fork to use on which course. It is a matter of choosing our words wisely when we come before the throne of grace. And since God searches our thoughts and hearts (1 Chronicles 28:9), it is also a matter of sincerely understanding and believing what those words mean. And this will be the pursuit of in our next study.

## Questions for Study

1. How did Jesus respond to the request of how to pray (pages 3, 4)?
2. What is the distinction between how we pray and what we pray (pages 3, 4)?
3. What are the three sections of the Lord's Prayer (page 4)?
4. Discuss the continuity of the Lord's Prayer (pages 4, 5).
5. Should the Lord's Prayer be a model for prayer or should it be recited verbatim (pages 5, 6)?
6. Is it vain repetition to pray the Lord's Prayer verbatim (page 7)?
7. What are the danger/benefits of praying the Lord's Prayer verbatim (pages 7, 8)?