

PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer – Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Prayer is Adoration

(1) Prayer is orienting yourself to the true reality of God

Psalm 73:16-20

¹⁶ But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,
¹⁷ until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I discerned their end.
¹⁸ Truly you set them in slippery places;
you make them fall to ruin.
¹⁹ How they are destroyed in a moment,
swept away utterly by terrors!
²⁰ Like a dream when one awakes,
O Lord, when you rouse yourself,
you despise them as phantoms.

(2) Prayer makes vivid the truth of who God is

Ephesians 1:16-19

¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,
¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give
you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,
¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is
the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious
inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his
power toward us who believe.

Prayer is Thanksgiving

(3) Prayer is dependence on God

Mark 9:28-29

²⁸ And when Jesus had entered the house, his disciples asked him
privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” ²⁹ And Jesus said to them,
“This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

(4) Thanksgiving reorients the heart

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and
supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God.
⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard
your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer is Supplication

(5) Prayer changes things

James 4:2-3; 5:16

² You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive,
because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ^{5:16} The prayer of
a righteous person has great power as it is working.

(6) We must pray according to God's will

John 15:7

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish,
and it will be done for you.

Prayer is Confession

(7) The posture of prayer is a broken heart

Psalm 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

Prayer | Notes

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Model for how we should pray

- notice four classic elements: adoration, thanksgiving, supplication and confession (ACTS)
- doesn't need to be in any particular order

Prayer is Adoration

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Psalmist is filled with envy and discontent

- he sees the apparent prosperity of others, especially the godless
- filled with distress and turmoil – almost loses his faith!
- until he looks into the *face of God* and comes into the presence of the Almighty
- prayer is looking away from the distorted reality of the idols of the world, and returning to sanity

Example of Job

- Job endures great suffering – loss of family, fortune, health
- understandably, this sends him into turmoil | he seeks “answers” to his questions
- but what happens in the end? God reveals himself, but doesn't answer any of his questions
- Job responds – “I put my hand over my mouth; surely I spoke of things I did not understand.”
- amazingly, Job is helped and comforted by this
- ultimately, Job didn't need answers; he needed to see the face of God

(2) Prayer *makes vivid* the truth of who God is

Ephesians 1:16-19 ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.

Paul's prayer doesn't ask for any *change in circumstances* – but for *the heart to grasp the glory of God*

- prayer makes real what we know with our intellect, but hasn't translated into the heart
- our greatest need isn't a change in circumstances, but a deeper experiential knowledge of God
- so that "love of God" isn't an abstraction, but a vivid, palpable reality

- *Ex Machina* illustration: difference between scientist studying color in a black-and-white room and that scientist stepping out into the beauty of the natural world

Prayer is not just a way to get things *from* God, but to get more *of* God

This presupposes a life *soaked in Scripture*

- how do you adore a God you barely know?
- prayer is response to God's self-revelation in Scripture | 'Scripture-prayer' is a conversation
- if your prayer-life is dry, perhaps it's because you're not listening to half the conversation

Prayer is Thanksgiving

(3) Prayer is *dependence on God*

Mark 9:28-29 ²⁸ And when Jesus had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" ²⁹ And Jesus said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Absence of thanksgiving comes from the heart that says – "*I have done this for myself*"

- prayer acknowledges that we are sustained by God moment by moment
- Acts 17:28 – "in him we live and move and have our being"

(4) Thanksgiving *reorients the heart*

Philippians 4:6-7 ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Thanksgiving is a reorientation of the heart – *away from grumbling and complaining*

- human heart is prone to self-absorption and self-pity
- the solution is to look upward to God and see his abiding goodness

Also, thanksgiving *trains our hearts to see God's good and wise providence*

- because notice, we are to give thanks in "everything," even in tragedies and sorrows

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

First part of the Lord's Prayer is *all about God*

- only then, from that framework, do we think of ourselves

Prayer is Supplication

(5) Prayer changes things

James 4:2-3; 5:16 ² You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ^{5:16} The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

There is a kind of hyper-spirituality that says – “prayer *only changes you, not circumstances*”

- but all throughout Scripture, we see the power of prayer | God appointed prayer to change things
- James explicitly invites us to pray for our needs; and tells us reason we lack because of not praying
- our prayerlessness partially comes out of the thought that prayer has no power

Deep mystery – God is sovereign, but prayer has power to change things

- Moses pleading for God not to abandon Israel in Exodus 33 (it appears to change God’s mind!)
- in fact, Jesus commands us to pray with temerity and importunity – like a child with father

(6) We must pray *according to God’s will*

But the natural follow-up question – but what if we ask for the *wrong things*?

- James specifically says, “you ask wrongly”

Therefore, we must pray according to God’s will

- but how do we know God’s will?

John 15:7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

To the extent that you *abide in Christ*, your desires will become aligned with God’s will

This is what it means, therefore, to “pray in Jesus’ name”

- for many people, “in Jesus’ name” has just become a way to end the prayer
- but Jesus commands us to pray in his name – “ask me anything in my name and I will do it” (John 14:14)
- in ancient world, a person’s “name” is his character, nature, will
- in Exodus 3, Moses asks God his name | “I am who I am” (God reveals his self-originating nature)
- to pray in Jesus’ name, is to pray in accordance with his nature and mission and will

What if we *don’t know God’s will*? How do we pray for someone ill?

- we are sometimes paralyzed with not knowing if God wills someone’s healing or not
- difference between God’s revealed will and secret will
- we must always pray for God’s revealed will – healing, restoration, wellness
- but, always with Jesus’ attitude, “not my will, but yours be done”

But the power of prayer scares me – what if I ask for the wrong thing?

- Jesus assures, “What father, if his son asks for a fish, will instead give him a serpent?” (Luke 11:11)

Prayer is Confession

(7) The posture of prayer is a *broken heart*

Psalm 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

Prayer comes out of *an emptiness seeking to be filled with God*

- if we do not recognize our spiritual poverty, we will not pray

Prayerlessness is a *kind of test* – do you really believe the gospel?

- because a self-sufficient life, a self-confident life will not pray
- a life of spiritual poverty, spiritual brokenness will cry out to God