

Praying with Jesus & Paul *Matthew 6:9-13*

Pretentious Prayer, Matt. 6:5-8

Matt. 6:5: Jesus does not forbid all public prayer, but stresses the private side of devotion to God in prayer. When right motives are in place, public prayer is appropriate. Moreover, it was not the posture or the location that was crucial; it was the motive (“to be seen by men”). In Scripture, people prayed *prostrate* in Num. 16:22; Josh. 5:14; Matt. 26:39; *kneeling* in Dan. 6:10; Lk. 22:41; Acts 9:40; 21:5, *sitting* in 2 Sam. 7:18, and *standing* in 1 Sam. 1:26; Mk. 11:25; Lk. 18:11.

Note: The reward is the same as the intent. Compare “they have received their reward in full” with “to be seen by men.” Drawing attention to ourselves in prayer (or any religious activity) is to take away attention from God and is tantamount to idolatry!

Matt. 6:6: Praying in private helps us focus our full attention upon God and removes all distractions.

The Disciples’ Prayer, Matt. 6:9-13

God’s Paternity (Fatherhood), “Our Father in heaven” Matt. 6:9a

Addressing God as “Father” indicates intimacy in relationship; acknowledging that He is “in heaven” underscores His supremacy in greatness. God is both near and far.

God’s Priority, “hallowed be your name” Matt. 6:9b

By seeking to make God’s name holy we prioritize His purity and perfections over our needs and wants. When we pray, God’s honor should be utmost in our thoughts.

God’s Program, “your kingdom come” Matt. 6:10a

This request is for God to bring about His kingdom, not for kingdom subjects to take matters into their own hands. The establishment of the kingdom will be brought about by God for us and not by us for God.

God’s Plan, “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” Matt. 6:10b-c

If we’re not willing to live like this, then should we pray like this? The cost of seeking God’s will over our own can be huge as Jesus well knew (cf., Lk. 22:42). This, I believe, is the hardest prayer we could pray but also the most important prayer we could pray. Moreover, we should not only think globally (“on earth”) but locally in our own circumstances and lives.

God’s Provision, “give us today our daily bread” Matt. 6:11

Note: The progression in prayer begins with God’s majesty (Mt. 6:9-10), then moves to our personal needs (Mt. 6:11-13). Asking God for long-term provision could inhibit the recognition of our day-by-day dependence upon Him. Is this limited to food to nourish our bodies?

God’s Pardon, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” Matt. 6:12.

Note: Sin is seen as indebtedness. And note that it is our “debtors” not their debts that we forgive. We have no right to expect forgiveness from above when we’re unwilling to grant it to others. We must first mend horizontal relationships before we approach our vertical relationship with God (cf., Matthew 5:23-24). God takes our relationships with one another very seriously.

God’s Protection, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” Matt. 6:13

The prayer of a genuine worshipper knows his/her own weaknesses and acknowledges their utter dependence upon God to live for Him. Although God tempts no one to sin (James 1:13-15), this request is to rescue us from evil, which is the goal of temptation (cf., 1 Cor. 10:13). This is a prayer to avoid sin, not necessarily temptation (“deliver us from evil”).

Conditions for Answered Prayer, Matt. 6:14-15

Why do you suppose Jesus picked up on forgiveness when explaining the prayer to His disciples?

Does Jesus say there are any conditions for God to grant forgiveness? (see also, Lk. 17:3; 1 Jn. 1:9)

According to Is. 59:2; Ps. 66:18; Jn. 9:31 are there any conditions for God to hear your prayers?

Why is the willingness to extend forgiveness to others, whether they ask for it or not, an essential ingredient for an effective prayer life?

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Now That You Know These Things...

How much do you pray in public versus private?

When is the last time you prayed in private with no distractions?

How has prayer been used for self-glorification?

When was the last time you felt the full weight of the prayer “your will be done?”

What elements of this prayer *will* you incorporate into your prayer habit?