

The Model Prayer

Matthew 6:5-13

⁵And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

Background: Verse 5 gives the general instructions and attitude for prayer. Jesus opens with a clear anti-example of what not to do.

- Don't pray like the hypocrites (like some of the religious church people of the day). We are not to model our prayer life after their example.
 - I missed this lesson early on as when I heard other professional Christians pray and come up with neat phrases that collected amen and crowd pleasing responses, I wanted to copy that style and use those lines....so I did. I didn't realize that was not the proper attitude for approaching God in prayer.
 - So I was really playing and not praying....took a while to realize my error.
- They (hypocrites) pray in the open for a show or to perform so that people will see them and be impressed. They are not praying to God but instead praying to receive the praise and glory from men/crowd. That is the earthly and prideful reward they receive.
 - There is some personal and selfish gratification from praying in this manner or with this kind of attitude...but it is not spiritual and the feeling won't last long.
 - Matthew Henry refers to it as "vain glory".
- If there were hypocrites back then and they were man of the Scribes and Pharisees....who would be the hypocrites of today and where might they be found? Be careful, there is a difference between religion and relationship with God.

⁶But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. ⁷But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Verse 6 – Jesus provides guidance for conducting personal prayers. Do it in private to God alone and not for a public show. What you do privately for God, He will reward you openly where others can see it.

- Better to let God reward you openly than for us to seek open reward and recognition through our own efforts. We do this by seeking God first rather than glory for ourselves.
- This must be a real risk or problem area for Christians or else Jesus wouldn't spend so much time here outlining a warning and instructions.

- If it happened back then and Jesus warned against it, then there is a pretty safe bet that the same attitude and same errors are being made by some religious people today when it comes to praying.
- Prayer must be God focused and not self-focused.
- Notice the scripture states “when” you pray; so God is fully expecting prayer to be a normal and frequent activity for believers.

Verse 7 – Jesus next warns against repeating the same words and phrases. He calls them vain actions or repetitions.

- This type of prayer again is for self-promotion or the person praying feels they need to add something extra thinking this self-effort will prompt God to hear better.
- The thought appears to be the more eloquent and longer they speak, the more impressed God will be and He will hear them.
- I understand the logic behind this, but human logic and spiritual correctness differ in the Kingdom. I would rather be spiritual than logical.
 - There is the danger of pride. That is the temptation to put on a show or as some of the Pharisees did, they were just pretending to be righteous.
 - Would you really want someone with these motives praying for you before God?
 - There is the danger of fear and doubt where we feel we have to do something extra using our flesh and own might to help God.
- The words are vain which suggests this type of prayer will not profit you...just wasting time. David Guzik and several commentaries reference Ecclesiastes 5:2: *God is in heaven and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few.*
- Matthew 23:14 mentions this....*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.*

Verse 8 – Jesus encourages us to not follow these examples. There is no need for us to be dramatic in our request to try and get God’s attention since He already knows what we need before we ask. So why go through extra means to try to get Him to know and hear what He already knows.

Question: If God already knows what we need before we ask, why pray and ask? When I asked my class this question, the following example was discussed.

When you are troubled or upset what are you inclined to do? One class member stated they may find someone they feel comfortable with and trust to share their frustration with. When they are able to talk and share, they feel better since they can get some things off their mind. You can use the same concept in relation to prayer.

When I am praying correctly, I’m sharing with a loving God and this builds my trust and faith. I believe one of several reasons God desires us to pray is not just to build our relationship with Him, but it is also for our benefit. When we pray correctly, we should be encouraged.

⁹After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Verse 9 – Jesus not only gives the anti or bad example, but also the perfect example for what and how to pray. This is not the first time the Bible uses this both good and bad examples to teach understanding of the Word.

Note – it is a model for us to follow. Like a pattern. If we simply recite it without understanding the model, then it is no more than a vain repetition. I don't want to recite the prayer just because everyone else around me is saying it.

Our Father which art in heaven

- He opens the prayer with humble submission and acknowledgement that He is our Father. We are submitting to His guidance, protection and leadership.
- We open prayer by viewing God in a relationship...not about religion.
- Notice also it doesn't start out in a request or our wish list.

Hallowed be thy name.

- Holy is His name. We are acknowledging the awesomeness of who He is. He is more than just a Father, He is holy.

Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Here I have discovered a major shift in my original thinking about this prayer. When I used to pray these words I was always praying and thinking about the actual coming of Christ to rule on the earth. When heaven comes down to earth and the fulfillment of end time prophesy. But the Spirit opened my understanding to a much broader application. I was reminded that:

- Jesus used parables to describe the Kingdom. That is using stories in the natural to help explain the nature of the Kingdom.
- So while I still pray for the coming Kingdom to arrive on earth, a closer application for me is that I'm praying that my personal and right now situation or the parable I'm living through right now, reflect the Kingdom or produces Kingdom results.
- I used to pray His will be done in relation only to His Kingdom coming, but I've now started to apply it to my right now situation.
- Here we have a further shift. After the submission and coming under the wing of our Father, we now shift from our desires and our will to focus on His will.
- Our will and plans are now subordinate to His plans for the Kingdom to come. It is now His will and not our will which is in control.

- This part of the prayer has been of particular help to me. When I am praying for His will to be done on earth, I'm not just praying for the Kingdom, I'm applying the prayer to my particular situation as well.
 - The great hope that I have when I pray that regardless of my troubles or circumstances or challenges, I start to have peace and confident assurance that God's will is going to be performed in my circumstances.
 - It might not turn out as I planned, but I have a living hope that He will have His way in my situation. Since He is my Father, His will must be for my good and favor. So I'm praying to a loving Father that He would bring to pass what is best for me in His eyes.
 - It might not turn out like I wanted....but I am praying now that His will trump my own desires. When the dust settles, at the end of the road, when His will is done in my life...I will indeed be better than I ever imagined.
 - There is a revived hope when I understand what I'm praying for. In the end, I will have victory but because I am praying and confident that God will have His way....I don't have to wait....I can praise Him now and have peace in the midst of a storm.

For example, while teaching this lesson I was reminded of a childhood incident. I might have been three or four but there was a bully in the neighborhood who took my tricycle from me. While he started riding my bike, I ran to my house and called my dad.

- I took the first step of the prayer. I was in need, I had lost something that I owned and loved, and the problem and challenge that was facing me was bigger than I could handle.
- I went to the father because I have a relationship with him. He was my dad.

Now my dad hears my problem and tells me something like the following...."Boy you better go back outside and get that bike back. Don't come back without it or you will have a bigger problem than that bully when you come back." It was something like that. All I knew was that I revered my dad. Because it was my dad and I knew the threat was real, the bully had no chance. I got my bike back and as I was riding it back home, I could see my dad peeking through the screen door. He was watching and with me the whole time.

As I was sharing this story to the class, one of my star students observed that Satan often represents the bully in my story. The Father is working with us and through us to restore what the enemy has taken from us. It will be hard for me to not think of this example from my life and not relate it to the first three steps of this prayer.

There are still times and areas of my life where I have to hurry to the Father who I have a relationship with and ask Him humbly for help. I have to bury my fear and doubt and reverence that there is power beyond me just in His name. So I can pray confidently that the hope for recovery and restoration is in His will and headed my way.

Give us this day our **daily** bread.

- Here the person is praying for God to be a provider and meet their needs. After submission, now we are submitting and trusting in God to provide. This is another level of maturity and relationship with God. A greater level of trust.
- One commentary pointed out the word “daily”, which denotes having faith in God that He will provide what we need and there is no need for us to hoard. So each time we pray this, we are praying and demonstrating faith.
- I happily come back daily by faith to communicate and talk to God.
- I used to think we are just praying for our daily meals, but since this is a model, I believe the prayer request is for God to provide whatever it is that we require (not necessarily want, but need).

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

- This stage we are seek his mercy and forgiveness. At the same time, we are to extend mercy to others.
- I still have to pray hard over this area at times amazingly. I sometimes face situations where people offend, they disappoint and you just want to really let them have it. I have to remind myself and often through this prayer that I have offended and disappointed and if not others...certainly God. I am not greater than God who has forgiven me of so much. If I get to this point and can't forgive, then I probably need to start this prayer over again.
- Additionally, once I forgive, I don't need to continue to pass along dirty looks. I don't have to be best buddies, but I do need to let the offense go and move forward.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

- The request is to help us to maintain our standing in Him. We are not to fall away into temptation by making bad choices. Next, we pray to not to fall before our enemies and evil. We are looking and asking God to deliver us safely through our troubles.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

- We celebrate the soon coming kingdom and His power and glory that shall be revealed.

So the prayer seems to start out with reverence and end in praise.

The first four elements deal with our relationship and focus on God Himself.

- Our Father, His Name, His will, His providence

The next three deal with relationship with others and our standing on the promises.

- Dealing with others, living holy, the Kingdom

Is there a connection with the feasts? If so, what does it mean to us today?

Level #	Prayer Element	Feasts – Leviticus 23	Other Notions
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1	Our Father in Heaven	Passover – Humble submission. Fulfilled when Christ humbly died on the cross	Some place our Father & Kingdom come as 1 & 2. Acknowledging His dwelling place
2	Hallowed be Thy Name	Unleavened Bread – Fulfilled with Christ’s burial. We bury our self, pride and past as we approach a Holy God	Reverence
3	Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done	First Fruits – Fulfilled with Christ’s resurrection. This represents the new hope of the coming kingdom and submission to His will	Being joined to His will
4	Give us our daily bread	Pentecost – Fulfilled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They were “filled”. The Holy Spirit is our provider and comforter daily	Acknowledge Him as the source of our needs
5	Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors	Trumpets – represents the Rapture. Also points to mercy, note the 5 th Beatitude and importance of mercy	Letting some things go and not holding things against others
6	Lead us not into temptation; deliver us from evil	Day of Atonement – represents the 2 nd coming of Christ when he defeats the enemy and saves his people	Endurance through tough times and temptations
7	Thine is the Kingdom, glory, forever	Tabernacles – represents the millennium rule of Christ on the earth	Attributing victory and credit to Him

The prayer was not designed I think to be used as a strait jacket. We are flexible within the model to pray within the spirit and intent of each section. If there is really a feast connection, then each element of the prayer takes us closer to the Kingdom and closer in relationship with God.

A benefit of using the model prayer with each steps in sequence with the feasts is it helps us have the proper motivation and helps avoid the vain repetition Jesus warns us against.

- There have certainly been times in my past when I prayed the Lord’s Prayer in private but I did it out of memory.
- Certainly there must be more than a few who have recited the prayer from memory but didn’t have the proper spiritual approach or motivation to really understand what the prayer is a model for.
 - This was not intended to be a model for repetition but an example for how to have a right relationship with God.

At the time of this study, I was going through a particularly troubling and frustrating time. I couldn’t find peace of mind and it was hard to focus on God and not the problem. I started to pray....but I did so using the elements of this model prayer. The more I prayed, the more my faith increased. The more I prayed, the more I was committed to wanting His will to be done in my situation. In the midst of my storm I had peace, just through properly praying. Jesus was an expert on prayer and the model he provides works when properly applied.



Let us pray!