



Growth Group Questions
October 22, 2023
“Some Thoughts About Prayer”

Context

In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus takes up the topic of prayer. He starts by contrasting the kind of prayer his disciples need to consider and how it differs from how other non-Jewish people prayed. Others who prayed to their gods/goddesses felt that there were certain formulas or long repeated phrases which would bring assurance that their gods/goddesses would hear them.

Prayer is course one of life’s great mysteries. We know we are to pray, but oftentimes we only find ourselves praying when we are troubled by life, and even when we pray, many of us are not exactly sure of how we are to pray. Jesus is fully aware of this reality and so he provides a framework for prayer which is often called the Lord’s Prayer, but could actually be called the Disciples Prayer, because it teaches the followers of Jesus how we are to pray.

Though Jesus gives us a framework about how to pray, he does not expect us only to use these specific words. It is simply an outline. We know that because the prayer that he teaches the disciples in Luke 11:2-4 is different than the prayer here in the Sermon on the Mount. When we pray we can speak out loud or we can pray internally.

We call God Father because from early on God had referred to the people of Israel as his son, his firstborn in Exodus 4:22-23. Jesus also referred to God as Father. God is not an idol made by human hands, but he dwells in heaven and wants to bring his rule here on earth. The aim of God is not to take his people away from earth and up into heaven, but instead to bring his glory and reign here on earth. We see that the first part of the prayer is all about God.

The second part of the prayer wants us to consider our relationship with other people. We need to pray for those who are in need, for those who don’t have daily bread. We need to pray for our forgiveness, this gift of mercy and grace, that is offered to us by God. And not only do we need to ask God for forgiveness, we need to be willing to forgive others. Finally, Jesus says pray that you will be spared from the testing of the evil one that will come upon the world. The reality of evil is real, and followers must pray that they will be delivered from that evil.



Scripture:

Matthew 6:5-15

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:

“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 today 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 the evil one.’

¹⁴ For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.



Questions:

1. What is prayer and what is its purpose in the lives of Christians?
2. Pastor Jere said that “prayer is an exchange of wishes.” What does that mean to you?
3. In Matthew 6:8, we are told that our “Father knows what you need before you ask him.” Why, then, is it important for us to pray?
4. What are the two main problems that Jesus identified with the way in which the hypocrites prayed (verses 5-7) and how might we be guilty of these same errors?
5. When we begin to pray, Jesus tells us to address our prayers to “Our Father in Heaven.” (verse 9) Why is it important for us to begin our prayers in this way?
6. What does it mean for us to pray for God’s kingdom to come and for “His will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven?” (verse 10)
7. Matthew 6:11-13 includes three requests that we are to make of God in our prayers. What is significant to you about these three requests?
8. In addition to this week’s Scripture passage, where else in the Bible are we given instruction on how to pray?
9. Why is daily prayer important?
10. What can we do to enhance our prayer lives?

