

Effective Prayer – Part 1

Have you had **something in your life** that you **thought you knew**, but after a long period of time realized there was **more to it** or you were **completely off base**?

Silly example – I have **2 aunts** on my Mom's side – My Aunt **Lou** and Aunt **Doris**

- I knew **Doris** was **spelled Doris**, but my mom & dad and even grandma always said her name quickly – **Dorse**
- So I said **Dorse** – It wasn't until probably **7 years ago** when Liane said, "What are you calling her". She laughed at me for 5 minutes straight.
- That's silly, but there are some things **we think we understand** that we don't
- When it comes to our **Christian walk** it can be a **great hindrance** to our **growth** – I believe one of those areas for many of us is "**Prayer**".

During **Jesus' earthly ministry** He stated things that the **people** of the time **thought they had known** all of their lives only to **reveal** to them a **new standard** in which to consider the matter.

- For **example**, in **John 13:34a** Jesus stated, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you."
- The commandment to love one another **wasn't new**. It had been in place since the law was given in **Leviticus 19:18**
- **Jesus raised the standard** when He told them to love each other **as He had** loved them.
- The practice of **comparing** personal accomplishments and behavior to **those around them was changed** to the **impossible comparison** to Jesus.
- The **purpose** of this was for man to **take his eyes off of the outward** world and to **focus on the inward** man.

Jesus' **longest recorded sermon**, known as the **Sermon on the Mount**, focused on this line of thinking for **multiple subjects**. One of those subjects is on **prayer** where Jesus gave the **longest** and **most** **detailed instruction on prayer** found in the entire Word of God.

Jesus began in **Matthew 6:5-8** with some **preliminary comments** on when to pray and then went into a **seven part instruction** of the **elements of prayer** in Matthew 6:9-13 known as the **model prayer**, the **Lord's Prayer** or the **disciples' prayer**.

Do we want to effectively pray to God?

Jesus began in **Matthew 6:5-6** stating,

“And 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. But 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. “

This **first instruction** targets the **sincerity** of the person praying.

- It was **not a condemnation** of **public prayer**, but rather a standard set for how **private prayer** was to **birth communication** between man and God.
- This is the **first recorded instruction on how** and **where** man was to pray.
- The men mentioned in Matthew 6:5 were praying to be seen.
 - o **No one is praying to be seen** when it is done privately.
 - o Only a sincere heart will pray in secret
 - o It is **hypocritical** of a Christian to **appear more** in their **public** prayer life than in their **private** prayer life.

In **verse 7** Jesus added, “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”

Jesus instructed them to **refrain from repetitious prayer**.

- This **does not mean** to refrain from a **repeated request**, because later Jesus will instruct the people to be **persistent in their prayers** when in Luke 11:9 He stated to **ask, seek and knock**.
- This repetition mentioned referred to the **mantra** that was so prevalent in **pagan** religions as it still is today (**Rosary**).
- **I find it odd** that the very prayer that Jesus used to instruct men how to pray has become the most **vainly repeated prayer** among Christians.
- Jesus was indicating the need for sincerity as we begin our prayers.

Jesus continued in the first part **Matthew 6:9** stating, “After this manner therefore pray ye”.

This was to be compared to what had just been said on what not to do in prayer, so He began the instruction saying “after this manner”.

Note, He **gave the instruction** to “pray”. It is an **imperative**, **not an option**. From this point Jesus’ prayer can be broken into **seven elements**, we’ll use John Butler’s section descriptors.

(1) the relationship to God, (2) the reverence for God, (3) the rule of God, (4) the resources of God, (5) the repentance to God, (6) the righteousness from God, and (7) the respect for God.”

Are we ready? (Read together)

The Relationship to God

All too often we look at prayer as a **time for us to unload** our laundry list of **wants** and **desires** on God. We’ll see that God has something different in mind.

In the first portion of the model prayer Jesus began to show us that prayer is more than a stoic list of petitions, but **rather a personal communication** with the Heavenly Father.

The first portion of the prayer in **Matthew 6:9b** reads, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”

There are **4 distinctions** here, “the prompter to pray, the people who can pray, the Person to whom we pray and the perspective in prayer.”

The prompter to pray the address “Our Father”.

“**Father**” is a **title of honor** and shows a **personal** relationship.

- A father is a person who can be **approached without fear of rejection**.
- This is a person who looks after the well-being of his child in an effort to share his knowledge and wisdom and to make the person into a functioning adult.
- Unlike earthly fathers sometime – He’s **never disinterested or distracted**
- Jesus indicated that this was the relationship that we as Christians are to have with our Heavenly Father.

The people who can pray – shown in the first word of this portion when it says “Our”.

“Our” is a word of **ownership**. It indicates that the Christian **belongs** to the Father, but also that the Father **belongs** to the Christian.

- This is a moniker that **only belongs to Christians** - privilege.
- Until a relationship through **salvation** is established the Heavenly Father is only God to a person.
- Once we have accepted Jesus Christ through faith does that relationship change to God the Father.
- This was a **shock to my father-in-law** when he was lost.
- Note that all of the **pronouns** through the prayer are plural. Obviously Jesus was speaking to a group of people, but it **indicates** that the **blessings** of the prayer **belong to the entire Christian family** and not just a distinct group of believers or leaders.

The Person to whom a Christian prays is indicated in the full phrase “Our Father which art in heaven.”

In the Old Testament prayers were made to God and Jehovah, but now in the model prayer Jesus instructed to pray to “Our Father...in heaven.”

- This was a **very specific placement** to whom a Christian is to pray.
- Jesus does **not direct prayer toward Him** or the **Holy Spirit** or any saints, but squarely on the Heavenly Father.
- This has been corrupted in religion, as in the case of the Roman Catholic religion, where men are instructed to pray to **Mary or saints**.
- Jesus’ instruction was quite clear that **prayers are only to be made to the Heavenly Father**.

Lastly, **the perspective of prayer** is found in the word “heaven”.

Throughout Jesus’ instruction on prayer He used terms that were and are **meant to change the perspective** of the our praying.

- The thought is to **not constantly be looking down**, but to be **looking up** toward heaven.
- In today’s terms, it is similar to taking the **10,000 foot view of a situation**.
- We almost **remove ourselves** from the situation and **start to see life in God’s view**.

- Robert Law stated, "Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in heaven, but for getting God's will done in earth."
- All too often we approach God in prayer with the opposite of Law's quote in mind, but Jesus showed how to keep prayer properly aligned with this statement.

The Reverence for God

This second portion of the model prayer deals with worship when Jesus stated, "**Hallowed be thy name.**"

- We're instructed to **call out** to our Heavenly Father, but **not carelessly** as we would approach a familiar friend.
- The Father should be approached **with reverence** due to His holiness as God declared to the Israelites in Leviticus 11:44b, "ye shall be holy; for I am holy."

The statement of this portion can be looked at from **two angles**.

- The **1st angle as discussed** is that we should pray with the thought in mind that the **Heavenly Father is holy** and therefore our comments should acknowledge that thought.
 - Our conversation with God in prayer is **open and truthful**, but it's not to be as conversations with men where people are **trite or manipulative**.
 - The first angle to this statement is to acknowledge the **hallowedness of the Father**
- The **2nd angle** to consider would be of **bringing honor to the Father's name**.
 - Obviously, we **can't increase the holiness of God**, but our actions do **shed light on God's holiness**.
 - Earlier in this same sermon Jesus instructed believers in Matthew 5:13-16 to be **salt and light** to the world.
 - The salt and light of the lived-out Christian life **exposes sin, purifies** the world, and **preserves** the world all of which **brings honor and glory** to name of God.
 - We, therefore, do not increase the hallowedness of the Father, but **expose the rest of the world** to the fact that He is holy.
 - By saying "hallowed be thy name" it is stating that we want to declare that fact about our Heavenly Father to the world.

The Rule of God

The third portion of Jesus' instructional prayer is found in **Matthew 6:10**, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

The principles from this portion dissect into the three phrases of the verse.

"Thy kingdom come" is a request or petition to God to **come and rule** this earth.

- This statement would have been **understood differently** by the **Jewish** believers who were with Jesus at the time of its delivery.
- Since this is **mentioned prior to Christ's death, burial and resurrection**, the earthly kingdom that they were thinking of was the understood kingdom that the Messiah would bring for Israel, which at that time would have been over the ruling **Roman Empire**.
- However, since the full revelation of the meaning of Christ's earthly ministry has now been revealed, **we can now pray for God's kingdom** to come as prophesied.
- We're praying for the **earthly kingdom** that is promised to come after the tribulation, known as the millennial kingdom where Christ will rule the earth prior to the final judgment.
- We're **also praying** for God's kingdom **to come spiritually**. The spiritual kingdom of God is filled with all those who have and will accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and thus this is also a prayer for evangelism.
- As Revelation 22:17b states, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."
- We could go as far as to say that the **prayer is binding us to help spread the message** of the kingdom of God.

The second phrase is **"thy will be done in earth"**.

Jesus was demonstrating two points in this phrase.

- 1st that **God has a specific will for the earth**.
- It does not take a long look through history to see God's hand of providence on the kingdoms of this world.

Do we believe that? Tomorrow's Proverb

- King Solomon stated in **Proverbs 21:1**, "The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."
 - o The **history of Israel** to prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ is a vivid example of God's will being performed. At the end of the Old Testament, Israel was a small nation dependent on their benefactors to allow them to rebuild in Jerusalem.
 - o **Over the next four centuries** God would introduce and remove the **Persian** and **Greek** Empires to make way for the rise of the **Roman** Empire, thus making the fulfillment of all the necessary prophecies concerning Christ's birth possible.
 - o **God definitely has a will for both nations and individuals.**

This prayer for God's will on earth is an **acknowledgement of His will**, but **also a surrender** to what that will might be.

- Is **God's will changed** because we don't acknowledge it?
- **No**, but **when we surrender** to that will it **changes us** and **gives us the opportunity** to put **our thoughts and actions in-line with God's direction**.
- Therefore, **this portion of the prayer changes us**.

The last portion of this statement, **"as it is in heaven"** deals with how God's will is to be done.

- **In heaven**, when God gives a command, it is assured that it will be **carried out** by the heavenly beings **to its fullest degree** without qualification as to why a portion of it could not be accomplished.
- That picture is typically **not seen in the life of Christians**.
- There are directions that we're given that may take time to decipher what God's intent might be, but there are **hundreds of instructions and principles** found in God's Word **that are clearly understood**, yet the we **don't carry them out** as it would be carried out in heaven.
- This phrase once again **reflects a change in heart** by us as to how the will of God will be fulfilled on earth.

Tonight – We've gone through the **first 3 portions** of the model prayer and we've **yet to ask God for a single thing**.

- We'll see that God definitely gives us **prayer to communicate our needs**, but as we saw tonight one of the **primary goals is to change us** – Our **thoughts, desires** and **perspective**.

As you pray this week, **go through these elements** and allow **God to speak** to your heart and mind.