

Lord, Teach us to Pray (Part 1)

“The approach to prayer”

Mt. 6:9-13

Introduction: Prayer is perhaps one of the most talked about, taught about, discussed, and misunderstood topics of the Christian life – yet it is also one of the most vital subjects in the Christian’s life. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Thes. 5:17 tells us to “*pray without ceasing.*” But we must know how to pray, for what to pray and be aware of what hinders our prayers, if we are ever going to experience the fullness of communing with God and the blessings of prayer. The half-brother of Jesus, James, tells us “*The effective, fervent (believing) prayer of a righteous man avails much.*” (James 5:16)

In this passage of scripture known as the Sermon on the Mount, and the one like it in Luke about prayer, is in answer to the request of Jesus disciples, (Lk. 11:1) “*Lord, teach us to pray...*”

In Mt. 6:9-13 Jesus does just that, and through His message, we gain some great insights into what Jesus taught His disciples about prayer:

1. Jesus is teaching something is required before we pray, in order

to pray properly: (vv.1-4) before Jesus teaches about prayer – He makes a point about a double standard: The Jews of Jesus day had developed a religious standard that was inadequate and short of God’s Kingdom standards. Showing them the contrast between, the world’s standards and God’s standards – He emphasizes, God’s standards are always right and true.

a. **The world has one standard way of doing things** (6:1)

b. **The word of God is where we find the standard of God** – (Rom. 8:26)

Dr. John McArthur writes, “*I believe the there are two ultimate tests of true spirituality: 1. is the study of God’s word and 2. Is prayer.* The study of God’s Word comes first because we don’t know how to pray unless we know what the Bible teaches us about God, His will for our lives and problems.

This is why we continually hear well-meaning Christians pray the following prayers and others like them:

“**Holy Spirit please be with us today.**” or “**God please send us your Holy Spirit.**” (Jn. 7:39; 1 Cor. 2:12; 3:16; 6:9; 12:13)

“**Oh Jesus please give me strength.**” (Phil. 4:13)

“**Lord be with us right now.**” (Mt. 28:20)

“**Oh, God give me your love or more love...**” (Rom. 5:5)

Prayer is so important and has such power – it is too valuable to be wasting it on praying for or asking for things we already have! *Jesus made a tremendous commitment to prayer* (Mk. 1:35; Mt. 14:23; Lk. 6:12) *No doubt this is what prompted the disciples to ask this question: (Lk.11:1) And He did...*

2. Jesus is teaching a “pattern” for prayer – not a model prayer:

This means there are things we should and should not do:

A. Things we shouldn’t do when we pray –

1. We should not recite this prayer as a prayer (v.7)
2. We should not pray like the hypocrites – (vv.5-8) (i.e.) to show off or present ourselves as “spiritual.”
3. We should not pray long “public” prayers - Jesus even taught against long prayers – (Mk.12:40) (We don’t need to impress God or men).
4. We should not pray prayers of vain repetition – (v.7)

B. Jesus said, there are some things we should do when we pray – Matthew 6:5-15

1. We should pray to our Father - (cf. John 1:18; 1 Tim 1:17) and (Matt 6:8)
2. We should pray so it is not "to be seen by men." In other words, our prayer is not for show!

Our prayer time, whenever, wherever we pray – Prayer is simply having an honest, intimate conversation with God our Father (regardless of who else may be listening).

3. Jesus is teaching a perspective of prayer –

This was not something new – it was a refresher course on something very old. The Old Testament Jews believed in prayer:

- a. They believed God wanted them to come to Him in prayer – (Ps. 145:18; 91:15) They came with absolute confidence *that God wanted them to come to Him.*
- b. They believed in the power of prayer – and they believed God would hear “all” their prayers – (Ps. 65:2)
- c. They believed prayer should be constant – They taught prayer was not just something one did when they were desperate, but rather, God’s people should pray all the time!
- d. They believed prayer ought to consist of certain elements:
 1. **Love and praise** (Ps. 34:2; 51:17)
 2. **Gratitude and thanksgiving** (Jonah 2:9)
 3. **A recognition of God’s Holiness** – (Isaiah 6)
 4. **A desire to please and obey God** – (Ps.119)
 5. **A confession of transgressions** and a pure heart – (Js. 5:16) (Ps. 24:3-4; 26:6)
 6. **Unselfishness** – *The Jews viewed prayer in a sense of community.*
 7. **Perseverance** – Deut. 3:26 – (2 Cor. 17:7,8)
 8. **Humility** – (Lk. 22:42)

Listen; prayer is not asking God to do my will; it is bringing myself into conformity with His will, and asking Him for the grace embrace it and enjoy it.

These folks were serious about their prayers! And we should be too...

Conclusion: Prayer is perhaps one of the most talked about, taught about, discussed, and misunderstood topics of the Christian life – yet it is also one of the most vital subjects in the Christian’s life.

Paul tells us in 1 Thes. 5:17 tells us to “*pray without ceasing.*” But we need to study scripture, so we know how and for what to pray. We need to avoid certain things when we pray – and we need to have the right perspective on prayer if we are to pray properly and powerfully.