

## How to Pray

**L**ET US PRAY the Lord's Prayer together:  
*"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

*"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*

*"Give us this day our daily bread.*

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

*"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."—Matthew 6:9-13.*

This prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray is an example of true prayer. It begins with adoration of God and praise to Him. It intercedes for the fulfillment of His promises for our daily needs and the forgiveness of our sins, for strength and victory in daily living. In closing it attributes glory and honor unto the Ruler of the universe, the Redeemer of men. Jesus Himself said:

*"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."—Luke 18:1.*

In this fast-moving age of ours men are waiting every day for a new victory of science over nature, a new theory, a new plan, a new prediction. Everyone is highway conscious. Why is it that we have forgotten the most important road of all? Through life, death, and the starlit spaces themselves, prayer is the highroad, the King's highway, but so few ever travel it.

In the story of Jacob and his dream at Bethel, we read of a ladder set up on the earth, whose top reached to heaven, with angels ascending and descending upon it. In this beautiful vision Jacob was encouraged to believe that heaven and earth are not really separated, but that there is a ladder, a highway, between man and God.

In 1850 celebrations were held in Europe and

America, when two continents separated by a great ocean were united by the first trans-Atlantic cable. When the great deluge of human sin first separated heaven and earth, God in His love laid a mighty cable of prayer, and never from that day to this has it been broken. Troubled hearts in this world communicate with the God of heaven, and messages of blessing, encouragement, and power come earthward.

Jesus Himself taught us the "Our Father," the *Pater Noster*. He taught us that the purpose of prayer is to glorify God.

*"Praise waiteth for thee, O God. . . .*

*"O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come."*—Psalm 65:1, 2.

Prayer involves not only adoration of God, but thanksgiving as we recognize the true character of the Lord and His constant manifestations of love and mercy to us as our Father. As the apostle put it:

*"In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving [notice that, with thanksgiving] let your requests be made known unto God."*—Philippians 4:6.

So often we make requests, but do not thank God for the things we have received—for another day of precious time, for life itself. God's authority is over all the universe and over us, for "his kingdom ruleth over all," we read in Psalm 103:19.

There are three kinds of petitions concerning our own welfare which are proper in prayer: (1) those that recognize God as the provider of all things; (2) petitions that confess our sinfulness and seek God's forgiveness; (3) prayers that recognize God as our hope and refuge against all the workings of evil.

Jesus practiced prayer in His life, and His words teach us to pray. The aim of His life and ministry was to bring men back to God through redemption and adoption as sons, so that His disciples might pray in His name. His incarnation, His suffering, His ministry as our high priest—all are for this purpose.

In what we call the Lord's Prayer there are

six petitions for spiritual blessings and only one for temporal wants. We need to remember this. The Lord's Prayer reveals Jesus Christ. Someone has said that He is in every word of it, and that it is the "condensed substance of all previous prayers."

What are the first words of the Lord's prayer? "Our Father which art in heaven." We are to address God as "our Father." It was the cross of Christ that made this prayer possible. Jesus said:

*"I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."*—John 20:17.

The apostle Paul speaks of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:17.)

*"Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."*—Romans 8:15.

The word *Abba*, of course, means "Father." The meaning is almost like the word children often use for Father—*Daddy*. It is only through Christ and the redemption of the cross that we can really call God our Father. The Saviour died for us. He took our place, and we took His place as sons of God. Now we have also become the sons of God through faith.

We come now to the first petition: "Hallowed be thy name." Jesus said:

*"I am come in my Father's name."*—John 5:43.

How do we treat the name of God? How about our language? Do we ever profane that name or take it in vain? It is not only by our words, but also by our acts that we profane or hallow the name of God.

The second petition: "Thy kingdom come." Jesus is revealed as the King. He said:

*"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, . . . but now is my kingdom not from hence."*—John 18:36.

But His kingdom will come, as we read in Matthew 25:31:

*"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory."*

It is for this kingdom that we pray in the Lord's Prayer.

Third petition: "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Jesus is the only One who has ever fulfilled God's will perfectly. He said:

*"Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God."*—Hebrews 10:7.

*"I seek . . . the will of the Father."*—John 5:30.

*"I came down from heaven . . . to do . . . the will of him that sent me."*—John 6:38.

Through His petition the will of God will be done on earth and find its full realization when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth "as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:9.

Fourth petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." Jesus said:

*"I am the living bread which came down from heaven."*—John 6:51.

Our daily bread includes not only the food we eat, but also the spiritual food that builds up and strengthens our souls.

Fifth petition: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We all need forgiveness. It is written:

*"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."*—1 John 2:1.

And again:

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*—1 John 1:9.

God forgives us because Jesus has paid our debt upon the cross. In this petition we see the sufferings of Christ and His death for our redemption.

The sixth petition: "Lead us not into temptation." We need to remember that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15. His sympathy for us is complete. He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Hebrews 4:15. When Satan desires to have us sifted as wheat, Jesus prays for us that our faith fail not. (Luke 22:31, 32.)

Seventh petition: "Deliver us from evil." Jesus won the victory on the cross. He said:

*"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."*—John 12:32.

*"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."*—Verse 31.

Jesus is the victor in the great controversy between good and evil. He will bruise Satan's head at last, for He came not only to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), but to destroy the devil himself. (Hebrews 2:14.)

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." This reminds us of the words of the great prophecy of Revelation 11:15, when—

*" . . . the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."*

"Amen." Jesus Christ takes this name. In the book of Revelation (3:14) we read these words:

*"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."*

Friends, we need to study this prayer that Jesus gave us, for it is a model and part of His teaching. However, the Saviour said much more on the subject of prayer. For example:

*"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."*

*"If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."*—John 14:13, 14.

Here Jesus is speaking to true believers who pray in His name and according to His will.

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."*—John 16:23.

To pray in the name of Christ means more than merely mentioning His name at the beginning and ending of the prayer. It means to pray with the mind and spirit of Jesus, relying upon His promises and His grace, and working His works. Praying in Christ's name means praying for things that will promote His kingdom on earth. It means that we are seeking what He

seeks. To come in Christ's name asking for selfish and worldly desires is absurd.

True prayer demands true faith.

*"For he that cometh to God must believe that he is [that is, that He exists], and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*—Hebrews 11:6.

True prayer involves submission to the revealed will of God, for it is written:

*"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."*—Proverbs 28:9.

Real prayer means a willingness to forsake all known sins. In Psalm 66:18 we read:

*"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*

Prayer must be earnest. We must not give up too soon. Jesus said:

*"Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"*—Luke 18:7.

True prayer must be accompanied with the spirit of forgiveness. Jesus said:

*"If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."*—Mark 11:26.

True prayer is not only in public, but in private. Jesus said:

*"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."*—Matthew 6:6.

We need to open and close every day with prayer. Not only should we talk to God, but we should listen for Him to speak to our hearts in meditation. This may be illustrated by the words of Samuel, who as a boy heard the voice of God and said:

*"Speak; for thy servant heareth."*—1 Samuel 3:10.

Our prayers should not be proud prayers.

*"When thou prayest [Jesus said], thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to*

*pray . . . that they may be seen of men.*"—Matthew 6:5.

Jesus stressed three ingredients of real prayer: First, it is to be conditional. We approach God on a condition, and that condition is threefold: (1) We must have clean hearts; we cannot cling to idols. (2) We must believe that God can and will answer prayer. (3) We must be obedient.

*"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."*—1 John 3:22.

Second, prayer is costly. It means a surrendered heart; it takes earnestness; it takes time. We are to be in the spirit of prayer all the time. We can pray while we work, while we walk, while we drive, while we sit at our desks.

Third, prayer is victorious. It conquers in spite of circumstances. It will conquer not only in our own lives, but in the lives of others.

*"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death."*—1 John 5:16.

We need power if others need help. If the work of God needs victory, let us pray.

*"Ask, and ye shall receive."*—John 16:24.

Let us not limit God by our unbelief or hold back the blessings that would come upon the world if we prayed for God's work and God's workers.

*"Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker. Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me."*—Isaiah 45:11.

If we should attempt to quote all the things that Jesus said about prayer and all that the Bible says about prayer, we would take much more time than that available for this broadcast. Let us never forget that, above all else, God desires to answer the prayers of His friends. Jesus said:

*"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?"*

*"Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?"*

*"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"—Luke 11:11-13.*

Then why do we not ask? A father loves to give good things to his children. He receives more joy in giving than the children do in receiving them.

So it is with God; He longs to give. The trouble is that we do not pray much, we do not ask, we do not beseech Him for the gifts we need. To illustrate this, Jesus told the story of a man who went to his friend at midnight and said: "Lend me three loaves. A traveler who needs refreshment has come to my home." But the response was: "Don't bother me. The children are all in bed. I can't get up and help you now." But the man kept asking, he kept requesting. So his friend finally got up in the cold night and gave him the bread. By this parable-story Jesus illustrates the constancy, the earnestness, so necessary in true prayer. We mean business in other things. Why not in prayer?

When we pray in faith we should leave our worries and problems in the hands of God. He understands them all and does not want us to carry the burdens of the world. Jesus has carried them, and He is watching over us.

Hall Caine, a well-known British author, tells the story of a bishop who was riding along a road on the Isle of Man and saw a convict on his knees breaking stones on the road. The bishop stopped to give some encouragement and advice to the poor fellow. When he was about to leave him, he said, "I wish I could break up the stony hearts of my people as you are breaking up those rocks." The convict looked up at the ecclesiastic and replied, "Perhaps you could, Sir, if you would work on your knees."

Sometimes when God answers our prayers He does not answer them in the way we expect or hope, but always in the way that is best for us. Read the Holy Scriptures through and you will



be encouraged to pray. See what God did for Job when he prayed. (Job 42:10.) Some other outstanding characters who prayed are Jacob (Genesis 32), Moses (Psalm 90), Hannah (1 Samuel 1 and 2), David (2 Samuel 22), and Daniel (Daniel 9).

What did Jesus say about agreeing in prayer?

*"I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.*

*"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*—Matthew 18:19, 20.

Try it friend, get together with two or three who love the Lord and who agree in the Spirit, and pray. You will find great blessing in this.

Jesus is our example. He prayed. His life was a life of prayer. He prayed during His ministry. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed on the cross. The disciples were so impressed by His prayer life that they said, "Lord, teach us to pray." Luke 11:1. He will teach us to pray also, and our lives will be victorions.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!  
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;  
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,  
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;  
We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!  
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,  
Or others—that we are not always strong—  
That we are sometimes overborne with care—  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled—when with us is prayer,  
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee.  
—Archbishop Trench

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Have faith in God—  
For Him to do and dare;  
Have faith in God—  
To serve Him everywhere;  
Have faith in God—  
And so find power in prayer.  
Have faith, dear friend, in God.