

Do You Pray the Lord's Prayer?

Perhaps one of the most well known passages of scripture is found in Matthew 6:9-13. It is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." Many people have taken the time to memorize this prayer and it is used throughout many religious groups in their worship services.

I would like for us to consider in this article the point Jesus was making in Matthew 6. Did Jesus mean for people to recite these exact words every Sunday in their worship service? Or perhaps there was another reason Jesus said these things. As I drive to the church building on Sunday morning I listen to some "religious radio." Every Sunday at least one or two of the speakers has their congregation recite the "Lord's Prayer." Are they simply following Christ's commands or have they missed His point?

I would encourage you to read the beginning 8 verses that lead up to the Lord's prayer. Like any other passage, we will not understand the meaning and the intent until we look at the context. A couple of things should stand out in your reading of Matthew 6:1-8. First, Jesus is warning His disciples to NOT practice righteousness in order to be seen by men (vs. 1). Second, three subject matters are under consideration: Giving (vss. 2-5), praying (vss. 6-15) and fasting (vss. 16-18). So, as we think about what Jesus said concerning prayer, it has to be understood in light of vs. 1.

Let's look at some of the guidelines Jesus talks about in regards to prayer. In verse 5, Jesus gives us an example of how some people were praying. They would stand on the street corners and in the synagogues to pray. Jesus calls them 'hypocrites.' Their purpose in praying was not to be heard by God but to be seen by men. Obviously this was not the right attitude or method in praying, as Jesus said they would have their reward in full.

In verse 6, Jesus gives us an example of the correct way to go to God in prayer. Did Jesus mean you could only pray in the inner room? No, He is making the point that prayer is between the individual and God. It has absolutely nothing to do with being seen by others. The Father will reward the one who does not make a spectacle of himself when he prays.

In verses 7-8, Jesus addresses the words we use when we pray. The Gentiles would say very long prayers and would be very repetitious. They thought God would hear them more because they used more words. Such was not the case. The point of prayer is not to try and impress God with our grip of the language. Neither is God going to hear us better if we use a lot of "Thee's" and "Thou's." He won't listen to us more if we use all the real nice phrases that we have picked up over the years. God knows what we need even before we ask! We have just to ask.

Now that brings us to Jesus' prayer. What exactly is the point Jesus is getting across in this prayer? Jesus' prayer contains the basic elements that should be used when we pray.

Praise: *"Hallowed be Thy name."*

God's Will: *"Thy will be done."*

Needs: *"Give us this day our daily bread."*

Forgiveness: *"forgive us our debts..."*

Help with temptation: *"do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil."*

These are the basic ingredients for prayer. Now, are we to pray this particular prayer everyday or on every Sunday?? No, that's not what Jesus' point is. This is, in fact, A model FOR prayer and not THE model OF prayer.

I will close with telling you another reason why we should not be praying this exact prayer today. It is because we should not be praying for the Kingdom to come ("Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done"). The Kingdom is already here!! Certainly it wasn't when Jesus spoke these words but since then it has been established. Look at **Mark 9:1**, *"And He was saying to them, **Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.**"* Some of the people that Jesus was talking to would be alive to see the kingdom of God come. If it is still yet to come, there are some very old people walking around today! Jesus told the apostles that they would receive "power" when the Holy Spirit came upon them. (Acts 1:8) We see the fulfillment of this in Acts 2.

More proof is shown from Paul's writings. **Col. 1:13**, *"For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."* Those who have followed God's plan for becoming a Christian are no longer in Satan's domain but in the Kingdom of God!

The Lord's prayer is short and simple but yet full of lessons for us to learn about prayer. He never expected us to recite it verbatim. If anything, this would fall under the heading of "meaningless repetition" that He condemned in verse 7. Let's be careful to always study the context of scripture so we do not pervert its meaning and application.

– Shane Williams