

The Model Prayer

A former Archbishop said: *"People tell me that answers to prayer are merely coincidences. I can only reply that when I pray coincidences happen, and when I stop praying they stop happening."* Someone else once wrote, *"If a matter is not serious enough to pray about, then it's not serious enough to worry about; and if it is serious enough to pray about, and you have prayed, then there is no need to worry about it."*

Turn with me to **Matthew 6** and let's read **verses 9-13** together....

This is the Model Prayer. It is God's priorities in 63 words. In general, there are three things that we may observe, concerning this divine prayer:

- First, that it contains all we can reasonably and realistically pray for. There is nothing which we have need for, nothing which we can ask for (without offending God), that is not included, either directly or indirectly, in this comprehensive outline for prayer.
- Second, that it contains all we can reasonably and realistically desire. That is, whatever is for the glory of God, and whatever is needful or profitable for all. And indeed, our prayers are the proper test of our desires. What we may not pray for, neither should we desire! What we are not at liberty to pray for, we are not at liberty to desire!
- Third, that it contains all our duty and service to God and man: That is, whatever things are pure and holy; whatever God requires of us; whatever is acceptable in His sight; and whatever may profit our neighbour. Such things are all expressed or implied in this passage.

In these five verses we have what is called "**The Lord's Prayer**." However, when using this title we should remember that Jesus never prayed it Himself. It was given to His disciples as a 'model' after which they could pattern their daily prayers. It was not given as the exact words they were to use when praying (verse 7 rules this out), because many words repeated by memory become just empty babbling. The Lord's Prayer is the model prayer. It's an outline for personal worship, intercession, petition, warfare and praise, and it covers 7 major topics. Each topic representing a basic human need.

(1) **The Paternal Need** - "***Our Father...***" A basic human need to have intimacy with the very person who's seed brought about your existence. Jesus relates this to God as the Father of all creation. However, "*our Father*", more than anything, reveals a new note of familiarity with Yahweh. A connection between God and His creation that's founded on love but grounded on intimacy. **Romans 8:15** confirms this, "*For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry 'Abba, Father'.*" The Holy Spirit grants us subjective assurance that we are children of God. Note, Abba is an Aramaic word for Father, however, it denotes intimate familiarity, and it is probably best translated "Daddy." Therefore, when you pray, all your needs are met through the generosity of a loving Daddy.

Remember, the paternal need embraces mother, brother and sister. "*Our Father...*" When you became a

Christian you became part of a world-wide family – the church. In Christ, everyone has the same Father.

Ephesians 4:6 says, “*One God and Father of all.*” St Augustine said, “*You cannot have God as your Father without having the Church as your mother.*”

“**Our Father in heaven...**” Prayer should be addressed to God the Father in acknowledgement of His sovereignty over the universe. **Psalm 66:5, 7** declares, “*Come and see the mighty works of God; He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men... We will rejoice in Him, for He rules by His power forever. His eyes observe the nations*”

(2) **The Father’s Presence** - “**Hallowed be Your name...**” “*Hallowed be,*” establishes the principle of prayer on the precept of worship. It unveils the importance of inviting God’s presence into your prayers through worship. “*God inhabits the praises of His people*” (**Psalm 100:4**). Praying to the Father demands:

- (a) that you engage a heart that’s full of adoration;
- (b) that you pray with an expressive heart;
- (c) that your heart yearns to draw near to Him.

It simply means having a heart of worship! David, in Psalm 63, rejoiced in the presence of God saying, “*Oh God. You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory.*” Therefore, you too should remember to begin your prayers with worship, ascribing praise and honour to Him who is so worthy. Praising God for who He is and thanking God for what He’s done!

(3) **The Father’s Priorities** - “**Your kingdom come...**” After worship, you should pray for the advancement of the Father’s cause. Declaring His kingdom priorities - putting His interests first. You should be praying that His kingdom “values” shall be established in yourself, your loved ones, your church and your nation. **Romans 14:17** declares, “*For the kingdom of God is not eating or drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*” The Father’s priorities are also His will. “**Your will be done...**” As you pray that His kingdom values are established in your life, you must acknowledge that God knows what is best and surrender your will to His. This in turn expresses a longing to see His will revealed throughout the world.

“**On earth as it is in heaven...**” A phrase that refines all three preceding petitions concerning God’s priorities and purpose. The worship of God, the sovereign rule by God, and the performance of His will, are all a reality in heaven. Your prayer is therefore, that the same conditions may exist on earth as they do in heaven. So that heavenly affections will extend beyond your personal life and into your home, relationships and into the structures of society. Why? Because this is the Father’s heart - it’s His priority for you and me.

(4) **The Father’s Provision** - “**Give us this day our daily bread...**” After placing God’s interests first you are now permitted to present your own needs. “*Give us this day our daily bread...*” Jesus, who is fully committed to meeting your every need, tells you to pray daily - asking the Father to supply all your needs. However, in **Luke 11:11** Jesus says this, “*If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? (verse 13) “... If you then, being carnal, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more*

will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Implying that the Holy Spirit is the best gift you can receive because your primary needs are "spiritual." However, lesser gifts are also available and can be freely asked for.

The Father-heart of God desires to bless His children and He delights in their prosperity. So be assured, God will respond every time you ask something of Him "in Jesus name." Ask and you will receive!

Praying this way confirms your total dependence on God for your daily food - both spiritual and physical. But please note, "daily bread" represents your immediate 'needs' and not your convenient 'wants'. Therefore, in prayer, you must differentiate between what you 'want' and what you 'need', for they are entirely different.

(5) **The Father's Forgiveness** - ***"And forgive us..."*** You are in need of God's forgiveness but you also need to forgive others. Therefore, your daily goal should be to walk in love and forgiveness, and your prayers should always reflect this. God holds you fully accountable because He first forgave - He took the initiative when you were still in your sin. In a family setting, this verse refers to the parental forgiveness that is very necessary if fellowship with the Father is to be maintained. If you are unwilling to forgive your brothers and sisters, then how can you expect to have fellowship with the Father (who has freely forgiven you).

Forgiveness is qualified by your readiness to forgive personal grievances. Forgiveness is one of the most personal actions you can choose to take. What's interesting is that the Greek work for "debtor" has nothing to do with finances. A "debtor" is someone who owes a moral obligation - a moral transgressor. It's someone who has violated the code of ethics; failing in performance. A delinquent! Hence, you are directed to pray that God forgives you for violating His commandments. But only as you forgive others for breaking their moral obligations toward you. In fact, God is saying that He will set you free when and if you set others free!

(6) **The Father's Protection** - ***"And lead us not into temptation..."*** Or, 'lead us away from all our own evil desires'. This petition expresses a healthy distrust of your own ability to resist temptation and to stand up under trials. It acknowledges complete dependence on the Father for protection and preservation. Especially in the face of temptation!

However, the first thing you need to understand is that temptation is quite normal - it happens to everybody. We are all in the same boat. It is therefore, how you respond to temptation that matters and not the temptation itself.

"But deliver us from the evil one..." This is a heart-cry for daily salvation from the power of satan in your life. It is the prayer of all who desperately desire to be protected against evil by the power of God. So pray a hedge of protection around yourself and your loved ones, and verbally put on the whole armour of God - and do it every day!

(7) **The Father's Partnership** - ***"For yours is the kingdom..."*** This represents divine partnership. End your prayers by praising God for sharing His kingdom, power and glory with you (**2 Timothy 4:18**). In **John 17:22**, Jesus declares, *"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one as We are one."* By ending every prayer time with an acknowledgement that you are a "joint heir" with Jesus, then you remind yourself of the awesome authority you have in Christ. **Romans 8:17** states, *"And if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."*

“For your is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever” - the sovereign right over all things that are or ever were created. Yes, His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endures throughout all ages. **“The power”** — the executive power whereby He governs all things in His everlasting kingdom, whereby He does whatever is pleasing to Him, in all places of His dominion. **“And the glory”** — the praise due from every creature, for His power, and the mightiness of His kingdom, and for all His wondrous works which He works from everlasting to everlasting. And shall do, **“for ever and ever! Amen!”** So be it!

I'd like to end by focusing on a statement Jesus made at the beginning of this the Model Prayer....

Jesus' words **“Your kingdom come”** are more than a suggestion to pray for a distant millennial day, because everything in this pray is in fact current! As mentioned, this prayer is not a formula for repetition so as it is an outline for expansion. Worship is to be longer than a sentence. Our petitions are not to be confined to bread. Forgiveness is to be requested in specifics, not generalities. And prayer for the entry of God's kingdom into present earthborn situations is not accomplished in a *momentary utterance*. *The verb, mood and tense of “Your kingdom come”* essentially says, *“Father let Your kingdom come here and now!”*

Such prayerful intervention is called prevailing prayer! Motivation toward such prayer occurs when we recognise the importance Jesus placed on prayer. Without the intervention of God's kingdom rule through prayer, earth's circumstances will succumb to inevitable negative consequences. Diverse scenes of human need must be penetrated by God's “will” - “here on earth as it is heaven.” Either the weakness of man's rule (the flesh) or the viciousness of the devil's works will prevail.

God's power alone can change things and bring heaven's rule instead. However, praying is ours to do - this is our responsibility. Unless we ask for the intervention of His kingdom and obey His prayer-lessons, nothing is going to change. All “kingdom ministry” begins with, is sustained by, and will triumph through, **prevailing prayer**.

Father, let Your kingdom come!