

Living Word Fellowship Church

Pastor Paul Canings, Ph.D.

Christ Teaching on Prayer

I. Introduction

The disciples' relationship with Christ had grown significantly; they had been through much together. However, when Christ said He was leaving, they were left them bewildered. They had forsaken everything to follow Christ, and now, with nothing left (Matt. 19:27-30), Christ announced His departure. To comfort them, He explained that He was going to prepare a place for them, and at the same time, He reminded them of the importance of keeping Him as the pivotal focus of their lives (Jn. 14:6). This proved critical, because He is the only way they can know 'the Father.' For the disciples, being Jews who knew God historically, this was everything. Furthermore, since Christ had established that He and the Father are one (Jn. 10:29-30; demonstrated through supernatural, powerful works), and was now going to the Father, Philip asked to see the Father. This moment was especially significant, as Christ also informed them that they would face much tribulation (Jn. 16:33), even after having already endured many trials with Christ. Therefore, their continual surrender to Christ manifesting their love for Him (Jn. 14:15), would connect them to God and guarantees answered prayer (15:1-10).

Being connected to the Father is everything, especially for a Jew, because everything they did in the temple, the three hundred laws of Moses that became their culture - was about remaining engaged with the Father. For example, prayer, as we see in the life of Daniel, was a critical means of remaining before God, especially under Roman oppression. With the coming of Christ, however their connection to God – and thus their prayer life reaches a whole new level. Through Christ, who now goes to the Father to sit at God's right as an Intercessor, they can have a more intimate, deeper relationship with God, ensuring at a greater level communion. This is why we can now call God 'Papa' (Romans 8:15), a name Jewish leaders and followers would never have thought to use because of the intimacy it represents.

Christ teaches us how this works in three passages; Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:5-13, Luke 18:1-8; John 14:8-15; 16:23-24. Let's take a look.

II. Prayer Taught by Christ

A. Matthew 6:9-13 – **How to Pray?** – Popularly known as “the Lord's Prayer”:

1. Food for thought:

I have never met anyone who let their gas tank run empty without making time to stop and refuel. Yet many Christians have been spiritually empty for years and still struggle to make time for private prayer. We understand the necessity of fueling our vehicles but often overlook the necessity of fueling our souls. Prayer is the believer's lifeline to God and the source of enduring strength.

2. Introduction to this passage:

The Jews characteristically prayed at three times each day (Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10). Christ was not condemning all public prayer; rather, He was condemning hypocritical prayer. A hypocrite is like an actor whose prayer is performed for the applause and admiration of others instead of being a sincere

conversation with God. Sincerity (John 4:24) in worship is what Christ desires from His disciples. Likewise, Christ warned against meaningless repetitions in prayer. Such repetition involved the heaping-up of empty phrases, motivated by a spirit of fear and designed to inform and then placate the pagan deities (1 Kings 18:25-29).

3. Background for this Passage:

- a) "Jewish people commonly addressed God as "Our heavenly Father" when they prayed, although such intimate titles as "Abba" (Papa) were rare. One standard Jewish prayer of the day (the Kaddish) proclaimed, "Exalted and hallowed be his name and may his kingdom come speedily and soon." ¹
 - I. "Abba" is the *Aramaic word for "Papa," a term of great intimacy and affectionate respect. It was normally the first word a child would utter, but adults could use it for their father as well, and students sometimes used it for their teachers." ²
- b) "Jewish prayers recognized that God's name would be "hallowed, or "sanctified," "shown holy," in the time of the end, when his *kingdom would come, as the Bible also said (Is. 5:16; 29:23; Ezek. 36:23; 38:23; 39:7,27; Zech 14:9). In the present God's people could hallow his name by living rightly; if they lived wrongly, they would "profane" his name or bring it into disrepute among the nations (Ex. 20:7; Jer. 34:16; 44:25-26; Ezek. 13:19; 20:14; Amos 2:7)." ³
- c) "Most people in the Palestine of Jesus' day either worked their own fields or served others as day laborers. A worker was paid a denarius for his work at the end of each day. With that denarius he bought food for his family, oil for the household lamp, and other necessities. That denarius, which was a typical day's wage, was barely enough to cover those daily expenses." ⁴
- d) "This verse alludes to God's provision of "daily bread" (manna) for his people in the wilderness after he first redeemed them. Prayers for God to supply one's basic needs of which bread and water are the ultimate examples-were common in the ancient world (Prov. 30:8)." ⁵
- e) "Jewish teaching regarded sins as "debts" before God; the same Aramaic word could be used for both. Biblical law required the periodic forgiveness of monetary debtors (in the seventh and fiftieth years), so the illustration of forgiving debts would have been a graphic one (especially since Jewish lawyers had found a way to circumvent the release of debts so that creditors would continue to lend)." ⁶
- f) "The principle of forgiveness that Jesus states here seems to be that only people of grace know how to accept grace." ⁷

4. Commentary:

- a) Before the Lord provides the format for prayer, He takes time **to explain the attitude** by which we should approach the throne of grace. Not like the hypocrites "*But you, when you pray, go into your*

¹ Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Mt 6:9–10). InterVarsity Press.

² Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Mt 6:9–10). InterVarsity Press.

³ Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Mt 6:9–10). InterVarsity Press.

⁴ Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Mt 6:9–10). InterVarsity Press.

⁵ Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Mt 6:9–10). InterVarsity Press.

⁶ Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Mt 6:9–10). InterVarsity Press.

⁷ Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Mt 6:9–10). InterVarsity Press.

inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” (Matt 6:6; NASU) Notice, He that does not say, “close our eyes,” “clasp our hands,” or “kneel down.”

- b) Bowing before God is an expression of respect, worship and adoration. It is not required. When we come to grips with who He is, we would want to build an altar like Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- c) The Lord does not say or imply that He is expecting us to follow this prayer word for word.
- d) There are seven steps in ‘The Lord’s prayer.’ The first part of the prayer is focused on who God is, and the second part of the prayer are petitions for our daily concerns.
- e) ‘Our Father’:
 - I. Interestingly, Christ does not say ‘My Father’. We are now in Christ (Eph. 2:6), so God is our Father, so much so that we can call Him Papa (Romans 8:15). Even though it is inclusive, it is exclusive to all those who are not saved (Jn. 9:31).
 - II. Thus Christ expressly announced, *“I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God”* (John 20:17).
 - This is why God views us as His children (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:14-17; Phil. 2:15; 1 Jn. 3:1-2).
 - III. He is the One who provided us salvation through a spiritual birth that is eternal (Jn. 1:13; 3:16; Eph. 1:5).
 - IV. He is superior to us all.
- f) “Who art in heaven” – shows God’s power, majesty, and supreme sovereign nature. *“But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased”* (Ps. 115:3).
- g) Hallowed be Thy name:
 - I. ‘Hallowed’ is English terminology, but it means to sanctify His name for sacred use. This is why we are told not to take the Lord’s name in vain (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). God’s name must be revered, adored, and glorified. It must be held in the utmost respect. “
 - a) Christ teaches us how important this is, as explained in John 14:11-15; 16:23-24 (discussed later).
 - b) There are several passages that explain why His name is important. Here are a few of them:
 - Phil 2:9-11; NASU
 - Acts 4:12; NASU
 - Eph 1:20-23; NASU
 - 1 John 5:14-15; NASU
 - II. God’s names represent the many attributes He displays:
 - a) “Yahweh” (Lord0 – “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14-15); God’s covenant name.
 - b) “El-shaddai” is God Almighty, the source of salvation for His people (Gen. 17:1; Exod. 6:3).
 - c) “Elohim” (Gen. 1:1) is a plural and refers to God in the fullness of His power.
 - d) “Elyon” indicates the Most High (Num. 24:16).

- e) **“Adonai”** points to God as Master (properly "my Master") or Lord: "O, Lord I am not a man of words" (Ex. 4:10). T
- f) The meaning of the name **Jehovah** is to some extent explained in Exod. 3:13, 14; 6:2,3. It is a form of the verb *to be* and has been interpreted to mean "I am that I am," or "I shall be what I shall be." In the original Hebrew, this word consists of the four letters. Various combinations occur in connection with this name:

- Probably most familiar are the designations "Jehovah of host" (Ps. 46:7,11)
- "Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6).
- "Jehovah will provide" (Gen. 22:14)
- "Jehovah (is) my banner" (Ex. 17:15)
- "Jehovah heals you" (Ex. 15:26)
- "Jehovah (is) peace" (Jud. 6:24)
- "Jehovah (is) my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1).

h) **Thy kingdom come:**

- i. *“Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21; NASU)*

- a) By the words "Thy Kingdom," to distinguish sharply the Kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan (Matt. 12:25-28), which is a kingdom of darkness and disorder.
- b) Thy kingdom come represents God’s universal rule over all creatures and things (1 Chron. 29:11).
- c) God’s kingdom is present through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:3-4; Titus 3:4-8) as we live in “heavenly places.” (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12).

- Jesus answered, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5; NASU)
- *Jesus answered them, "**To you** it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted."* (Matt 13:11; NASU)

- d) God’s kingdom is future - *"Let the Day be hastened when Satan and his hosts shall be completely vanquished, when They people shall be completely vanquished, when They people shall be done with sinning forever, and when Christ "shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11).*

i) **"Thy Will be done in earth, as it is in heaven":**

- God’s desires that we be obedient to His Word (John 15:1-13; Col. 3:17).
- How we obey must be based on what the kingdom of God requires of us as outlined in verses 9-10.
- The Lord’s prayer begins and ends with this focus: *“Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”* (Matt. 6:13)