

When You Pray

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Matthew 6:9

Have you ever done something so often, repeated this action time and time again that you could do it in your sleep? It is so ingrained in you that you just go into autopilot. This happened to me just yesterday. I was driving to the church to drop something off. I had my brother-in-law with me. As we came to Oak Hill and St. George, instead of going straight, I turned left. I was headed to the airport. That's the route I normally take. I realized my mistake as I entered the parking lot of Tristate Aero. How about you? Give me some examples of times this has happened to you.

Similar along those lines we are talking about the Lord's prayer today. This is an example that some folks repeat so frequently that they don't understand the meaning. They do it so often that they don't know why they do it they just do. This morning I want to address the beginning of this prayer - Matthew 6:9 - the very beginning. I would like to read Matthew 6:1-13. This will give us context for our discussion today.

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your 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. And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Keith did an excellent job last week of walking us through and teaching us the beginning of Matthew 6. We saw Jesus warning against those perversions that had so corrupted Jewish prayer life. Today we will see how our Lord gives kingdom citizens a divine pattern that we can use to pray in a way that is pleasing to God.

Jesus' prayer is meant to be a model or skeleton:

1. Use it to flesh out praise, adoration, petitions in our own words
2. Not a substitute, but a guide for our prayers

The fact that his is not simply meant to be repeated as a prayer itself is clear:

1. Introduced "Pray, then, in this way"
 - a. Houtos oun means literally, "Thus therefore,
 - b. "along these lines" or "in the following manner"
2. Jesus just warned not to pray with "meaningless repetition" v. 7
3. No where in NT do we see any prayer said repetitious, ritualistic manner by a group

The focus is on God, on His adoration, worthiness, and glory:

It's affirming God's sovereignty, righteousness, and majesty and seeking to conform our desires and our purposes to His will and glory.

Prayer is something we are called to do unceasingly:

1. It's best we know how to do it properly
2. Our Lord teaches us to pray

Notice what he doesn't teach us:

1. Christ doesn't teach us about the posture of prayer
 - a. Any posture will do
 - b. Standing, sitting, kneeling, bowing down, etc.
2. Christ doesn't teach us about the place of prayer
 - a. 1st Timothy says "Let men pray everywhere"
 - b. In the Bible we see prayer in a garden, in the street, in the temple, in house, in a fish, etc.
3. Christ doesn't teach us about the time of prayer
 - a. Paul teaches us to "Praying always...."
 - b. In Scripture people prayed - morning, at night, at bedtime, at the ninth hour, etc.

Because prayer is meant to be open communion with God that goes on at all times.

Prayer allows God to display His majesty. He uses it to bring my life into harmony with His will.

Psalm 86:6-12 illustrates this very well.

With this in mind go back to Matthew 6. Let me close our thoughts this morning by summing all this up. What does it mean that God is our Father? What does it mean that we can go to Him as Father?

1. It means the end of fear
2. It provides hope
3. It ends loneliness
4. It does away with selfishness because He's our Father
5. It provides infinite heavenly resources, because He's our Father in heaven
6. It demands obedience
7. It declares wisdom