

Refine Women's Ministry
Seasons of Prayer
When You Pray, Say - Part 1
October 23, 2019 by Ann Malm

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with [an attitude of] thanksgiving;”
Colossians 4:2

“I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.” Psalm 138:2

“...nothing is more important, and nothing more important to maintain, than a personal prayer life—an approach to prayer that would be diligent, sustained, organized, Spirit-filled, and one that engaged in would give to us the sense that we are actually doing what the Bible had bid us do. The reason this is so important is because prayer is really the key expression of the fact that a man or a woman has a living, personal relationship with God. Some of us have wondered why it is that prayer is so difficult to be established and to maintain and it is because it is the very pinpoint of spiritual warfare. For the Evil One knows that he needs to fear the response of the Father to the prayers of his children, and therefore he seeks to so work in our experience that we will leave off the issue of prayer, or, if we do determine to pray, that we will pray in such a way that our prayers are just mechanical, they are careless, casual, and we may even say that they are purposeless—that we have established a pattern whereby we are going through things, and we're halfway into the business before we recognize that our minds are not even engaged in what is going on and our hearts seem to be so removed from that which we're endeavoring to say.” Alistair Begg

When, Where:

“But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.” Luke 5:16

“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.” Mar 1:35

“[Jesus] ever lives in the Spirit, and always seeks to bring the Father pleasure. So He leaves the faces of people and seeks the grace of the Father.”¹

How, What:

Luke 6:28 - pray for your enemies

Luke 10:2 - pray for the Lord of the harvest to send our laborers

Luke 11:13 - pray for the Holy Spirit

Luke 18:1 - don't get discouraged, but continue to pray

Luke 21:36 - stand firm and alert by praying, pray for strength and faith to endure

Matthew 6:5-15

¹ Dr. Jim Rosscup, *An Exposition on Prayer*, 2011 (AMG Publishers)

The Wrong Way:

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward." (v.5) This is an example of prayer being practiced to impress others. The focus is self. In this case, Jesus is clear that your reward is the applause or adoration of others and you cannot expect any further reward from God.

The Right Way: In secret. Your prayers should be from your heart and for God's ears.

The Wrong Way:

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (v.7-8) Prayer is not an incantation or a spell. The example here of "as the Gentiles do" is using empty phrases repeatedly. Pagans would repeat the names of their gods or the same words without thinking. It is a prohibition against "mindless mechanical repetition".²

We are not immune to prayerless praying. "A heartless performance, a senseless routine, a dead habit, a hasty, careless performance, it justifies nothing. Prayerless praying has no life, gives no life, is dead, breathes out death."³

The Right Way:

"Prayer is faith passing into act - a union of the will and intellect being realized in an intellectual act. It is the whole man that prays. Less than this is wishing or lip service, a sham or a mummerly."⁴

Praying from the heart is pleasing to God. Prayer that pleases God has the elements of dependence on God's grace and a childlike faith.

"God prefers realism to ritualism. Real prayer is far better than mere ritual because there is meaning in it. When grace is absent, there is no meaning in ritual. It is as senseless as a fool's game."⁵

John 4:23, "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him."

Real prayer:

- Has meaning
- Has spiritual life
- Recognizes God
- Has sincerity
- Has humility
- Has faith - Spurgeon

² ESV Study Bible, (Crossway, 2008)

³ E.M. Bounds, *E.M. Bounds on Prayer*, p.77 (Whitaker House, 1997)

⁴ Richard Cecil, *E.M. Bounds on Prayer* p.71

⁵ C. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon on Prayer and Spiritual Warfare*, p.132 ((Whitaker House, 1998)

God isn't going to be impressed or manipulated by what you say. Because, "...your Father knows what you need before you ask him." God will not be manipulated by your many words. He knows what we NEED. (Matthew 6:32)

"We are not to prescribe but subscribe to God." Matthew Henry

"The first passion of prayer is a passion that God's will may be done, that God's heart may be satisfied, that God's purposes may be realized. This is the first realm of prayer [in which] to operate."⁶

Talk to God Personally

Coming to God as our LOVING FATHER who lives in Heaven - *Our Father who is in heaven*: Jesus invites his disciples to use this familiar form of address. Jesus addressed God as Father by virtue of His unique status as Son; He now gives that privilege to his disciples by virtue of their adoption. When we address God as our Father we are reminded of our new status in Christ, and this should affect us deeply and cause us to come humbly with hearts full of gratitude and praise for this new position in Christ. (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6)

As our Father He:

- Shows compassion. Psalm 103:13
- Knows how to give good gifts. Luke 11:13
- Disciplines us for our good. Hebrews 12:9,10
- Forgives when we come to Him in repentance. 1 John 1:9

Our Father: "Intimating, that we must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others; for we are members one of another and are called into fellowship with each other."

Matthew Henry

In heaven:

It is where Christ is. Hebrews 8:1

It is His habitation. Psalm 33:13-14

"Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few." Ecclesiastes 5:2

"He is not only, as a Father, able to help us, able to do great things for us, more than we can ask or think; he has wherewith to supply our needs, for every good gift is from above. He is a Father, and therefore we may come to him with boldness, but a Father in heaven, and therefore we must come with reverence. Thus, all our prayers should correspond with that which is our great aim as Christians, and that is, to be with God in heaven. God and heaven, the end of our whole conversation, must be particularly eyed in every prayer; there is the centre to which we are all tending. By prayer, we send before us thither, where we profess to be going." Matthew Henry

⁶ Clay Miller, Sermon notes on Luke 11

“In prayer we come not only to our Father’s feet, but also to the throne of the Great Monarch of the universe. The mercy seat is a throne and we should never forget this. Familiarity there may be, but let it not be unhallowed. Boldness there should be, but let it not be impertinent.” Charles Spurgeon

Our Father in Heaven than carries with it the idea of God’s nearness and His transcendence. A perfect combination of the attitude in which we can approach Him. As our Father, but as a Father who is in heaven. Every time we address God as Our Father, we should be reminded of what a tremendous truth and privilege this is. This initial phrase begins to set the stage for our attitude in prayer.

Take God Seriously

Coming to God as THE HOLY ONE - *Hallowed be Your Name:*

1. Pray with a heart that honors God’s name as holy:

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” Exodus 20:7

We cannot think of God’s name without thinking of His essence, His character and His attributes; His name represents all that He is. He is the Creator not the created. He is eternal, infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent, transcendent, eternal. Worthy of the adoration of every creature. No one name can suffice for all that God is.

“Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that when your words come [to pass,] we may honor you?” But the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?” Judges 13:17-18 - Wonderful - incomprehensible, extraordinary; related to a Hebrew word for remarkable or secret.

“How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy *to revile your name* forever?” Psalm 74:10

“A lack of regard for His name reveals more clearly than anything else a lack of regard for Him”⁷

2. Pray with a heart to know God:

“Prayer should be intelligently presented. ...the more you know about the Lord, and the better you know His name, the more intelligently you will call upon that name. It would be wise, therefore, for you to study the scriptures faithfully and to ask the Lord to manifest Himself to you so that you may know Him. To the degree that you are acquainted with Him, you will be able to call with confidence upon His name.” Charles Spurgeon

“I will give them *a heart to know Me*, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.” Jeremiah 24:7

⁷ R.C. Sproul, *The Prayer of the Lord* (Reformation Trust, 2009)

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." John 17:6

3. Pray with a heart to Glorify God:

"Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to *your name give glory*, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!" Psalm 115:1

"In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; *your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul.*" Isaiah 26:8

"[This] ought to be our chief and ultimate end in all our petitions, that God may be glorified; all our other requests must be in subordination to this, and in pursuance of it." Matthew Henry

"Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name." Psalm 30:4

"For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name." Psalm 33:21

"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!" Psalm 103:1

"Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!" Psalm 105:3

"Whatever you *ask in my name*, this I will do, *that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*" John 14:13

"True worship is focused on God and not on ourselves. And the test of worship which hallows God's name is not whether it pleases us, but whether it pleases him." A. Begg

4. Pray for an awareness of your witness:

"To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, *so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you*, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

- In our walk:

"...so as *to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him*: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;" Col 1:10

"...and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, *that the word of God may not be reviled.*" Titus 2:4-5

"For, as it is written, 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.'" Romans 2:24

"Let all who are under a yoke as bondservants regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, *so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.*" 1Timothy 6:1

- In our words:

"I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore, nations will praise you forever and ever." Psa 45:17

“Our praying, to be strong, must be buttressed by holy living. The name of Christ must be honored in our lives before it will honor our intercessions. We cannot divorce praying from conduct.”⁸

“...and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.” 1 John 3:22; Matthew 26:41

10 ways to make God’s name Holy in your life:

1. Profess His name
2. Adore His attributes and works
3. Trust in Him
4. Speak His name with only the highest reverence
5. Love Him distinctly
6. Worship Him rightly
7. Obey His word
8. Grieve when His name suffers
9. Stand for His truth
10. Prefer His honor above yours⁹

Coming to God as a REIGNING KING - *Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven:*

3 Aspects of Christ’s rule:

- Conversion
- Consecration
- Consummation

“[There is a] present dimension and a progressive discovery, and then finally a permanent display of God’s Kingdom” Alistair Begg

The idea of King and kingdom is God’s idea. Jesus second petition in this example prayer is “Your kingdom come” turning our hearts from adoration to obedience. Having recognized Him as holy we fall on our faces before Him as our sovereign, praying that His kingdom will come more and more fully in the here and now and in the future.

Kingdom in the Old Testament: God served as Israel’s King in leading them out of Egypt and into the promised land. Israel rejected God as King, much to the prophet Samuel’s dismay. (1 Sam 8:7). God warned them that this human king would not be as good to them, but they persisted (1 Sam 8:19b). Yet, God continued His faithfulness to the nation promising them a conquering King that would sit on the throne forever. (Psalm 89)

In New Testament times, the Jews rejected Jesus as king. They brought him before the authorities on the grounds that he was making himself King. (John 18:33-37a.) Jesus did not deny His kingship but stated that His kingdom was not of this world. (John 18:36)

⁸ E.M. Bounds, *E.M. Bounds on Prayer*, p.74

⁹ adapted from Chris Ball’s teaching on the Lord’s prayer - used by permission.

The heart of Jesus mission on earth was God's kingdom. When we pray for His kingdom to come, we are taking part in His mission to bring His kingdom everywhere. "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." The kingdom was near because the King was near. (Luke 10:11, 11:20) Jesus inaugurated His kingdom when He came to earth the first time. He then ascended to heaven for His coronation. This Kingdom has been *redeemed* by the Messiah, and is *ruled* by the Messiah. Jesus kingship is not in the future, it is now. HE is now reigning as king.

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
Philippeans 2:9-11

- Those who trust in Christ for salvation are citizens of that kingdom.

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,"
Philippians 3:20

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son," Colossians 1:13

- As citizens of the Kingdom we commit and submit ourselves to God's will in obedience.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace." 2 Peter 3:10-14

- The now and the not yet:

In our lives in the here and now we are experiencing a conflict of kingdoms. The kingdoms of this world and the heavenly kingdom. When we regard God's name as holy, seeking His Kingdom to come and His will to be done, our lives will make the kingdom of God manifest in the here and now. It is the church's job to make the invisible kingdom visible. We bear witness to the kingship of Christ in our homes, our work, the way we spend our money, the way we interact with strangers, everything. This is the way that the kingdom of God has come in the here and now, while we wait for Christ to return to establish his reign.

"Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power." 1 Corinthians 15:24

So, when we pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done" we are praying:

1. That those of us who are citizens of the kingdom would be wholly devoted to Christ our King, submit to His rule in our lives and obey Him. (2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Peter 1:14-15)
2. That more would come into the kingdom by being born again. (John 3:3,5, 1 Cor 5:13)

3. And finally we pray anticipating the King coming to reign over all.

"Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." Revelation 11:15 (Daniel 7:14)

- This is the Kingdom that has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34), it is an unshakable Kingdom (Hebrews 12:27-28), it will never pass away (Daniel 7:14).
- As for believers; "... you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." - Revelation 5:10

"We should turn the word we hear into prayer, our hearts should echo to it; does Christ promise, '*surely I come quickly?*' our hearts should answer, '*Even so, come.*'" M Henry

We are building day by day
As the moments pass away
A kingdom that this world cannot see.
For every victory won by grace
Will be sure to find a place
In that kingdom for eternity.¹⁰

"And the demands are without question great, but the rewards are out of this world. When we are so clearly praying "Your kingdom come," then we will be able, not necessarily to take [it all] in our stride, but we will certainly be able to respond in a different way to the ravages of sin as we experience them." Alistair Begg

Discussion

Read David's hymn of praise on the occasion of the public entry the ark made into the tent prepared for it. (1 Chronicles 16:8-36)

As you read, stop to make observations about the attitude of David's prayer and how it relates to Jesus prescription to pray, "Our Father, who is in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." (In other words, how are David's priorities lined up with how Jesus instructs us to approach Him in prayer?) It may be helpful to underline the directives (consider making a list), and circle the references to God's name, works and character.

¹⁰ Fanny J. Crosby, "Building Day by Day" (1891). Paraphrased.

8 Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name;
Make known His deeds among the peoples.
9 Sing to Him, sing praises to Him;
Speak of all His wonders.
10 Glory in His holy name;
Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad.
11 Seek the LORD and His strength;
Seek His face continually.
12 Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done,
His marvels and the judgments from His mouth,
13 O seed of Israel His servant,
Sons of Jacob, His chosen ones!
14 He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
15 Remember His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,
16 The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac.
17 He also confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
18 Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan,
As the portion of your inheritance."
19 When they were only a few in number,
Very few, and strangers in it,
20 And they wandered about from nation to nation,
And from one kingdom to another people,
21 He permitted no man to oppress them,
And He reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying,
22 "Do not touch My anointed ones,
And do My prophets no harm."
23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth;
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.
24 Tell of His glory among the nations,
His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.
25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
He also is to be feared above all gods.
26 For all the gods of the peoples are [fn]idols,
But the LORD made the heavens.
27 Splendor and majesty are before Him,
Strength and joy are in His place.
28 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
29 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;

Bring an offering, and come before Him;
Worship the LORD in [fn]holy array.
30 Tremble before Him, all the earth;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.
31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
And let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."
32 Let the sea roar, and all it contains;
Let the field exult, and all that is in it.
33 Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD;
For He is coming to judge the earth.
34 O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
35 Then say, "Save us, O God of our salvation,
And gather us and deliver us from the nations,
To give thanks to Your holy name,
And glory in Your praise."
36 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting.

Summary

"Intimacy requires development. We can never know Him by brief and fragmentary and thoughtless repetitions of intercessions that are requests for personal favors and nothing more. We can never expect to grow in the likeness of our Lord unless we follow His example and give more time to communion with the Father."¹¹

Our Father is always ready to hear our prayers. His ears are attentive to the cries of His children, but we will not really get to know Him in the way that He intends if we treat prayer like a telephone, for a few words of hurried conversation. Spending time in daily, purposeful, intentional, planned prayer is the model Christ left for us. If Jesus needed to pray, how much more do we? Jesus example teaches us that all the blessings of heaven come and continue to come through prayer. It is not possible to walk with God, obtain His blessing and leading, or to do His work joyfully or fruitfully apart from close, unbroken fellowship with the One who is the source of all life and power.

How can we follow Christ's example better? It is no different than overcoming any other shortfall of our spiritual lives, we go to God in repentance and faith. We must stop relying on our own strength and throw ourselves entirely on God's grace. The answer to a more God honoring prayer life is prayer.

"As you go to prayer, however cold and dark your heart may be, do not try in your own might to force yourself into the right attitude. Bow before Him and tell Him that He sees in what a poor

¹¹ E.M. Bounds

state you are and that your only hope is in Him. Trust Him with a childlike trust to have mercy upon you and then wait upon Him. You have nothing; He has everything.” Andrew Murray

And then, we have to be practical. Set aside the time to pray. Find a secluded place and withdraw. Resist your flesh and remember that Satan is desperately opposed to your prayers. He tempts you to postpone your time in prayer, he brings in wandering thoughts, distractions, and points you to your unbelief and weakness. “Satan endeavors to become the master of the Christian’s prayer time.”¹² Keep your eyes focused on Jesus. He is our help and deliverer. Have faith that He is there, ready to hear you, ready to act in power to bring more and more into His Kingdom, and eager to satisfy you with all of His goodness.

O God of the open ear, teach us to live by prayer as well as by providence, for ourselves, our souls, bodies, children, family, and church. Give us a heart amenable to your will, so we might live in prayer and honor you. Teach us that the work of prayer is to bring our wills to yours and that we find success in prayer only when we pray according to your precept and promise. Help us to desire great things and with holy boldness ask for great things for your people, for ourselves, that we might live to show your great glory. Teach us that it is wise for us to pray for all that we have, out of love, willingly, not of necessity; that we may come to you at any time, to lay open our needs before you. May our lives be steeped in prayer, filled with grace and supplication. In the Name and merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, Amen.¹³

Homework

1. How can we be tempted to parade our spiritual lives to impress others?
2. What mindless words or phrases have you heard, or have you used in prayer?
3. Summarize the key characteristics or elements of this model prayer that provide a pattern for how God desires us to pray.
4. Rephrase the 3 petitions that we studied this week in your own words.

Prayer Practice

Read the handout on Intercession. This week be purposeful to take some time each day to pray for others. Consider developing a system that works for you to help you remember who to pray for. (Examples are on the handout.)

¹² Andrew Murray, *Living a Prayerful Life* (Bethany House, 2002)

¹³ Adapted from various prayers. *The Valley of Vision*

Elements of Prayer: Intercession

“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should
sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you”
1Samuel 12:23a

Definition:

Prayer on behalf of another, to plead on behalf of someone.

Purpose:

It is a command: James 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 1 Timothy 2:1,2; Matthew 5:44

Follow Christ’s example: John 17, Hebrews 7:25, 1 Timothy 2:5

It is a way to come along-side others and help them in their ministry: 2 Corinthians 1:11;
Romans 15:30

God works through our prayers! Acts 12:5, Philippians 1:19, 2 Thessalonians 3:1

“Intercessory prayer is a priestly ministry. As priests appointed and anointed by God, we have the honor of going before the Most High on behalf of others. This is not optional. It is a sacred obligation and a precious privilege of all who take up the yoke of Christ.” Richard J. Foster

Ways to Intercede:

- In spoken words
- In the heart
- Through written words

Practical tips:

Organize a way to pray for others. Consider assigning a day for different people or needs. For example, Monday: Missions/missionaries. Tuesday: Those sick or in need, Wednesday: Church leadership, Government leaders, etc.

Utilize Paul’s prayers for the churches as found in the Epistles when praying for others. Take note of how he prayed for others.