

**The Disciple's Prayer**  
Matthew 6:9-15

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This past week prayer made the news. It's not often that prayer finds its way into the national discussion. But the Supreme Court of Canada brought down a ruling about prayer. At city council meetings in Saguenay, Quebec, they always began with prayer. But this practice offended atheist Alain Simoneau. So 8 years ago he filed a complaint against the city. The legal battle went back and forth and finally to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court ruled in a unanimous decision that reciting a Catholic prayer at council meetings infringes on freedom of conscience and religion. The court ordered the city and the mayor to stop the prayers. It also ordered the city and the mayor to pay the complainant \$33,000 in damages and costs.

This past week I was listening to 630 CHED. The early morning host Bruce Bowie was handing off the on air program to the morning show host Ryan Jesperson. He announced they would be talking about prayer and the Supreme Court's decision. Then Ryan, the guy who was going to host the discussion made an offhand comment something like "I really don't think prayer needs to be at council meetings. We will talk about where it's appropriate to pray." But then Bruce Bowie jumped in. And it was one of those unscripted moments. Bowie said "Well I don't know about you Ryan, but I need prayer in every area of my life – so we might disagree on that one." Then they agreed to disagree politely and went on with their day.

"I need prayer in every area of my life." I don't know Bruce Bowie or where he stands. But he sure sounds like a Christian. As Christians we know we're supposed to pray. That's one action most people expect of Christians especially when they go into a church. But there is a great difference between knowing about prayer and actually praying. Many Christians, when asked about the state of their prayer life, answer that they don't pray enough or they're struggling with prayer. Lack of time is a common reason given for absence of or struggle with prayer. But is our problem with prayer really a lack of time?

Tim Keller, pastor and author from New York City writes about a time when his practice of prayer was dramatically challenged.

*"I was barely scratching the surface of what the Bible commanded and promised regarding prayer. Then came the dark weeks of 9/11 in New York when our whole city sank into a kind of corporate clinical depression, even as it rallied.*

*For my family, the shadow was intensified as my wife Kathy struggled with the effects of Crohn's disease. Finally, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer.*

*So his wife urged him to do something with her that they had never been able to muster the self-discipline to do regularly. She asked him to pray with her every night. Every night. She used an illustration that crystallized her feelings very well.*

*Imagine you were diagnosed with such a lethal condition that the doctor told you that you would die within hours unless you took a particular medicine – a pill every night before going to sleep. Imagine that you were told that you could never miss it or you would die. Would you forget? Would you not get around to it some nights? No – it would be so crucial that you wouldn't forget, you would never miss. Well, if we don't pray together to God, we're not going to make it because of all we are facing. I'm certainly not. We have to pray. We can't let it just slip our minds". Anything that is truly a non-negotiable necessity was something we could do.*<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps our prayerlessness or hit and miss approach is not really a lack of time but a lack of belief. Maybe we don't believe prayer is vital to our everyday life. Maybe we believe the only time we really need it is in times of crisis. But I believe that prayer is an optional activity for only super-spiritual Christians, we have missed something major. When Jesus talked about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, He did not say "if you pray." He said "when you pray." Jesus prayed often throughout His time on earth. He modeled constant communion with and dependence upon His Father. He calls us as His disciples to do the same.

So I have a question for you today that I want you to ponder for a moment. Then I will share with you my answer. **"How's your prayer life?"** I am dissatisfied with my prayer life. It happens but I sense a great need to go much deeper with God. Perhaps that reflects your heart longing. We want to connect with God more often.

Thankfully, Jesus didn't only tell us to pray. He taught us to pray. In perhaps the most famous prayer in our world today, we will discover a very simple yet memorable pattern to help us start praying, rekindle our prayer lives or pray more appropriately than we have before. This prayer will also help us keep perspective about God and life. It's called the Lord's Prayer. Here is a key piece from Jesus to help kingdom disciples live on Earth. Today we're going to see Jesus describe two major movements in prayer that help us rightly connect to God. I pray that you will open your hearts and minds to the possibility of connecting much more intimately with our Father in heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, (Dutton, 2014, New York, NY), 9.

**Matthew 6:9-15 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.

<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread,

<sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Last week we looked at what Jesus said NOT to do in prayer. Don’t pray to be seen because that will hinder you from clear focus on God. Don’t keep repeating the same phrases thinking God doesn’t hear. In fact, God knows what we need before we ask. Then Jesus teaches us how to pray. There are two major movements in this prayer. **Pray first for God’s glory.** The first half of this prayer focuses on God and His glory. Why pray for God’s glory first? It gives us the right perspective. If we don’t pray for His glory first, we might pray for our glory. We might say, Our Father in heaven, great is my name. I want my kingdom to be built. I want my will to be done. So help me do it Father.”

But a God-first focus helps us approach Him appropriately. Jesus starts with a way to address God. **“Our Father in heaven.”** Our Father describes the kind of God we pray to. He is personal and caring. He is the one who establishes the real nature of fatherhood. Yet this Father is in heaven which reminds us of His greatness and sovereignty. We’re not praying to a kind old grandfather who is warm but has little power to really do anything in this world. We pray to our father in heaven – Lord over all – Creator of the Universe – Sovereign over history – all powerful and all knowing. “Our Father in heaven” puts us in our place not in a negative way but in a healthy way. We are the child. He is the Father. We are the creature. He is the creator.

Now we get to the prayers for God’s glory. **Hallowed be your name.** “Hallowed” means to “make holy.” But what are we really asking for in this phrase? God’s name is already holy. God’s name doesn’t need some polishing.

God's name doesn't have some blemishes that need cleaning up. This is not prayer hoping God will become holy because He already is. This prayer asks that God's name would be hallowed – that God would be treated with highest honor and set apart as holy. So it asks for more than reverent speech about God. It appeals to God to direct, lead and empower people to live lives that hallow or reverence His name. It might also be appealing to God to intervene in situations where His name is not respected.

I remember watching a film one time on the life of Oscar Romero. He was a priest in the Central American nation of El Salvador during a time of civil war. Eventually, he was killed for standing up to the establishment and the corruption of the government. In one scene, the government forces had taken over a church for their party room. They had food all over the front of the altar and garbage everywhere. When Romero first went in, he shouted at them to get out of the church and treat the place with respect. The soldiers and their partiers laughed and then threatened him before they threw him out the front door. People from the village had gathered all around to watch this.

He realized he could no longer keep one foot in the establishment's camp and another foot in the ordinary man's camp. He would have to confront these government soldiers. So he picked himself up and walked into the church to the front without saying a word and began leading a worship service. Many poor villagers followed him. Slowly the soldiers and their partiers quieted down, grew silent and removed themselves from the church. This simple act of defiance recaptured a reverence for God's name in that village although it would eventually cost Romero his life. To sincerely pray "Hallowed be your name," we call on God to act but we also need to live in a way that shows our agreement with this prayer. The first part of "giving God glory" is to pray "Hallowed be your name."

The second part is found in the first phrase of verse 10. **"Your kingdom come."** God is eternally holy and eternally reigns in absolute sovereignty. But there was a disturbance in that reign at the fall of man. Sin entered the world. The earth is afflicted by the devil and demons. Yet from that moment of fracture between God and the first humans, Our Father has been working on reconciliation and advancing His kingdom. One day, that kingdom will be visible for everyone to see. But right now, God has chosen to advance His kingdom through the lives of His people and their ministry in the world.

So to pray "your kingdom come" means we call on God to continue to advance His kingdom today and look forward to the final arrival of the kingdom in the future. We pray that God's royal rule extend now as people bow in submission

to Him. We look forward to the day when every knee will bow and tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God our Father.

Now there are a couple of very large implications to this prayer. First, we're laying down our kingdoms and submitting them to His kingdom. We guys especially love to build our own kingdoms – whether that be in our work – or our homes – or our financial status or even as pastors – our kingdom – our empire. But this prayer requires us to submit all of it to His reign and rule. If you are empire building for yourself, you might have trouble with this phrase. Do you really want God's kingdom to come where He reigns and you are entrusted with some of His kingdom for a time? Yet, the sooner we submit our kingdoms to His reign, the better. The reign of every human king, prime minister, CEO, pastor, president, owner and emperor comes to an end. Yet God's reign will never end. Therefore, it's a much wiser investment to pour ourselves into an eternal kingdom than a temporary one.

There's another implication to the prayer "your kingdom come." It shows we are not content with the way things are in the world. You don't pray for someone's kingdom to advance into a realm where everything is good and right. Yet we live in a world where a lot seems to not be right. There's some injustice out there that hasn't been addressed. There's bad stuff happening to people and nations and vulnerable groups. So we need to strike that balance between awareness of the needs in our world and getting overwhelmed by them. We are not God. We cannot solve all the world's problems. But we can lift them to our Father and get involved in areas He's prepared for us to serve.

So Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. The third part of focusing on God's glory in this prayer is found at the end of verse 10. **Your will be done.** Now those are 4 easy words to say but 4 very difficult words to live out. Jesus used this phrase when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest. "Father, if it is possible, take this cup from me (meaning the cross). Yet not my will but yours be done." Jesus' human will recoiled at the horror of the cross in the garden. Everyone knew what crucifixion involved. The Romans and Herod crucified people everywhere and left their bodies on crosses to warn others about rebellion. Yet Jesus submitted His own will to His Father's will.

"Your will be done" might mean it's time to let that go; it's time for you to stop fighting and start forgiving; its time to let that loved one go into God's presence. This phrase calls us again to submit our will to His will. To honestly pray "your will be done" before we ask for anything sets the overall framework for our prayer requests. That's why I get

nervous sometimes when I hear prayers of people commanding God to do something. We can ask in God's name. But His will is ultimately what needs to happen.

We pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Can you imagine a place where everything that happens is according to God's will? There's no sin there. There's no injustice or oppressed people group. There's no a brewing rebellion behind a hill away from God's throne. There are hundreds of thousands of angels who await God's direction and who serve him according to His will. Our loved ones who knew Christ and have gone before live according to His will in heaven right now. There is obedience and glorifying praise and joy and harmony. We pray that His will be done here so we can taste a piece of heaven on earth.

These first three petitions focus on God's glory. They orient us to God and correct our drifting or unbelief in Him. These prayers are impossible to sincerely pray without us humbly committing ourselves to following this direction. Tim Keller quotes 4<sup>th</sup> century church father Augustine who wrote this – **“Living well depends on the reordering of our loves.”** Love for our father in heaven needs to come first. Then all the other loves fall into appropriate order. The first half of the Lord's Prayer helps us do that.

Then Jesus instructs us in the second move of prayer. First we pray for God's glory. **Second we pray for our good.** This does not mean that we can now pray selfishly for whatever we want. “God now that I've given you glory, please give me that Ferrari or 18 million dollar house or a photographic memory so I don't have to study. Jesus instructs us to pray for what is good and necessary in God's eyes.

**Give us this day our daily bread.** Some of you here can relate to this prayer or you can remember times when this was a daily desperate prayer for you. I remember reading about Michael Oher, the athlete whose story is told in the film the Blind Side. A white upper middle class family in Memphis took in a black teenage boy off the streets. They saw him through to a professional football career in the NFL. He is now 28 and played for Baltimore, Tennessee last year and now Carolina. But in commenting on poverty, Michael said “you're poor when don't know where you next meal is coming from.” Some of you have experience with that in the past or even now. The people listening to Jesus on that mountain could relate very well to this prayer. Many of them were paid one day at a time. Their family depended on daily pay for survival. A few sick days could spell disaster for them. So this prayer was appropriate.

But there are others of us in this room who have never wondered where our next meal is coming from. We can struggle with a prayer like this because we've got 19 months of food in our freezer. Yet this prayer forces us to realize that we can only live one day at a time. We are only given one day at a time. We can't eat 19 months of food in one day. We depend every day on God for our very existence. Everything we enjoy include today's lunch ultimately comes from God and is a gift. So the first prayer for our good addresses that basic need for survival.

The second phrase addresses another of deep needs. **Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.** Now you might have learned the Lord's Prayer using 'trespasses' here. But Matthew uses debts which also linked very clearly with the people Jesus spoke to. Many were in debt. They had to borrow seed to plant crops in the spring. They paid back their debt with the harvest. So if the crop failed they were in trouble. Many Jewish merchants extended credit to regular customers. So if a creditor showed mercy and forgave a debt, this was a massive gift.

But Jesus is not talking about a money debt. He's talking about a sin debt. When we sin, we owe God in a way. We have taken the life He's given us and used it to rebel against Him in some way. So we owe him. Yet the ultimate penalty for that debt was paid on the cross. There God justified us through Jesus' work. So why would we need to ask forgiveness for our sin debts if they've already been paid?

Though our sins have already been paid, we still have to carry on a relationship with God every day. It's kind of like a parent and a child. The parent and child are united together in a family. If the child wrongs the parent, they don't cease being that parent's child. The status of their relationship remains. But the state of that relationship has been damaged. It gets repaired by confession and forgiveness.

The same applies to our relationship with God. Once we receive Christ, we are God's children. That status doesn't change. But the state of our relationship ebbs and flows. So we pray Lord please forgive us our debts.

But then Jesus adds "as we forgive our debtors." Some conclude that God's forgiveness depends on our forgiving others. As we forgive those who have sinned against us, then God will forgive us. But the sequence does not dictate some sort of dependence. They go together. We ask the Father to forgive our debts. We recognize the massive gift such forgiveness provides for our own lives. So we don't hoard that gift. Instead we pass it on and forgive others. Once our eyes have been opened to the enormity of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling.

Real repentance of sin will also result in real forgiveness of others. Self-interested remorse likely won't result in a forgiving attitude. To ensure that the disciples don't miss this, Jesus goes back to it in verses 14 and 15. Again, it's not that God's forgiveness depends on whether or not we forgive others. But if we refuse to forgive when the other person repents and comes to make reconciliation, there's something seriously wrong in our heart. Jesus alerts us to this with these phrases.

So we pray for our good. "Give us our daily bread; forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Then verse 13 - **Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.** Now does anyone see a problem with the first half of this prayer? Lead us not into temptation. We pray to Our Father in Heaven. Why would we have to pray "lead us not into temptation?" God does not tempt anyone to sin. James 1:13 states "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one." The word translated temptation actually means testing. In older English a temptation may have been linked to the word test. So the temptation was not necessarily to do something evil but some sort of strenuous experience.

Yet even with the phrase "Lead us not into testing" we face problems. God tests his people throughout the Bible. Genesis 22:1 - "After these things, God tested Abraham." Or back in James 1:2 - Count it all joy my brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know the testing of your faith produces perseverance." There are good tests that strengthen our faith. So Jesus may be referring to the tests that could result in a destruction of our faith. Sometimes, people can get so cocky in their faith that they think they can take on anything. We need a humble view of ourselves. There are tests we should not seek; there are situations where we must guard against going into them unless we absolutely have to because there are so many opportunities to fall. I think that's what Jesus might be getting at here.

But whatever He specifically means, we can be pretty sure that He's instructing us to pray for protection and deliverance in spiritual battles. We get this from the last phrase - deliver us from evil. If we find ourselves in those situations where we can fall or testing threatens to overwhelm us, we can cry out to our Father for deliverance. To deliver means to spare us or rescue us out of a dangerous situation filled with evil. God wants His children to turn to Him to lead them on the paths He has for them not blindly go into danger spots that might lead to a large fall. God wants us to turn to Him for deliverance from evil.



That's the Lord's Prayer. Jesus teaches us two primary moves in prayer. Pray first for God's glory and then for your good. Pray for God's name to be hallowed, his kingdom to come and his will to be done. Ask for your daily bread. Come to Him for forgiveness and the power to forgive. Ask Him to lead you on the paths He has for you and deliver you from evil.

The phrase "for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, Amen" does not appear in the oldest manuscripts. So that's why it's not included in this text. But most of your Bibles have it in the footnotes. It is a later addition. But there's nothing wrong with praying that last phrase because it is a great way to end the prayer and honor the Lord through it.

The Lord's Prayer – The disciple's prayer – our prayer - One commentator writes, "The earnest briefness and simplicity of this prayer contradict human pride of showy prayer. This is the prayer of those who know they must depend on God for their daily provision, who need their debts forgiven, who need his protection from the testing all around them. This is not the prayer of the complacent and self-satisfied, but of the humble, the lowly, the broken, the desperate." This is a great way to start praying or restarting your prayer life for prayer is vital for any Christian. If you don't our Father in heaven, then I want to invite you to put your trust upon Christ His Son for your life and forgiveness. God will see that trust and save you. And you will begin the journey of life with your Father in heaven. You can talk more with our Elder of prayer at the front following our time together.

We started by asking "How's your prayer life?" My closing question is "how will you now move forward in your prayer life by the power of the Holy Spirit." Keller writes "Prayer is the only entryway into genuine self-knowledge. It is also the main way we experience deep change – the reordering of our loves. Prayer is how God gives us so many of the unimaginable things he has for us. Indeed, prayer makes it safe for God to give us many of the things we most desire. It is the way we know God, the way we finally treat God as God. Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life. We must learn to pray. We have to."

Will you listen now to the Lord's Prayer being sung? Then we will close by praying it together.