

# Back to the Basics – Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15; Luke 11:1-13

## Introduction

We need to occasionally be reminded about the basics, the core beliefs and disciplines that are central to a godly life. Today we are going to talk about prayer. Prayer is a primary activity for Christians. Jesus expected His followers to be people of prayer, just like He was. He calls it “practicing our righteousness.”

Have you ever been trained to pray? Do your prayers “work”? What is the purpose of prayer? What are the results?

Our passage today will be one that is so familiar you will be tempted not to look carefully at what it says – and doesn’t say – about prayer. But to do so would cause us to miss Jesus’ revolutionary view of prayer and its great potential impact on our prayer lives, and lives in general.

We’ll be looking at The Lord’s Prayer in Matthew chapter 6, but Luke 11 gives us the background of what was going on that prompted Jesus’ famous words about prayer.

## Passages:

Matthew 6:5-15 – <sup>5</sup>“And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. <sup>6</sup>But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.”

<sup>9</sup>“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. <sup>10</sup>Thy kingdom come. Thy 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 do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*’ <sup>14</sup>For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup>But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”

Luke 11:1-13 – <sup>1</sup>And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “**Lord, teach us to pray**” just as John also taught his disciples.” <sup>2</sup>And He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. <sup>3</sup>Give us each day our daily bread. <sup>4</sup>And forgive us our

sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.” <sup>5</sup>And He said to them, “Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; <sup>6</sup>for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; <sup>7</sup>and from inside he shall answer and say, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.’ <sup>8</sup>I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet **because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.** <sup>9</sup>And I say to you, **ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.** <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. <sup>11</sup>Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? <sup>12</sup>Or *if* he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? <sup>13</sup>If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

## Bible Study:

Story about Scarlett teaching my Mom how to pray.

Jesus’ disciples had been praying all of their lives, and yet they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

Luke 11:1 – <sup>1</sup>And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “**Lord, teach us to pray**” just as John also taught his disciples.”

What might have prompted Jesus’ disciples to ask Him to teach them to pray?

We all pray, but Jesus taught his disciples who also had been praying all of their lives how to pray. Maybe we’ve been doing it wrong. Do you ever wonder why your prayers are not answered? Do you wonder if anyone is listening? Do you sometimes even doubt if prayer works???

What a difference it would make if we would learn from Jesus’ words here how to pray.

In Matthew 6, we see the most complete record of Jesus’ response.

Matthew 6:5 – <sup>5</sup>“And **when** you pray, ...”

The first thing to know is that Jesus expects us to pray, and to pray often.

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Where should you pray?

Matthew 6:6 – <sup>6</sup>“But you, when you pray, **go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door**, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

This is an interesting statement. Some of the people listening wouldn't have even had a door to shut. What does Jesus mean? How can you follow His direction?

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Alone, isolation from the world around you, undistracted from the world, quiet

Have you ever thought about the fact that when you pray, God is watching you?

Matthew 6:6 – “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and **your Father who sees in secret will repay you.**”

If we were ever to realize that God knows our name and sees us pray, then that should be enough.

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Next Jesus states that there is a reward for praying.

Matthew 6:5-6 – “And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to 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, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret **will repay you.**”

What is the reward for praying?

Remember the context of Matthew 6. There is a reward promised for giving, praying, and fasting. (Maybe we should try it and see!)

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Don't think there is a special formula that will bend God's will toward yours.

Matthew 6:7 – “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.”

How big is your God? Do you really want a God that you can convince? Calling out the names of God, special phrases, long prayers, Lord's prayer

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This next part may be demotivating for our prayer life if we don't understand prayer.

Matthew 6:8 – “Therefore do not be like them; for **your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.**”

Then why pray? If it's not a matter of informing or convincing God, then what is the purpose of prayer?

If this deflates your desire to pray, then you've been praying wrong. You need to tell Jesus, “Lord, teach me to pray.”

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This is the way to pray: (This is the Jesus way to pray.) (This is so familiar that if we're not careful we'll miss Jesus' lesson on how to pray.)

Matthew 6:9 – “Pray, then, in this way: **Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.**”

Not “Dear God, thank you for this day. Now let's get to me.”

Recognize the tension in this phrase. Father vs. God, creator, in heaven Think about Who you are talking to. “Hallowed be your name.”

PAUSE!

The quicker we rush through this, the bigger our circumstances will seem.

Father means: respect, smarter than me, I can trust you, you have my best interests in mind, whatever you say I will do even if I don't understand, tender, intimate, authority

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Wow! I get to talk to you! Remember Esther!

This is the part we skip, and this is the part that will make the real difference in our prayers.

Matthew 6:10 – **“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,** On earth as it is in heaven.”

Before we get to praying about our kingdom, we must get to the place where we can say, “Thy kingdom come. Not mine.” “I'm more committed to your will happening than mine.” “I'm not here trying to convince you to do what I want. I want to bend to your will.”

The purpose of prayer is to surrender our will, not to impose it.

“If you have enough faith and say the right words, God will do what you want.”

How small is your god? Do you really want a god you can convince? Do you want to spend the rest of your life trying to get God to do stuff for you?

Wouldn't you have a much better life and have much greater impact if you bend to His will instead?

This is what should determine how long you pray. If you already know God's will, then there's no reason to pray. The length of your prayers will be determined by how long it takes for you to honestly say, “Your will be done.” Compare Lazarus (25 secs.) vs. Gethsemane (all night) Get in sync with Him.

The answer is “Yes.” What is the question?

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Once we get to this point in our prayer, we will be rewarded – Peace!

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Now we finally get the part of the prayer that we are really interested in, but in truth, it's really not what we think:

Matthew 6:11 – <sup>11</sup>"Give us this day our daily bread."

This is more of an expression that God is the one who supplies all of our needs than it is where we start asking for everything we want.

"God, even in the midst of our surplus, we still acknowledge that you are the source of everything we have."

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Jesus goes on:

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 – <sup>12</sup>"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

<sup>14</sup>For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup>But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."

Not just asking God to forgive us, but also forgiving others.

Why do we need to ask God's forgiveness?

I won't get up off of my knees until I have forgiven everyone I am holding a grudge against.

How can you tell if you are holding a grudge?

Holding a grudge will result in bitterness and even health problems.

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Jesus goes on, "And lead us not unto temptation. We can find it all by ourselves."

Matthew 6:13 – <sup>13</sup>"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*"

"I don't want to sin against God."

"To the best of my ability I don't plan on sinning any more."

If there is something you are planning to do that is a sin, then change your plan. Before you move on, you need to repent and stop it.

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This is the big soprano ending to the song:

Matthew 6:13 – <sup>13</sup>"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*"

But it wasn't in the earliest manuscripts. It was a review of the Jesus' prayer that made up for Jesus' abrupt ending.

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Summary:

Explanation.

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Have you asked God for anything yet? Only at this point does Jesus then mention anything about asking God for anything. In Luke 11:

Luke 11:5-13 – <sup>5</sup>And He said to them, "Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; <sup>6</sup>for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; <sup>7</sup>and from inside he shall answer and say, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you *anything*.' <sup>8</sup>I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him *anything* because he is his friend, yet **because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.** <sup>9</sup>And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened. <sup>11</sup>Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? <sup>12</sup>Or *if* he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? <sup>13</sup>If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

Why would Jesus wait until all of the preceding has been done before allowing any requests to be made?

## Practical Application:

Imagine two opposing teams from two different Christian schools praying before the big game. Both pray what you would expect them to pray. How does that work?

How do your typical prayers compare to Jesus' model prayer?

Is there a chance we've been praying wrong?

## Conclusion:

The purpose of prayer is not to change God's mind, it is to change us. And after we have reset our wills to be His, then we can know our prayers will be answered.