

Spending Time With God  
November 8, 2015

Bill Hybels tells the story of having his dad's phone number. His dad was a very busy business man. In order to get him on the phone, you had to go through a switchboard unless you knew the private number, which rang a phone right on his desk. He gave that phone number to only a few select business partners. However, in addition, all of his children had the number. Bill and his siblings knew that no matter how busy their dad was that they could call him any time on that direct line.

As God's children, you and I have a direct line to God. We call this prayer. God is always glad to hear our voice, always glad to listen to our prayers. God is never too busy for you, for you are most important to Him. Prayer is the greatest privilege we have.

So what do you talk with God about? Jesus gave some suggestions to His disciples that we can still follow today. The passage we are going to read is from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. It may sound very familiar to you.

**Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)** This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Many people take this prayer and simply pray it, word for word. Another view is that Jesus had something else in mind. It may be that Jesus was not giving His disciples a prayer to pray, but rather a model from which to form their own prayers. I believe that Jesus wanted us to take the ideas of this model prayer and use them as a blueprint in our prayers to God.

**So what does this prayer teach us to pray to God?**

**Pray your relationship with God. - "Father"**

Jesus introduced His followers to God, the FATHER. We can address God as FATHER because of our new relationship to Him through Jesus. Christians have a new, more intimate, personal relationship with God than the people who came before us. Though all the world belongs to God, He adopts Christians into His very own family. As a result, Jesus taught His followers to call God "Father".

You, Christian, have been adopted into God's family. So let your prayers reflect this truth. Address God according to this new relationship. As an example, if the president of the United States adopted you into his family, you would have a new relationship to him. In this new relationship you would have the privilege of talking with him. And your conversation would reflect that new relationship. Maybe you would call him dad, or daddy Barack.

That is what Jesus is trying to get across to us. Through Jesus we have a family relationship with God. Believe it and let your prayers reflect that belief. Regard yourself as a son or daughter of God. When you call on God in prayer, do so within this family

relationship. Speak of your relationship with God as His child. Thank Him for adopting you. Thank Him for the privilege of prayer that you have with Him.

Pray your relationship with God.

**Pray your respect for God as God. - "(Let) Hallowed be Your name."**

The word hallowed is an archaic English word used to translate the Greek word ***hagiadzo*, which means "to make holy."** A literal translation of the phrase Jesus uses would be "let Your name be revered" or "let Your name be made holy." This is an expression of desire for God to be seen as God by all the world. Even as I, the one praying this, recognize God as the one true, living God, I desire all the world to know this.

God will one day be recognized as God by all the world. This petition is a desire to see that happen and to participate in it.

You start the prayer based on your relationship to God. There is the danger that we take God for granted, even as we sometimes do our parents. There is the danger that we treat God too familiarly and not as God. We may fail to give Him the recognition and praise He deserves as GOD. We must guard against treating God as less than God, the creator of the universe. A few weeks ago I spoke of the importance of God and the specialness of God. Your prayers should reflect both of these.

Express your respect for God as God in your prayers. Praise God as God. Too often we move directly to what we are thankful for instead of spending time praising God as God. To praise God as God is basic worship, giving worth to God. **The word "worship" means to "give worth to"**. To worship God is to give Him worth by praising Him, recognizing Him as God.

**So in your prayers communicate how important and special He is.** Praise Him as God. Recognize His uniqueness, His holiness, His glory, that is His importance.

Pray your relationship with God.

Pray your respect for God as God.

**Pray your recognition of God as sovereign. - "(Let come) Your kingdom."**

God created the world for Himself. God is king over all the world. He is sovereign over all the earth. That means He has supreme authority over all the earth. It belongs to Him.

But there is rebellion in His kingdom. Mankind rebelled against God's authority, God's kingly rule. God's plan is to reassert Himself as king to all the people of the earth. God is working towards that eventual outcome.

One day, maybe today, Jesus is going to return to the earth. And when He does, everyone will see Him and every heart will know that He is the Lord of all lords and the King of all Kings. Jesus will sit on His throne and rule as king over all the earth. What a great and wonderful day that will be. I believe Jesus will solve all the problems of the world. He will end the wars. He will put an end to terrorism, to human trafficking, to computer hacking, to identity theft. He will stop big business from buying off government officials. Crime and corruption will practically disappear from the earth. He will solve the energy problems and the pollution problems. It will be an age of great peace and

prosperity upon the earth. That is the kingdom that is coming. Amen! Let it come! Let His kingdom come!

This is a prayer that recognizes God as the rightful ruler of all the earth. It recognizes God's sovereignty over all His creation. It anticipates that day when Jesus will rule the earth in righteousness.

So far, we have seen that God is father, God is Holy, and God is Sovereign. Therefore...  
**Pray your submission to God. - "(Let be done) Your will."**

You have recognized God's right to rule over all the earth. He is working His plan. To accomplish that plan God has a whole lot of smaller goals to accomplish. One of those goals is your transformation to the character and faith of Jesus. God is looking to rule over YOU. This part of the prayer recognizes that and agrees to it. In your prayer, submit yourself to God's will. Jesus sets the example for us in this. He says in

**John 6:38 (NIV) For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.**

Jesus was committed to fulfilling God's plans for the earth. Jesus was committed to fulfilling God's plans for Jesus. How about you? Are you committed to fulfilling God's plans for you? Or are you busy trying to accomplish your own plans? You will often find that your own plans bring you into conflict with God's plans.

So pray yourself into submission to God's plans. Align yourself with what God is working to accomplish. Pray your submission to God.

Note how the first parts of this model prayer give proper recognition to God. Pray your relationship with God. Pray your respect for God as God. Pray your recognition of God as sovereign. Pray your submission to God. Let your prayers focus first on God. But your prayers should also involve you.

**Pray your needs to God. - "Give us this day our daily bread."**

Your physical needs are one need. You also have spiritual needs. You have the social need of friends or family. Pray your needs to God.

In telling God about your needs and asking Him to meet them, you are admitting your dependence on God. You are practicing faith in Him to meet those needs. You are saying you believe He can meet those needs.

Thank Him for all the ways He is already meeting your needs. You may already have today's food. Most of us do. In fact we have next week's food too. And we have homes with heat, and many have air conditioning. We have soft beds and couches and chairs. We have closets full of clothes. We are abundantly blessed. Thank God for so abundantly meeting your needs. Give the credit where credit is due.

Thank Him for salvation, but also ask Him to meet your other spiritual needs. You may be feeling your need for peace of mind this week. You may be feeling your need for wisdom in a decision. You may be feeling your need of patience. You may be feeling your need of strength to do the right thing. Maybe others are pressuring you to do the wrong thing.

Pray for strength. Maybe you have a really hard task ahead of you this week, a task you would rather avoid. But you know it must be done. Ask God for help to do it, do it right, do it well, and do it on time. God cares about your every need. Pray your every need into God's hands. Depend upon God to provide.

Whatever your needs are, bring them to God on a daily basis. Even if you think they're petty, go ahead and ask. Our heavenly Father delights in giving us good gifts the same way you delight in giving your children what they need. Be specific in speaking to God of your needs.

**Pray your willingness to be changed. - "Forgive me as I forgive others."**

While you need forgiveness, notice that Jesus puts a qualifier on it. You must be willing to forgive others just as you want God to forgive you. God's blessings come with the expectation that we are buying into His agenda. God has richly blessed us. And as His children, He wants us to learn to richly bless others with Him.

To ask for blessings from God without learning to bless others is just selfishness. It is just thinking about me. But the whole first part of the prayer is about God and what He wants and what is right for Him to have.

Now God wants your obedience, but not most of all. What God wants most of all is your heart. Your obedience is nothing without your heart. If you are willing to forgive others their sins against you, then you have truly given your heart to Jesus. And if you are not willing to forgive others their sins against you then you have not given your heart to Jesus. And no amount of obedience in other things will make up for your heart not being changed.

Pray to God your willingness and desire for Him to change your heart. THEN obey Him and He will change you through the obedience.

Jesus was so serious about this point that at the end of his prayer blueprints, he elaborated on this verse.

**Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV) "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."**

This is serious stuff. Your prayers should reflect how serious these things are to you.

**Pray your weaknesses to God. - "Bring us not into temptation, but rescue us from the evil (one)."**

Do not misread the phrase "lead us not into temptation", as if God would do something evil. James tells us that God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt us. Everything God does is good. The word here essentially means "to test". Temptation is a testing of your faith and obedience to God. And sometimes God allows the testing of our faithfulness. He does so reveal to us where we fall short. God allowed Job's commitment to be tested to reveal to Job a sin in His heart.

The word translated as "lead" in this passage is more literally "bring into". A paraphrase of this phrase would be, "God, don't bring me into situations that will test me."

If we carefully examine ourselves and admit our weaknesses, God will not have to lead us into situations to show us our weaknesses. God will not have to bring us into situations to show we aren't as smart as we think we are. God will not have to bring us into situations to show us we aren't as strong as we think we are. God will not have to bring us into situations to show us we aren't as spiritual as we think we are. God will not have to show us we are not as compassionate as we think we are.

Remember, God is working to transform you into the character of Jesus. He wants you to rule with Jesus in His kingdom. To do that you need to become like Jesus. But you are not like Him yet. God needs you to recognize that and pray that. Pray your weaknesses to God. You might pray something like, "Keep me from getting myself into trouble." "Help me stay away from those places, those people, those situations where I almost always end up sinning." And spell these out specifically to God.

Pray like the boy who had been saving his money for a baseball glove, and he just about had enough. So his prayer was, "God, please don't let the ice cream truck come down my street again today."

That is what we need to pray. "God, please help me avoid temptation situations today. Don't let this temptation come my way today. Lead me from the evil one. Protect me from the temptation that is there, because I am weak. I need Your strength to protect me."

Prayer doesn't change the situation. Prayer is about changing you.

**Mark Driscoll has said... "Prayer is not about making God do something. Prayer is about you and I aligning our will with God's, aligning our lives with God's, and being able to trust him enough to say, "Your will be done."**

Pray your weaknesses. Agree with what God already knows about you. Agree so you can work on your weaknesses with God.

Pray your true self to God. Pray your weaknesses to God. Give God your strengths as well, but pray your weaknesses to Him. God will do more through your weaknesses than through your strengths.

So take this prayer as a model for your own prayers. Use it as a blueprint for praying yourself into God's hands.

Jesus started this prayer by addressing God as Father. If you are not yet a Christian, God wants to adopt you too into His family. But that adoption rests upon your faith in Jesus. You must believe in Jesus as the Son of God, come from heaven to live a perfect life and die as the perfect sacrifice for your sins. Can you pray today admitting your sinfulness to God? Do so and receive Jesus as your Savior and turn your life over to Him as your Lord.