

10. Simple Commands for us to pray

9/14/2003

Prayer changes nothing.

Some people ask me, "Say a quick prayer for me." Do they think that the prayer I am going to utter would make anything different? Absolutely Not. It is our sovereign God who makes all things possible.

In most cases, I can comfortably say this: the majority of born-again believers don't have any idea what kind of power they are tapping into through their prayers. And they do not utilize the opportunity of the access to the throne of God properly.

The disciples of Jesus saw their Master Jesus spend all night alone in prayer to the Father in heaven. They realize that He had a prayer life that they didn't have. That is why they came to Him and asked Him to teach them how to pray. They didn't ask Him how to cast demons out or how to preach or how to expound the Word of God, but how to pray. It is that important.

The Word of God is God's voice to us, prayer is our voice to the Father in heaven. There are a few things we must know and understand about prayer. Let's hear from the mouth of Jesus our Savior.

A. IT IS A FORMAT, NOT A SPELL

Matthew 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

"In this manner" does not mean to pray using only these words, but to pray in this way. People often reduce this prayer to empty recitation. That is exactly what the Lord Jesus said not to do in v7. The Lord's Prayer is a great prayer, but it is not a prayer with power in itself. We cannot and should not use it as some sort of a magic spell that brings a solution to every situation.

Jesus tells us how He would have us address God - "our Father." The words speak of a family relationship, a closeness, a respect, and the accessibility of a parent. Next, He tells us how we are to envision the Father- "in heaven" (Literally).

"Hallowed be Your name" is a rather important thing we should know about. The word 'hallowed' is coming from Greek word 'hagiazō.' It means "to separate from profane things and dedicate to God, revered." His character is to be held in the highest respect, set apart from every other name that falls from our lips.

If you are using God's name in vain in habit, please stop now. You have no idea whom you are messing with. Some of you often say, "Oh my God," or "Jiminy Christmas." What does that sound like? In my opinion, it is a very similar way of using God's name in vain.

Since I am picking on what people say, I am going to continue. Some pastors prefer to be called, "Reverend." In my opinion, there is only One who deserves to be called, "Reverend." According to His Word in Psalm 111:9, it ain't them, it is God.

Psalm 111:9 He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.

There is nothing reverend about my position, nor my name, nor their positions as pastors. So, don't call me "Reverend Kim," unless you want a dirty glare from me.

The Lord's Prayer is composed of six requests. The first three ask for the kingdom to come in v9-10. And the last three are for God to meet the needs of His people until the kingdom arrives in v11-13.

B. THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE - HIS KINGDOM, HIS WILL

Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

When we come to verse 10, we cross the border into the domain of His rulership. To request that His will be done is, in essence, to submit to it in our own lives.

His name. His kingdom. His will. How quickly we pass over these thoughts in prayer! How often we forget them altogether! But when we start our prayers by concentrating on Him, a right perspective is gained, a respect is established, and authority is put in its proper place.

Somehow in their twisted false doctrines, some Bible teachers and their followers have created God in the image of a divine bellhop. Prayer, for those people, is the ultimate in room service with no tipping and everything is charged to that great credit card with unlimited balance in heaven. Prayer is not a shopping list that we hand to God and tell Him, "Make it so."

We don't get everything we pray to the Lord. However, in His unlimited love and kindness, He answers all of our prayers with "Yes, or No or Wait." We tend to think that when God answers our prayer with "No" or "Wait" answer, we didn't get the answers of our prayers. Yes, although He answered it, we just didn't like what we heard. Would you give your child a credit card without any control in the toy store? Why not, because it is not good for him. You know better than that. So, when your child wants everything in his sight at the toy store, you often say, "No" or "Wait." That is the same thing with our Father in heaven.

C. MAKING OUR NEEDS KNOWN TO GOD

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

In verse 11, the emphasis shifts horizontally to "our daily bread." The reference is symbolic of the necessities of life, not the luxuries.

Php 4:19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Psalms 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.

D. FORGIVENESS FROM HEAVEN, FORGIVENESS FROM US

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

The transition from bread to forgiveness in verse 12 is not as abrupt seems, for what bread is to our bodies, forgiveness is to our souls.

The idea of asking God to forgive us is not that our forgiveness others earns us the right to be forgiven. Forgiven people should be forgiving people.

Let's stop making excuses for the reason why we cannot forgive others while we ask God for His forgiveness for our sins. Let's not tell people who want to make it right with us, "Talk to the hand, because the face is not listening."

Some of you might think, "I have not sinned. Because I didn't kill anyone today." There are sins of commission and sins of omission. We commit our sins because we do when we should not to do. And there is sins of omission that something we should do, but we don't do.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

E. TEMPTATION AND DELIVERANCE

Matthew 6:13a And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.

Refusing to forgive others can be a big temptation. Naturally, unforgiving heart will take us to be tempted in many sins.

To pray "do not lead us into temptation" seems to imply that if we don't pray, He will lead us into temptation. Thus He becomes the one who solicits evil. Most likely, however, the verb "do not lead us" is a permissive imperative and could best be rendered, "Do not allow us to be led into temptation."

James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

The heart of the petition, then, is asking God to rescue us from the one who lies in wait, hungering for our souls.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

F. A FINISHING REMINDER

Matthew 6:13b For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Again, we must be reminding ourselves and submitting to the complete authority of God.

Let's sum up the format that Jesus teaches about how to pray:

Adoration - Praise and worship the Lord our God

Confession - Acknowledge our sins before our God

Thanksgiving - Thank Him for what He is doing in our lives

Supplication - Make our requests known to Him

G. EMPHASIZING FORGIVENESS AGAIN

Matthew 6:14-15 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Here Jesus reemphasizes the all important attitude of forgiving others if we hope to be forgiven ourselves. Two factors are necessary to make this transaction: first, the bedrock of God's grace to us, and second, the transfer of that same grace to others. Forgiveness essentially means providing others with the same forgiveness we receive from the Father.

H. PRAYER CHANGES ONE THING - ME

Earlier, I said that prayer changes nothing. Actually, there is one thing gets changed. It is our hearts. When you and I pray, we get changed. That is one of the major reasons prayer is such a therapy that counteracts anxiety. The true reason for our prayer is to align our hearts with God's hearts, so that we may do His will, not ours.

Prayer is not the least thing we can do for someone or ourselves when we are in tight corners. It is the foremost important for us to do.

Prayer should not be the last resort we can depend on as the situation around us gets uglier. It should be the first thing in our minds to present the situation to the Lord and asking God to have His way in everything.

I. NON-BELIEVERS PRAY IN VAIN

A great pastor and author Donald Barnhouse often closed his church services with the prayer, "Lord, dismiss us with Your peace, except for those who don't know You; keep them miserable until they come to know the Prince of Peace."

If you are not a born-again Christian which means that you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior into your heart, your prayer does not go any further than this ceiling. Since you are not God's child, He does not hear your prayer. But if you choose to come to God, He is all ears.

J. APPLICATIONS

1) His kingdom in our lives should be our foremost concern.

We cannot say, "Your kingdom come," until let our kingdoms go.

2) It is Jesus who prompts us to pray.

His promises prompts me to pray,
His examples insights me to pray,
His warning urges me to pray,
His glory stirs me to pray

3) Prayer should not be done to impress those who around us, but plea to our God.

We should not have that kind of carnal mind set. But with remembering His faithfulness and love for us, let's go to the throne of Grace with a simple confidence in Jesus.

4) Forgiveness of others is not an option before our prayer. It is mandatory.

Let's remind ourselves that it is whom forgiven much will also forgive.