



THE LORD'S PRAYER

KEY SCRIPTURES: Matthew 6:7-13, Ephesians 6:10-18, John 17

The words of the Lord's Prayer are some of the most familiar in scripture, and I would surmise they can even be repeated by some who don't really say much else to God besides those oft-quoted, can-say-them-with-your-heart-shut verses.

Jesus was known for often going into secluded places so He could spend some time praying. And who could blame Him? Word spread quickly about the things He could do, the way He could wipe out debilitating diseases with a single touch or raise people from the dead just because He said so. He was pressed by needy crowds wherever He went. And if it wasn't a needy crowd, it was a legalistic bunch of religious leaders who wanted Him silenced. Not to mention that he faced the demands of teaching a ragtag bunch of fishermen and tax collectors how to save the world. OK, so there was a doctor by the name of Luke in that group, but come on.

Still, with all He faced, He was noticeably different from anyone else. More at peace. More sure. More focused. What was His secret? What did He say when He stole away to speak to heaven that made Him come back to His demands with such calm?

We don't know for sure, but I think we can catch a glimpse of what His heart was by the words He gave His listeners when He was teaching them how to pray. They are the words we have come to know as the Lord's Prayer.

"Our Father in heaven. . ." (Matthew 6:9). Calling God "Father" has become a familiar way for us to start our prayers now, but have you ever stopped to think how new this would have been when Jesus first spoke the words? Everyone knew God was in heaven, but "Father" wasn't their default way of addressing Him. God was called "Father" by some of the psalmists and prophets, but it didn't just roll off of the average person's tongue. Then Jesus showed us a secret. Not only did Jesus call God "Father," He said, *"Our Father."* As in, "He's not just My Father, but if you will believe in what I am about to do, He will be your Father, too."

That changes everything. It means we average-but-Jesus-died-for-us people can speak to God as Father, knowing every single word of our prayers is personally heard.

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"...so we can know our value, live with purpose, and make a difference...**In that order.**"



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"Hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9). Jesus was showing us that God is Sovereign, and He is worthy of our honor and respect, set apart in our lives with a dedication that we give to no one and nothing else.

It means when we pray that we are acknowledging God is above all.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). With these words, Jesus was reminding His listeners that God has the right to be in charge and that it benefits us to be in agreement with His perfect purposes.

We should be praying with the aim that our desires match God's, not that His desires match ours.

"Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). We have to eat, right? And it's good if it's a regular occurrence. Jesus was showing us that our physical needs matter to God and that we can trust Him to care for every need we have.

Bread is about as simple a request as you can have, but there is no unimportant petition in God's eyes if it aligns with His best for us.

"Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). Jesus makes sure we don't forget that prayer isn't just about what we get; it's also about what we give. True prayer gets to the heart, all the way down to where things are stored that can cause us pain.

An effective prayer means we have allowed nothing to remain that could place itself in the way of our receiving God's best. After all, nothing is hidden from Him anyway.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. . ." (Matthew 6:13). Trouble follows us everywhere, and we wouldn't have been given a thorough description of our armor if we weren't meant to fight our troubles with it (Ephesians 6:10-18). Jesus's mention of temptation and evil is our reminder that we are ineffective when we are bound up in turmoil.

Who better to call on for strength than the God of the universe?
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"...for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:13). Yes. Yes. And yes.

To understand the Lord's Prayer as Jesus intended it, it's important to also know what He said before He spoke the actual words that have now become so familiar. *"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray. . ."* (Matthew 6:7-8).

The Lord's Prayer wasn't meant to become something we repeat just to be repeating it. It doesn't contain magical words that flip God's "Send The Answer" switch. It's not about the words at all; it's about the heart. It's a profound declaration of Who God is and who we are to Him.

I can just imagine what it would have been like to overhear Jesus' mountainside or garden prayers. (Could they have sounded something like His prayer in John 17 when He was only hours away from the cross?) To summarize what He said, to portray how much of a blessing prayer is, to capture every detail of what we should pray about is actually a monumental task. But Jesus did so for us with the Lord's Prayer.

Can you hear His heart in it, a heart that He knows you can have, too? Could it sound something like this? *"When you pray, tell God He is your God and your Father because I paid the price for you to call Him both. Tell Him He is everything to you, and that you want what He wants because He knows best. Tell Him you trust Him. Tell Him you need Him. Tell Him you will follow Him anywhere because you know it all belongs to Him."*

And tell Him you love Him.

Yes, Lord, we do love you.

How beautiful a prayer it is.

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