

EXTREME MAKEOVER

Matthew 6:5-13: Talking to Your Dad

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷ “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,
¹² and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Several years ago, when I went to Jerusalem, I noticed a man who would stand on the street corner during certain times of the day and he would pray. What made him stand out was the prayer shawl he had draped over his shoulders. The patterns and the color shouted out to everyone nearby that this was a man of prayer. Now I never talked to the man. I did not know anything else about this man other than there were certain times he would put on this shawl and start praying. As a tourist, I was impressed because of the boldness and devotion.

But Jesus would not have been. He would have concluded his reward was in my admiration, but not from God the Father. The reality is that there are times we “act” in front of others so they may think we have a close relationship with God. Yet for a kingdom follower, God doesn’t want the false pretence, He wants our hearts.

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Now, later I went to old Jerusalem, the site of the Western or "wailing wall" and noticed several Hassidic Jews, reading the Torah on a stand, rocking back and forth and repeating in Hebrew the same phrase. I was told they do that every day and will do so until the Messiah comes. Once again, the public demonstration immersed me and captured my adoration. From all appearances, these men came across as highly spiritual, people you assumed were in tune with God's heart. Yet it struck me, these same pious looking folks share one thing in common, they reject Jesus as Messiah.

During Jesus' day, the term hypocrite, described the actors that performed at the nearby theater. During their performances, actors would put on a mask to portray to the audience a certain character. Ultimately, their masks would consist of a prominent facial expression, such as a big smile, or frown, sad face, so that everyone in the amphitheater would be able to experience the mood projected from afar. Likewise, these street prayers, Jesus indicates, were putting on a performance for all to see. They ked convincing from the outside, but their hearts within were bankrupt of a right relationship with God.

There was this prevailing desire to display their righteousness before men, but Jesus saw right through it.

How should we pray then? Jesus addresses this in a provocative way.

6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Now, Jesus is a point here, not an imperative to pray indoors in a inner chamber as the term is translated. What he is saying is to find a place where you are away from people and other distractions, so you only have an audience of One, God.

For me, I cannot lock myself in a room and stare at the walls, I go crazy. I have to go outside. There is a special place by the river where I can walk the endless trails or sit under the bridge, overlooking the water, as I talk to God. My goal is to try to spend at least one hour there, each day.

I am convinced, without this alone time I cannot know God on a deeper and more personal level. I am convinced likewise, you will not have a substantive relationship with God if you do not make time with Him to be alone.

But it is not just time alone, Jesus demands, it is also to heed what words we utter before God.

7And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9" This, then, is how you should pray:

Have you ever noticed in Scripture, God comes across as a "straight shooter?" He does not come across as some "wordy" God with an English dialect and a Shakespearean script. "This is my son, who I am well pleased. Do what he says."

Trajan, my 20-month old son, is a one word kind of kid when it comes to communication. I often call him "my little caveman." His favorite word used to be "this." Every time he would see an object he wanted, he would simply point to it and say, "this." He has upgraded his speech to "milk," "ball," "Eat," "Juice," anda handful of other one-word favorites. He is simple, direct, and we always know what he wants. Likewise, Jesus wants us to keep our prayer simple.

Speaking of Trajan, the most important detail we understand when we pray to God is that we are also praying to our Father. If you pray like you are talking to dad, then you will be less apprehensive to approach God alone in solitude.

We learn this in this next section, as we study what is known as the Lord's prayer. I want to look at this prayer from the big picture so we can break it down into two main sections. Let us read it as a whole first.

'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
10your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

11Give us today our daily bread.

12Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.' "

The Lord's prayer consists of two sections, the first relating to the preeminence of God; the second towards the petitions of man. It breaks down in this manner.

In Relation to God

1. Hallowed be your name
2. your kingdom, may it come
3. your will be done as it is in heaven.

In relation to man

1. Give us our daily bread
2. Forgive us our debts
3. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

The key to unlocking this prayer is to mediate on the first two words, *Our Father*.

It is stunning to understand we have permission from the God of the universe, the creator of everything, the give of life and breath, to address Him as *Our Father*.

Many of you know, I lost my father at the age of seven. I loved my father, I adored my father. But he was taken from his son much too early in life. Eventually, my mom remarried but I never thought of my step-dad in the same way as my father. I was simply devastated to lose my father. As a result, when God revealed Himself to me and became my Father, I was able to have that father figure I missed out on as a child. God is my Father, that is huge.

Now unfortunately, many people, maybe even you, did not have a good role model as a father. Some I have talked to, even married, spoke of abuse, sexual assault, neglect, and hurtful emotional scars that still linger today. For you, it is hard to think of God as a Father because of what you experienced. The only thing I can say is I am sorry that your father did not model the example that God the Father has always set for fathers. You have to understand, God did not fail you; your biological father did. God the Father wants to replace your

experience with a Father who loves you unconditionally and cares for you deeply. He wants to show you how a father is supposed to be in life.

Like my children, His desire is that you feel comfortable to approach Him in all circumstances like a father. My children do not have any trouble approaching me because I try hard to model the characteristics God has established for all fathers to adhere to as a parent.

The very first two words of the Lord's prayer are profound. Like Jesus, he wants us to address Him as a Father. The creator of the universe wants you to call him, daddy.

The model Jesus is not a phrase we are simply to repeat, but it is a model that can help guide us in knowing what kinds of things we should pray for in life. The first three petitions are meant to glorify God.

- **Hallowed be Your Name:** This simply means, may your name be exalted and praised beyond all names. May people utter it not as a curse word, or as an expression of frustration, but as a name that is proclaimed for all its glory. As a father, I want my sons to call me dad because I have demonstrated positive examples of what that privileged title should convey. One of the most pleasant sounds when I come home and my children proclaim, dada. Ultimately, they are happy to see me because I have been a good dad to them. Likewise, God has been a good Father to us. We should proclaim His name like he just walked in the door.
- **Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done:** This is hard for many of us to grasp because we have acclimated, and in many situations, desensitized by our culture. But we are at war! The cosmic battle of good and evil rages for your soul. May your kingdom come; may your will be done is a way of saying that God our Father represents the kingdom of goodness and our desire to have Him conquer the kingdom of darkness. Ultimately, His will is to see His children in heaven so they can live in an environment where there will never be a possibility of His children being hurt. Were His children will be safe from tears, hurt, and ultimately, death itself.
- **Give us our daily bread:** This is the first petition for our personal provision. Like a child who asks of things from his father, so God wants to provide good things for his children. Now as a father, there are some things I will not allow my children to have because it would do more harm than good. For example, Korban's grandparents sent him a video of his grandfather cutting down a tree with a chainsaw. What do you suppose Korban wanted after that display of forestry. He wanted a chainsaw, which would not benefit him today. As children of God, we should ask our Father for provision, but we must do so in the context of our Father's will. 1 John 5:14-15 puts it like this:

1 John 5:14

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

I want my children to ask me for provision because it is my desire to bless them and see them filled with joy. In the same way, Jesus wants us to come to the Father like a child so we can receive good gifts and be filled with joy. Some of you may have had a father who never gave good gifts. This is not the case with your heavenly Father. Therefore, have the confidence of a child and ask your Father for His provision.

- **Forgive our debts:** Many Christians have not developed a deeper relationship with God the Father because their sinful habits. I know many men, even several pastors, who struggle with pornography and it has affected their intimacy with God. Ultimately, their prayer life is essentially non-existent. Many folks have been raised to look at asking for forgiveness as a sign of weakness. However, what keeps a person weak is un-confessed sin.

Several weeks ago, Korban left his stuffed Elmo doll at the park. Several hours later we realized this, but when we arrived, Elmo was gone. Later that night we went to Target and he told me that he was mad because Elmo was taken. He waited several minutes and concluded this time, he was really mad. Still several minutes later, he proclaimed he was super mad.

As we talked about his Elmo, Korban concluded that a little baby must have taken him. I asked him if he was still mad. He said, I am not mad anymore dada. The kid did not have an Elmo. I forgive him. This is the kind of heart that does a father proud. When we do something wrong, we ask forgiveness, when others wrong us, we work toward that freeing state.

- **Lead us not into temptation:** Jesus ends his prayer model discussion by stating we should ask God to help us not be in a situation where we are tempted. Now this does not mean that God tempts us. James addresses this issue in his epistle.

James 1:13-14

¹³Let 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.

¹⁴But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire^(A) when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and^(B) sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

As James states, we are tempted not by God, by our own desires. The key to your Father's deliverance is when you admit this reality and ask for His deliverance. Any father wants to rescue his son or daughter when they are in trouble. Many would give their own life in order to assure the safety of their children. In the end, this is exactly what God your Father did when He sent His son to die and be a substitute on your behalf. He saw that your desires were leading you toward condemnation. Therefore, he came up with a plan to deliver you, His child. A loving Father will always rescue their children when they are in trouble.

Conclusion: If you get anything today from the Lord's Prayer, I hope it is that God is not some powerful and distant entity who has no interest in his creation. On the contrary, God does care for you like a Father. He wants you to freely approach Him as His child. If you can grab hold of this, then you will discover that prayer is not the burden that our perceptions seem to portray. Instead, prayer is another opportunity to talk to your Father who deeply loves and cares for you.