

THE LORD'S PRAYER

COREY STARK

Divine Insight for a Victorious Prayer Life

I. THE MODEL PRAYER FOR DEVELOPING A GREAT PRAYER LIFE FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE

A. After asked, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Lk. 11:1), Jesus first describes *how not to pray* by highlighting two opposite groups (hypocrites and heathen) with two common challenges to avoid: motivation to be *seen by men* (Mt. 6:5) and confidence to be heard for *using many words* (Mt. 6:7).

Mt. 6:5 When you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. They love to pray standing... on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men... they have their reward... 7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words...

B. Jesus describes three powerful truths about the Father that form the way *we approach God in prayer* – His intimate accessibility produces rest in us. His extravagant generosity gives us great expectation and His wisdom causes us to trust His leadership. Jesus also lists three foundational principles that give us insight on *how to pray*, helping us *overcome* the previous challenges – privately, personally, confidently.

Mt. 6:6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly... 8 For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

C. Jesus then teaches us *what to say* (vs. 9-13). This is a *model*, indicated by "In this manner" (v. 9). The power isn't in saying these exact words, but in understanding the model and regularly incorporating it into our personal prayer life. It gives insight into *what God is like*, how the *kingdom operates* and the *role of prayer*. These few verses tell us the *essential things* that we must know and keep central in developing a strong prayer life. It covers all of the *foundational basics* that are expanded throughout the rest of Scripture.

Mt. 6:9 In this manner [model], therefore, pray: 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 forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

D. Jesus highlights *six requests* that we should offer regularly. Each request is like the tip of a massive iceberg of truth, having many implications, layers and applications lying just below the surface for all who desire to search them out (Pr. 25:2). The full glory of this prayer is only seen in context to understanding all six requests in relationship to one another and according to the revelation of "Our Father in Heaven" (v. 9).

1. The first three requests focus on *God's glory* – His name, His kingdom and His will (vs. 9-10).
2. The second three requests focus on *man's needs* – physical, relational and spiritual (vs. 11-13).

E. Jesus ends His teaching by highlighting two principles that are vital in developing a victorious prayer life – approaching God with *confidence* and *persevering* in faithful prayer until the end (Lk. 11:5-10; 11-13).

Lk. 11:8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence [perseverance] he will rise and give him as many as he needs. (see also Lk. 18:1-8)

Lk. 11:13 If you then, being [impaired by] evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!

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II. THE NECESSITY OF SPEAKING TO GOD IN ATTAINING THE FULLNESS OF HIS DESIRE

A. Many are content to live far below God's highest and best simply because they *do not* pray (Isa. 30:18-19; Ezek. 22:30; Jas. 4:2). Prayer is much more than just *thinking* about our problems or *complaining* about our circumstances to our friends.

Isa. 30:18 *The LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you... For the LORD is a God of justice... 19 He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. (Jas. 4:2)*

Jas. 4:2 *You do not have because you do not ask.*

B. To attain the fullness of God's sovereign desire and original design for our lives we *must speak* to God (Hos. 14:2). *God will not do our part and we cannot do His part*". If we do not do our part in intercession, some of the sovereignly ordained blessing of God's heart that He would have joyfully given is inaccessible. Think of prayer as co-signing a divine check, giving access to untold billions!

Hos. 14:2 *Return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled... 2 Take words with you, and return to the Lord. Say to Him... "Receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips."*

C. The priestly ministry of prayer is clearly the *primary way* God advances His Kingdom and releases His governmental power through Jesus and with His people, now and forever! This is seen in Jesus engaging in intercession *forever* (Ps. 110:4; Isa. 53:12; Lk. 22:32; 23:34; Rom. 8:34; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 15, 17, 21, 25; 1 Jn. 2:1). Prayer is simply our conversation with God. *He speaks and moves our heart, then we speak simple words and move His heart and He opens His hand to release His power.*

Heb. 7:25 *He [Jesus] is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*

Rom. 8:34 *Christ... who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

D. Jesus operated in the "*principle of intercession*" when He created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1). The Father, having deep thoughts and plans burning in His heart, ordained that His Son would speak out those thoughts as the means to release the Holy Spirit's creative power. Jesus is clearly identified as the Creator who spoke, "*let there be...*" (Gen. 1; Ps. 33:9; Jn. 1:1-3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:13-17; Heb. 1:2; 11:3).

Gen. 1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void... and the Spirit of God was hovering [waiting] over the... waters. 3 God [Jesus] said, "Let there be light"; and there was light... 11 God [Jesus] said, "Let the earth bring forth grass... and it was so."*

E. Too often we focus solely on the end result, while God is looking at the process, because He loves the dialogue and interaction with us. Many times He even withholds the sovereignly ordained blessing of His heart that He joyfully longs to give until the dialogue begins. For example, giving Jesus a mature bride was already in the Father's heart, yet He required Jesus to ask as the *only means* of receiving the fullness of His inheritance (Gen. 1; Eph. 5; Ps. 2:8). This reveals much about *what God is like*, how the *kingdom operates* and the *role of prayer*. God loves to surprise us with His creativity and generosity in answering (Eph. 3:20).

Ps. 2:7 *The LORD [Father] has said to Me [Jesus], "You are My Son... 8 Ask of Me [intercession], and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth as Your possession."*

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III. HAVING THE RIGHT VIEW OF GOD IN PRAYER – OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN (MT. 6:9)

A. Foundational to a strong prayer life is having a *correct view* of God. A.W. Tozer insisted that a low view of God has been the greatest problem in the Church in every generation. By having an incorrect view of God we can adopt an incorrect view of prayer as boring, difficult and irrelevant. We can easily misinterpret the way God answers prayer or the delayed answer. We can fall prey to imagining that we are enduring the dialogue and “paying the price” in prayer with a cold, stingy and distant God. However, one of the greatest ways to grow strong in our prayer life quickly is by *adopting a biblical view* of the One we are talking to.

B. In Mt. 6:9 Jesus set the context of intimacy with God in prayer alongside His eternal sovereignty and transcendent power by using the phrase “*Our Father in Heaven*”. He combined God’s *fatherly love* with His *heavenly power*. God is both *personal* and *powerful*. He is both *tender* and *transcendent*. He is the Most High God who reaches so low to connect personally with His children (Isa. 57:15). We cannot understand either dimension properly without holding the other in equal tension. Holding a wrong view of either facet of God’s personality will greatly diminish the consistency, effectiveness and intimacy of our prayer life.

Mt. 6:9 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

1. *Our Father* – This speaks of His *personal involvement* in the minute details of our day-to-day lives (provision, protection, direction), His *tenderness* with our weakness, His desire to overwhelm us with His *goodness* and surprise us with His *creative generosity*, His *deep affection* for us as His children whom He loves to celebrate and the *joyful pleasure* that He feels in our partnership with Him.
2. The Father longs for *deep relationship* with us that matures into an *enjoyable partnership*. I don’t love my 2-year old any less because the relationship is less mature, but clearly the partnership I experience with my 15-year old brings me a deep enjoyment that is related to the maturity of our relationship.
3. *In Heaven* – This speaks of His *eternal sovereignty* as the One seated upon the throne (Dan. 7; Rev. 4), ruling over the kingdoms and affairs of men (Ps. 2; Isa. 40; Dan. 2:20-22; 4:35), His *infinite power* as the Creator (Gen. 1-2), His *transcendent majesty* and His *indescribable beauty and glory* (Rev. 4).
4. As the *transcendent Creator*, God is outside of every known category and classification of man, both known and unknown. God is not simply the most wise or most loving or most powerful being, but rather He is completely outside of the category altogether because He is infinite. His greatness is unsearchable (Ps. 145:3). There is no end to any facet of His character, nature or personality. He is “wholly other than” anything that exists and far above everything that we understand (and don’t) forever!

C. We are created to be eternally fascinated by the Holy Incomprehensible (Pr. 25:2). The good news is that the Holy Spirit, like a divine “search engine” longs to reveal the deep things of God’s heart and mind to us!

1 Cor. 2:9 “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God... 12 Now we have received... the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

Jn. 16:13 The Spirit of truth... will guide you into all truth (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14; 1 Jn. 2:27)

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IV. OUR FATHER – PERSONAL CONFIDENCE TO APPROACH GOD AND GROW IN HIS LOVE

A. Prayer begins with the Person of God Himself, as our heavenly Father who is *personally involved* (Song 2:6; 8:3), *tender* in our weakness, *generous*, *joyful* and *deeply affectionate* toward His children. We come to an intimately personal yet majestic God with great confidence, devotion, dedication and expectation.

B. As we pray, we must intentionally meditate upon the *self-revelation* of God – who God reveals Himself to be in His Word. Though we were created for spiritual encounters (Jn. 5:39-40), if they are not grounded in the truth of the Word of God we open ourselves up to emotional fantasy, hype and deception. When asked about the end of the age, Jesus first warned the disciples about deception (Mt. 24:4).

C. Jesus' *strong emphasis* on the Father heart of God to the Jewish people was startling and revolutionary. Although God was known in the O.T. as Father *doctrinally* (1 Chr. 29:10), it was not expressed *practically*. Israel sought to keep their distance from the God whom they knew as a *transcendent Creator* (Gen. 1-2) and *eternal Sovereign* (Isa. 6), who caused all to tremble before His majestic power (Ex. 19). Jesus revealed the Father as One who *instantly receives* (without probation), *fully restores* (100% not just “better than broken”) and *openly celebrates* the uniqueness of His children, so we don't have to convince Him to like us (Ps. 139).

Lk. 15:20 But when he was still a great way off, his FATHER saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said, 'Father, I have sinned... and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. 23 Let us eat and be merry; 24 for MY SON was dead and is alive again...'

D. Jesus taught that Israel's *Creator* was also their *Father*. He desired to shift their relationship with God from *fear-based* to *faith-based*, giving them the correct framework to more clearly interpret all of His other attributes, characteristics and qualities. Jesus taught that the Father was intimately involved *not* distant, attentive *not* disconnected, engaged *not* apathetic, tender towards us *not* harsh, delighted in us *not* disappointed, generous *not* stingy, joyful *not* angry and affectionate towards us *not* cold. He uses His infinite *power* as the transcendent Creator to establish the wisdom of His *plans* as a tender Father (Rev. 21:7).

Rev. 21:7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

E. By seeing both dimensions of God's *transcendent power* as Creator and *tender affections* as Father, the Jewish people were to be empowered to confidently draw near to His heart, even in the midst of their weakness and deep brokenness (Lk. 8:2). As our *tender Father* we approach Him in confident expectation. As the *transcendent Creator* we partner with Him in bold faith to release His will on earth as in heaven!

F. Jesus greatly elaborated on the Father heart of God is. As the eternal Word of God (Jn. 1:1-3, 14; Rev. 19:13), Jesus came as the Father's divine communication to live out what He's thinking and feeling, as a living, breathing example of the Father's heart before all. When we see Jesus, we see the Father (Jn. 14:7-11). It's not just a *title* that He claims or *role* that he plays, but God *is* a Father at the very core of His Being. He thinks, feels and relates to us *like* a Father who longs for and deeply enjoys us, because He *is* a Father.

G. He is not just “*a*” Father, but “*my*” Father in a deep, intimate and personal way. He is not only “*my*” Father, but “*our*” Father. We pray to *our* Father for *our* daily bread, and forgiveness of *our* sins, and victory over *our* temptations. Our prayer requests are tempered with the realities of who we are to God as children in one royal family (Eph. 3:15). We are to pray for the whole family and not just for ourselves (Eph. 6:18).

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V. IN HEAVEN – FASCINATED BY THE TRANSCENDENT GLORY OF THE ETERNAL SOVEREIGN

A. Jesus gave Mt. 6:9 to John whom He knew He would visit in about 70 years (Jn. 16:12-14; Rev. 4-5).

**Rev. 4:1 And the first voice [Jesus]... saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things...”
2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne set in heaven, and One [Father] sat on the throne.**

B. Revelation 4-5 is one scene, giving us insight into what God considers “heaven”. Revelation 4:1-7 outline five categories of God’s beauty, each having 3 specific themes. These 15 details are *doorways* having many implications that the Holy Spirit will use to escort us into the beauty of God (1 Cor. 2:9-11).

Pr. 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

1. The beauty of the *Godhead*: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Rev. 4:1-2, 5b).
2. The beauty of God’s *Person*: how God looks, feels and acts (Rev. 4:3)
3. The beauty of God’s *Partners*: the saints enthroned, robed and crowned (Rev. 4:4)
4. The beauty of God’s *Power*: manifestations of power in lightning, thunder and voices (Rev. 4:5a)
5. The beauty of God’s *Presence*: holy fire upon the saints, sea and seraphim (Rev. 4:4, 6-7; 15:2)

C. Rev. 4 reveals the *Father’s Throne* and “*Holy of Holies*”, which is the most intense dwelling place of God and central reality adorning the pinnacle of the eternal *Celestial City* (Gen. 1:6-10; Job 22:12, 14; Ps. 8:1; 102:19; 104:1-4; 113:4-6; 148:1-6; Am. 9:5-6; 2 Cor. 12:2), called the “*New Jerusalem*” (Rev. 3:12; 21:2, 9, 22). Rev. 4 gives us the *clearest picture of His power and beauty* found anywhere in Scripture, referred to it as the “*beauty realm of God*” as it reveals the *perfection of beauty* (Ps. 50:2; 119:96). What the beautiful God set around Himself was designed to reveal specific aspects of His glory to the rest of the created order. The Father’s royal court is adorned with seraphim, cherubim, elders, saints and angels, as His light, wind, fire, glory, music and fragrance all flow across the vast sapphire crystal sea.

Ps. 119:96 I have seen the consummation [fullness] of all perfection [beauty, majesty, glory, etc.]...

Ps. 50:2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth.

D. God’s Throne is the *governmental epicenter* of the entire universe; upholding, empowering and directing *human history* (Job 34:21-30; Ps. 2:1-12; 94:10; 103:19; 119:89; Dan. 2:20-22; 4:17, 25, 34-37; 7:13-14, 18, 22, 27; Rom. 13:1-7; Rev. 6:1-8; 13:5-8), while effortlessly sustaining the *entire created order* (Isa. 40:12-17, 21-26; Mt. 5:45; Rev. 8:7-12) through worship-driven prayer fueled by the beauty of God (Rev. 4:8).

Rev. 5:8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp [music], and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals...”

E. We don’t verbalize ideas into the air, but speak to a *real Person* on a Throne in a *real place* at the height of the New Jerusalem (Ps. 102:19; 113:4-6). Why is this important? Because it gives us insight into our *home*, our *future inheritance* and the place we *currently appear* before God in prayer and worship (Eph. 2:6; Heb. 4:16). Revelation 4 gives a *focus to our faith*. We will cherish our relationship with Him much more when we see Him clearly as the transcendent Creator and eternal Sovereign (Dan. 7:9-10; Rev. 4).

Heb. 4:16 Come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace... in time of need.

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VI. PRAYING FOR GOD'S GLORY – HIS NAME, HIS KINGDOM, HIS WILL (MT. 6:9-10)

A. *Praying for God's Name to be Honored*: The first and primary petition is for the Father's majestic name to be *seen, understood* and *responded to* throughout the earth in a proper way (Mal. 1:11). That we would do it personally and inspire others. God's "name" specifically refers to the Father's character and nature.

Mt. 6:9 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

B. *Praying for God's Kingdom to Come*: The second petition is for the kingdom to increase. The kingdom is where God's word is obeyed, His will is done and His ways are manifest (i.e. healing the sick, casting out demons, etc. Mt. 11:5; 12:28). We are to be "change agents" in every sphere of society, as originally mandated to Adam (Gen. 1:26-28), confirmed (Ps. 115:16; Mt. 28:18-20) and fulfilled in Jesus (Dan. 7:27).

Mt. 6:10 Your kingdom come.

C. *Praying for God's Will to be Done*: The third request includes God's will being manifest on earth as it is in heaven. We primarily understand God's *general will* by first studying the Scriptures and by discovering what they have to say about heaven, where His will is done exclusively. We may also seek to know God's *specific will* in our personal lives through the Holy Spirit and by watching His emphasis in our generation. We seek God's will in our *personal lives* (individually, family, friends), the *Church* (local ministry assignments, missions abroad), and *civil government* (cities, states, nations). God's will consists of His commands, promises and plans. Jesus prayed the Father's will be fulfilled three times (Mt. 26:39, 42, 44).

Mt. 6:10 Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

VII. PRAYING FOR PERSONAL NEEDS – PHYSICAL, RELATIONAL, SPIRITUAL (MT. 6:11-13)

A. *Praying for All of Our Natural Needs*: The fourth request is for our *daily* provision, protection and direction. The "bread" here refers to *all* our natural needs. Sometimes we might prefer the monthly or yearly installments, yet God prefers the daily interaction and dependence upon Him, because He is relational.

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

B. *Praying for the Grace of Forgiveness*: The fifth petition concerns our relationship with God and people. We don't earn our forgiveness, but the forgiven freely forgive (Mt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35; Mk. 11:25-26).

Mt. 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

C. *Prayer for Deliverance from Evil*: The sixth petition is prayer for deliverance, prior to the temptation even occurring. This "pre-temptation prayer" is one of the most important, yet neglected types of prayer. It expresses humility that depends on God's strength as we acknowledge our weakness. The Bible describes "opportune times" (Lk. 4:13) when three elements converge to destroy us – *demonic activity* is heightened, our *emotions* are aroused (fears or lusts), and *circumstances* are optimum for failure. Prayer can *minimize, delay* or in some cases *totally avert* the temptation altogether. Jesus prayed for Peter's faith to *not* fail (Lk. 22:32), yet this *did not* relieve Peter from his personal responsibility to pray as well (Mt. 26:41).

Mt. 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.