

The Spiritual Discipline of Prayer and The Manner of a Disciple's Prayer

Chapter 18

Audio lesson: Sermon on the Mount 18



Object: To understand the spiritual discipline of prayer. (Text: Matthew 6:5-15)



“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. 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.”

—Matthew 6:5-9

Jesus taught His disciples how to pray with a prayer we often call “The Lord’s Prayer.” But this prayer really should be called “the Disciples’ Prayer” because Jesus never prayed it Himself. He said this is how we should pray. Jesus tells us to pray in a place where we can shut the door and be alone, where there is no one to impress but God.

The model prayer contains providential petitions, which are prayer requests that put God’s concerns first. It also contains personal petitions, which are prayer requests about the needs of the disciple. This fits with the consistent biblical message of putting God first. When we do this, we are not coming to God with a shopping list of what He can do for us, but asking what we can do for Him. He answers our personal petitions when we have aligned our will with His.

1. True or **false**? When Jesus tells us to pray in secret, He means that we should never pray in a public worship service.
2. **True** or false? The main thing to remember in any kind of prayer is that we are talking to God and not trying to impress the people around us.
3. **True** or false? Addressing God as “Father” was a new and radical concept for Jesus’ disciples.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one best answer for each question.

4. In the following list, underline each request that is a “God-first” providential petition. Then put a checkmark by each request that is a personal petition for the disciple’s own needs.

Hallowed be your name

✓ Give us today our daily bread

✓ Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors

Your will be done

✓ Deliver us from the evil one

Your kingdom come

✓ Lead us not into temptation

5. Why is it important to understand that God is our *Father*? (choose all that apply)

a. It shows that He is a personal God and as his children we can talk to Him.

b. It shows that He is interested in the details of our lives.

c. It means that we do not have to approach Him through a priest.

d. Because this idea is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament.

6. What do we mean when we pray “hallowed be your name”?

a. That God’s name is too holy to speak

b. That we want to live in such a way that people revere His name

c. That the key to prayer is knowing how to properly address God

d. That no one can ever really know Him

7. What do we mean when we pray “your kingdom come”?

a. We are ready for Jesus to return

b. We want God to overthrow earthly governments

c. We want to be in His kingdom and not our own

8. What does Jesus mean by “our daily bread”?

a. Bread represents all our needs

b. That we should be content just with bread, nothing more

c. Bread only as a metaphor for spiritual food

9. Why does Jesus list forgiveness first among the spiritual petitions?

a. It is our most important need.

b. His disciples were particularly guilty of sin.

c. God is reluctant to forgive and needs to be persuaded.

10. When we pray to be delivered from the evil one, what are we really asking God to do?

a. Take us out of the world.

b. Use His strength to defend us against Satan.

c. Make us immune to temptation and sin.



Do your prayers focus on God first? Which petition in the Disciples' Prayer do you pray least frequently? Spend some time focusing on that petition today.



Pray the Disciples' Prayer today, meditating on each thought:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

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. Amen."

—Matthew 6:9-13



Going Deeper

1. What is meant by the “grace of giving,” and why do we need that when we practice the spiritual discipline of giving? _____

2. Why is the spiritual discipline of prayer to be practiced in private? _____

3. Do you believe in a God who “*is*” rather than one who “*was*”? What is the difference? _____

4. What is meant by “vain repetitions”? Give an example. Why is it wrong? _____

5. What/who should be the focus in the spiritual discipline of prayer? Why? _____

6. Why is it important to understand that God is our *Father*? _____

7. God knows our needs before we ask. How do the four personal petitions summarize our needs? _____

8. Why is this prayer more the “Disciple’s Prayer” than “the Lord’s Prayer”? _____

9. To whom should prayer be addressed? How and why is this not always the case in many prayers? _____

10. What is the difference between multiple uses of a prayer and “vain repetition” in prayer?

11. Briefly describe what you mean when you pray, “Hallowed be Your name,” “Your will be done,” “Your kingdom come.” _____

12. Record all the names of God you find in Scripture. Use a Bible Dictionary or other Bible study tools as necessary. Which of these represent God as you have experienced Him? _____

13. What is meant by the “kingdom of God”? _____

14. How does Pastor Woodward explain the phrase, “Lead us not into temptation”? _____
