

So, How And Why Do We Pray?

" 'When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! '" Matthew 6:5-8

Opening Prayer

"Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.

May your Kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

**Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.**

And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one."

Matthew 6:9-13

Check-In (Share Prayer Experience)

Video ("Why Pray?" from *Prayer*)

1. Jesus is reported in the Gospels to have spent a lot of time praying. He often went to a solitary place and prayed, especially at difficult times in His ministry (Matthew 14:23, 26:36-41, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, 6:12). He gave us a pretty good

prayer, which has become a model prayer for us. It covers the key areas of what we want to say to God:

First, we call God by the affectionate term "Father." We adore him and acknowledge that he is not only our Father, but the creator of all universes, of all that is seen and unseen, the source of all wonder, and we praise His holy name:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. (NLT, Matthew 6:9)

We pray that the Kingdom of God will overtake this flawed earthly kingdom. We ask that God's will be done on earth in all things, and particularly in our lives:

May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. (NLT, Matthew 6:10)

We ask to be given the things we and world need for life, but we don't ask for things we merely desire, and we don't ask at the beginning of the prayer. We first call on the name of our Father, we praise him, and we pray for his will to be done. Then we ask:

Give us today the food we need, (NLT, Matthew 6:11)

We acknowledge that we sin against our Father and our neighbor and ask forgiveness and acknowledge that we must also forgive our neighbor who sins against us (Matthew 5:44, 6:14-15, Mark 11:25, Luke 6:28):

and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. (NLT, Matthew 6:12)

Finally, we ask for the strength to resist temptation and evil, because they constantly surround us and we are always challenged by them. (Luke 22:40):

And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. (NLT, Matthew 6:13)

This simple prayer is our best one. We may use many other prayers during this course. We will learn to pray our own prayers in private and aloud in this group. But this prayer is the basis for what we say to the Father.

2. "At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name."

John 16:23

God has no gender, male or female. Still, we traditionally refer to God as Father. Some people have poor, even traumatic, experiences of their fathers. The thought of father is not a pleasant one. Are there other ways we can think of God when we pray...ways that may be more comforting for some? Discuss.

3. " And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people 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."

Luke 11:9-13

Some people interpret this as saying we will get anything we ask of God. How does that interpretation fit with the Lord's Prayer? How do you interpret it? Does a wise parent give a child everything they ask? Is prayer worthwhile if we can't expect to get everything we ask for? Why pray? Does God care?

Closing Observations

Assignment(s): Daily Prayer for Ten Minutes

" And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for."

1 John 5:14-15

Sharing Prayer Needs

Closing Prayer

All Bible quotes are from the New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.