



First Baptist Church Selmer

SERMON ON THE MOUNT • HOW TO PRAY! • MATTHEW 6:9-15 • 10/26/2025

MAIN POINT

Jesus didn't just condemn the Pharisees' hypocritical practice of prayer, but gave His followers (and us today) an example of what prayer should look like.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What one word would you use to describe your prayer life right now? Why?

If your prayer life could be different in one way, how would you have it change?

Do you think prayer is important to God? Why or why not?

In the book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney states, "statistical surveys and experience seem to agree that a large percentage of professing Christians spend little time in sustained prayer. While they may offer a sentence of prayer here and there throughout their day, they rarely spend more than a very few minutes - if that - alone in conversation with God. It's very easy to make people feel guilty about failure in prayer... But we must come to grips with the fact that to be like Jesus, we must pray."

Most of us live with a sense of guilt about our prayer lives. We recognize that it's important, and yet few of us are really satisfied with this discipline in our lives. Part of that dissatisfaction is the tension about prayer we find in the Bible: Is it more about talking or listening? Verbal or internal? Alone or with others? Praying through a list or what comes to mind in the moment? The answer to all these questions is "yes." Because it's easy to be confused in regard to prayer, Jesus took time to show us what talking to God really looks like.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:9-13.

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."* (ESV)

Jesus first of all told us to pray intimately, knowing that God is our Father. Why is it important that this intimacy is the governing aspect of the whole prayer?

What obstacles could there be in someone's life and experience in approaching God as a Father who loves them?

How does knowing that He is your Father change the way you pray?

The way we interact with our earthly fathers has formed, whether we know it or not, our view of God as our Father. In verses 1-18, Jesus refers to God as "*Father*" ten different times. As Daniel Akin states, "Prayer is a child of God taking to his heavenly Father and listening to the Father by his Word illumined by the Spirit." A big part of relating to God in prayer is beginning to believe that He is a Father who loves us. This frees us from having mechanical and rehearsed prayers. We can approach Him with confidence because we know He loves us.

Do you struggle with praying for God's name to be hallowed? What's different about that kind of prayer and the way you usually pray?

Along with praying reverently, we must also pray submissively as we ask God's kingdom to come. Is it difficult for you to pray for God's kingdom to come? Why or why not?

When we pray, we must recognize that God is worthy of our worship and our submission. This idea refers to the reverence for who God is. Akin in *The Christ-Centered Commentary* states, "The idea is that as we pray, we admire, esteem, honor, revere, treasure, and value God's name above everything else." He should be the center of our prayers, not ourselves. When we pray for His name to be hallowed and His kingdom to come, we are consciously placing Him at the center of our lives.

The next phrase, a prayer for our daily bread, is a call to pray practically and persistently. Why did Jesus tell us to pray specifically for our "daily" bread?

We must also pray obediently and cautiously when we pray for forgiveness and for God not to lead us into temptation. What are some ways you need these attributes to be integrated into your own prayer life?

Even though we have the freedom through the gospel to approach God with confidence, we must also pray with a recognition of our own weakness. Although culturally, most of us do not experience the daily struggle to obtain food, many people throughout the world (and our community) do. A heart in tune with one's own weakness cries out in prayer for God's provision. Although we may see this verse as one of physical need, it is far deeper than that. Akin states, "We must not let availability of food trick us into thinking we are self-sufficient and do not need God to provide our daily needs."

Verses 12-13 show us that prayer aligns us to God's will, and one of the most difficult ways to do that is through forgiving others. In addition, we must also be cautious in our prayers. We must recognize our own weakness and pray that God will lead us through trials so they will not become temptations. It is quite understandable that each of us would seek to have God forgive us of our sins, but extending that same forgiveness to others would require divine intervention. Our prayers should ask God for the strength to do just that. "One of the chief evidences of true penitence is a forgiving spirit." - John Stott.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 6:14-15

14 "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (ESV)

Why is choosing not to forgive others not an option if you are a believer?

Is there someone in your life that you have refused, until this point, to forgive? Why must you move forward with forgiveness?

It has been said, "Not forgiving someone is like drinking poison but hoping the other person will die." Jesus doesn't leave it up to our interpretation when it comes to forgiving others. If you want God to forgive you, you MUST forgive. Understanding that we must forgive others is simple, but choosing (and living) in forgiveness is not easy. In the book *The Gospel for Disordered Lives*, Jones, Kellen, and Green state, "We all desperately need God's forgiveness. Bitter people essentially declare they don't."

One cannot walk in fellowship with God if they choose rather to live in unforgiveness. As Thomas Watson states, "We are not bound to trust an enemy, but we are bound to forgive him."

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Think back to all those characteristics of talking to God. Which is the most challenging for you right now? Why?

What is one practical way the nature of your prayers needs to change?

What about when we pray together as a group? What are some ways we can align our prayers with the pattern Jesus put before us?

PRAYER

Using Jesus' prayer as a guide, lead your group to pray through these characteristics as you close your group..

COMMENTARY

| MATTHEW 6:9-15

6:9. By commanding His disciples to pray like this rather than simply "pray this," Jesus demonstrated that this prayer was offered as a model rather than a mantra to be recited. Your name be honored as holy suggests that Jesus expected His disciples to live righteous

lives that honor rather than profane God's name (5:16; Lev 22:31-32). This is an important precondition for successful prayer.

God is the ideal Father—all-loving, all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful, and always present with us. At the same time, He is in heaven, which tells us He is greater than we can comprehend; so we approach Him as our Father with due reverence. The first-person plural pronoun *our* implies that Jesus intended this prayer to be a model for corporate prayer, i.e., a prayer for when disciples gather as a group. This confirms that Matt. 6:5 was not intended to prohibit disciples from praying together publicly in the synagogue or other gatherings, but instead prohibited prayers that were motivated by religious showmanship.

The first request is that the Father's name be honored as holy (v. 9). One's name in biblical thought stood for the person. The Father's covenant name is Yahweh (Exodus 3:14). This petition is that God will help all people everywhere to recognize the Lord God Almighty as He revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and honor Him accordingly (see John 6:44).

6:10. Your kingdom come could be translated "Your reign come." The kingdom has come in the hearts of all who have submitted to Jesus as Lord. It is also coming as more people yield their hearts to His reign. The kingdom will not have come fully, though, until Jesus returns and establishes it absolutely and forever. This petition asks the Father to bring people under His reign.

To pray for the Father to see that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven frightens some people. They fail to distinguish between what God desires and what He permits. He desires all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9), but He permits many to turn from Him. He desires all of us to keep His commands, but He permits our disobedience and the destruction it causes. We live, therefore, in a world cursed by sin. Even so, the Father weaves even sin's consequences into a pattern that ultimately will achieve His good will (Romans 8:28). Heaven is the only place free of sin and its painful effects. We should daily pray for the future consummation of God's rule in which He will reign fully and completely over the world.

6:11. The prayer's focus shifts from God's eternal purposes to our temporal needs. We are to request what we need to sustain life, such as daily bread (Matthew 6:11). Daily may be understood as "for today" or "for tomorrow," in either case pointing to immediate need. Daily bread was the amount of bread necessary to survive for a day. The request is reminiscent of Proverbs 30:8-9. Jesus wanted His disciples to live in a state of constant dependence on God and His provision. This prayer reminds us that our Father ultimately

is our Provider. As a wise father, God provides what we need, not necessarily what we want.

6:12. We also are to ask for forgiveness. Debts are sins viewed as obligations to the Father. The Greek grammar indicates that the disciple prays for forgiveness from God only after having first expressed forgiveness to others. We dare not take lightly the rest of the verse: as we also have forgiven our debtors (see also vv. 14-15). At least two biblical teachings about salvation seem in conflict with the words forgive us... as we also have forgiven (v. 12; see also vv. 14-15; 18:21-35). (1) Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-10). That rules out earning forgiveness by forgiving. (2) Faith in Christ brings forgiveness and eternal security (John 10:27-29).

6:13. The final petition has puzzled many believers—Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. (*“Evil one”* also can be translated “evil”; the essential meaning is the same.) We know God is good and does not tempt us to sin (James 1:13), so how are we to understand this? The overall meaning is obvious: the prayer is for the Father to keep us doing His will rather than being led astray by Satan.

6:14-15 These verses further exhort the kingdom servant concerning the necessity of forgiveness in human relationships if we expect God’s forgiveness. These verses, and 18:21-35, explain 6:12. Receiving God’s forgiveness motivates forgiveness toward others.

Jesus expects us to replace this specific petition with more personalized requests for forgiveness for the specific sins in our own lives. No “meaningless repetition” here. Jesus’ intention might be better reflected if our Bibles printed his words of petition followed by a large white space, leaving room for us to “fill in the blanks” with our own personal sins. The petitions as he has given them guide us to the important themes for prayer, but he expects us to personalize these principles in our own lives.