

## Prayer

### Introduction

Have you been amazed by something a little child said? Perhaps it was the way he explained how a toy worked. Or maybe it was the sharing of an exciting adventure. With their uncluttered minds and their simple, trusting ways, children often grasp things we adults miss.

Jesus knew this, and, although He taught profound truths, He taught simply - at a level any child could understand. And, He specifically asked His followers (not only those living during His earthly lifetime, but the many who would come later) to trust Him as little children would.

This is especially true with prayer. Jesus wanted His disciples to pray with this same childlike attitude to be as natural and as trusting as a child talking with his daddy. Jesus wasn't "religious" or showy like the religious leaders who prayed loud, repetitious prayers in public. The Bible tells us that He often slipped quietly away to commune alone with His Father. This communication with God, as we observe in Scripture, was Jesus' lifeline, His source of power for ministry. No wonder the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray!

### Our Study

We haven't the space here to discuss all that the Bible says about prayer, but we can take a fresh look at The Lord's Prayer. Like the disciples, we, too, need help and encouragement to be effective women of prayer. And just as the Lord taught them to pray, so the Holy Spirit can help us to pray as we consider the principles Jesus taught in The Lord's Prayer. If we approach this familiar prayer as eager and teachable children discovering something new, we'll be surprised at how much the Holy Spirit will show us through it.

### ***The Principle: Prayer begins with our relationship with God.***

#### **The Scripture: Matthew 6:9**

*"This is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven...'"*

1. To whom do we pray? \_\_\_\_\_

Our prayers aren't just sent out aimlessly into outer space. We're communicating with a personal God. And if we are God's children, we have direct access to our Heavenly Father. Jesus teaches that our prayers begin with this special relationship which is to be as close and as intimate as that between father and child.

Yet, our Heavenly Father is no ordinary father; He is both close and familiar like a "daddy," and at the same time He is the all-knowing God and Father of all believers. Unlike even the best earthly father, God can see the end from the beginning and He never runs out of time, energy, or resources. Look for a minute at how David in the Old Testament describes our Heavenly Father.

#### **The Scripture: Psalm 103:3, 4**

*"[He] forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, [He] redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion."*

2. List the action words which describe what God does. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now look at how David describes the attitude our Heavenly Father has in His dealings with us.

**The Scripture: Psalm 103:13, 14**

*"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust."*

3. These verses tell us that God understands our human weakness and that He has \_\_\_\_\_ on us.

Our Heavenly Father lovingly invites us and welcomes us to be in fellowship with Him so that we might experience His love. Although He already knows exactly what we need, God still wants us to come to Him with our requests because this opens the door to the greatest need we will ever have - getting to know and trust Him as our Heavenly Father.

Look for a minute at several scriptures which encourage us to approach our heavenly Father in prayer.

**The Scriptures: John 16:23; Hebrews 10:21, 22; Ephesians 3:20, 21**

*"In that day you will no longer ask Me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in My name."*

*"...and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith..."*

*"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever."*

4. According to this last verse, what is God able to do? \_\_\_\_\_

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**The Principle: *Prayer includes worship and praise.***

**The Scripture: Matthew 6:9b**

*"Hallowed be your name."*

Our names are pretty important to us. They represent who we are. When people hear our name, they can picture us with our unique personality - our interests, our likes and dislikes, our sense of humor, for instance. When we speak God's name, we aren't just using a title, we're expressing all that He is - His reputation, His character, His authority, and power. That's why His name is so important!

5. This verse describes a special quality of God's name. What is it? \_\_\_\_\_

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Remember, we're learning like little children! We don't need to be afraid of a word like "hallowed," It simply means that we are to honor God for who He is and to trust Him to be exactly what the Bible says He is. In other words, to worship and praise Him as an almighty, loving, faithful, all-wise God.

**The Principle: *Prayer should seek God's will.***

**The Scripture: Matthew 6:10**

*"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

This verse sounds like it's for people who live under the direct rule of a king. And in a special way it is, only the King is our Heavenly Father.

6. What two things do we pray for? \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_.

7. Where does God want to extend His heavenly rule? \_\_\_\_\_

When we pray this way, we're asking God to invade our world right where we live. We're inviting our Heavenly Father to set up His authority, to have His way with us in place of our self-centered plans.

**The Principle: *Prayer includes bringing our requests.***

**The Scripture: Matthew 6:11**

*"Give us today our daily bread."*

It never occurs to a child to be shy about asking his parents for food; most little children just naturally expect their parents to be able to feed them. In this verse Jesus teaches us to have that same childlike attitude toward our Heavenly Father about our physical needs.

8. What does Jesus teach us to ask for? \_\_\_\_\_

9. When should we make this request? \_\_\_\_\_

In Jesus' time bread was the main food in the diet. Bread was so important that "eating bread" came to mean eating food in general, as well as eating an entire meal. Knowing this helps us understand that Jesus was teaching several important things here.

The first is that God is concerned with the common, ordinary, yet essential, things about our life - such as our having to eat! And a second thing is that He's teaching us to be dependent on Him. Just as bread in Jesus' time could not be preserved for more than a day, so we can trust the Lord each day for His provision in our life.

Paul writes to the early Christians about God's ability to provide for us. Look for a minute at the following scripture:

**The Scripture: Philippians 4:19**

*"And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."*

10. Paul tells us here that God is able to meet \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_.

Jesus continues to emphasize this principle at the end of Matthew 6.

**The Scripture: Matthew 6:31, 32**

*"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."*

11. What does this verse tell us about God? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Right here in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us that we can ask Him each day for our basic needs. And in doing so, we can live without being anxious about tomorrow.

**The Principle: *Prayer includes receiving and giving forgiveness.***

**The Scripture: Matthew 6:12**

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

12. Jesus here teaches us to seek God's forgiveness for our \_\_\_\_\_ and in the same way, we are to \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_.

“Debts” is another word for sins or offenses which we have committed against God and our fellow humans. “Debtors” refers to those who have sinned against us. Jesus is concerned not only with our physical needs, but also with our emotional and spiritual need. Chief among these is our needs to live in forgiveness, to keep a clean record between ourselves and God and ourselves and others. Our attitude toward others should be, "owing them nothing, but love" (Rom. 13:8).

Forgiveness is such an important part of our relationship with the Lord and with others that Matthew continues the subject after the prayer is closed.

**The Scripture: Matthew 6:14, 15**

*"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*

13. What happens, according to this verse, when we do not forgive others? \_\_\_\_\_

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When Jesus is teaching here is that we are to keep our hearts open, to always be ready to seek forgiveness from God and to forgive our fellow man. If our hearts are closed to forgiving others, they are also closed to receiving forgiveness from our Heavenly Father.

**The Principle: *Prayer helps us battle our weaknesses and Satan's attacks.***

**The Scripture: Matthew 6:13**

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

14. This verse describes two ways we can ask God to help us as we battle against our own weaknesses and Satan's tricks. The first is to ask God not to lead us into \_\_\_\_\_.  
The second is to ask Him to deliver us from the \_\_\_\_\_.

All sorts of questions pop into our minds when we read this verse. Why do we have temptations? Do all Christians experience trials and temptations? Does God tempt us? Our best answers come straight from the Bible and they help us see temptation as God views it.

**The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:13**

*"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear."*

15. What does this scripture promise us? \_\_\_\_\_

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### **The Scripture: James 1:13**

*"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed."*

16. James tells us it is not \_\_\_\_\_ who tempts us. He encourages us to understand the purpose of temptation.

### **The Scripture: James 1:2-4**

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

Not only will Jesus use our temptations as instruments to strengthen us where we are weak, but He also will protect us and deliver us from the evil one, Satan.

### **The Scripture: 1 John 3:8b**

*"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."*

17. This verse describes the purpose of Jesus' mission on earth. According to this verse, what was Jesus' mission on earth? \_\_\_\_\_

What a comfort to know that Jesus welcomes our prayers for strength and helps us in our trials and temptations! He is on our side!

### **The Principle: *Prayer ends with worshipping and praising God.***

#### **The Scripture: Matthew 6:13b King James Version**

*"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."*

18. The last lines of the Lord's Prayer turn us back to honor and praise God. We want to live in His \_\_\_\_\_ by giving him \_\_\_\_\_ forever.

Remember how we started out talking about how a little child could learn about prayer. Imagine now a little girl who'd just finished talking with her daddy at bed time. She'd told him what she needed, she'd shared her problems with him and she'd received forgiveness for her mistakes. And now, because she believes her daddy is big enough to handle all her cares and needs, she can drift peacefully off to sleep. Then, she remembers one more thing - to hug her daddy and tell him how much she loves and appreciates him.

Just like that little girl, we come to the end of our prayer and tell God that He is our daddy, that we love Him, and want Him to be honored and worshipped above all else. And then we say, "Amen," our heart's "Yes, Yes, Yes" to the Lord.

## Answers

1. Our Father in heaven
2. Forgives, heals, redeems and crowns
3. Compassion
4. Immeasurably more than we ask or imagine
5. It is hallowed
6. His kingdom to come; His will to be done
7. On earth
8. Our daily bread
9. Today
10. All, needs
11. He knows what we need
12. Debts, forgive, debtors
13. Your Father will not forgive your sins.
14. Temptation, evil one
15. That we will never be tempted beyond what we can bear
16. God
17. To destroy the devil's work
18. Kingdom, power and glory

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