***One Holy Name***

**The Lord’s Prayer, Summer 2023: Matthew 6:9 July 9, 2023**

***This, then, is how you should pray:  
‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be you name . . . .’***

**Matthew 6:9**

**The first petition**

*“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven . . . .*

*“This, then is how you should 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 today our daily bread.*

*12 Forgive us our debts,*

*as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*13 And lead us not into temptation,*

*but deliver us from the evil one.’*

Matthew 6

*7 “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*

Exodus 20

1. “May your name be kept holy” (Ryle’s translation) is the first of three petitions that turn our eyes  
to the character and mission of God

2. God’s name is the powerfully personal way in which he reveals his most important attributes   
to us

3. Jesus applies the “passive imperative” tense (see Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 5:18-21) which   
means that we are praying for God to do a work in our lives, that we would:

Positively: that I would truly know God and direct my living to the honor of his name

Negatively: that I would never misuse God’s name

4. God’s name is important enough to be the “Third Word” (and his glory the reason I am here!)

**Heidelberg Catechism, Part III: Gratitude**

#### Lord’s Day 47

Q 122. What does the first petition mean?

A. “Hallowed be your name” means:

Help us to truly know you,1 to honor, glorify, and praise you for all your works  
and for all that shines forth from them: your almighty power, wisdom, kindness,  
justice, mercy, and truth.2

And it means, help us to direct all our living—what we think, say, and do—  
so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us but always honored and praised.3

1 [Jer. 9:23-24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jer.%209:23-24&version=nrsv); [31:33-34](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jer.%2031:33-34&version=nrsv); [Matt. 16:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%2016:17&version=nrsv); [John 17:3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2017:3&version=nrsv)  
2 [Ex. 34:5-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ex.%2034:5-8&version=nrsv); [Ps. 145](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps.%20145&version=nrsv); [Jer. 32:16-20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jer.%2032:16-20&version=nrsv); [Luke 1:46-55, 68-75](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%201:46-55,%2068-75&version=nrsv); [Rom. 11:33-36](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%2011:33-36&version=nrsv) 3 [Ps. 115:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps.%20115:1&version=nrsv); [Matt. 5:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%205:16&version=nrsv)

#### Lord’s Day 36

Q 99. What is the aim of the third commandment?

A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God by cursing,1 perjury,2 or unnecessary oaths,3  
nor share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders.4

In summary, we should use the holy name of God only with reverence and awe,5 so that we may  
properly confess God,6 pray to God,7 and glorify God in all our words and works.8

1 [Lev. 24:10-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev.%2024:10-17&version=nrsv) 2 [Lev. 19:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev.%2019:12&version=nrsv) 3 [Matt. 5:37](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%205:37&version=nrsv); [James 5:12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%205:12&version=nrsv) 4 [Lev. 5:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev.%205:1&version=nrsv); [Prov. 29:24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Prov.%2029:24&version=nrsv) 5 [Ps. 99:1-5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps.%2099:1-5&version=nrsv); [Jer. 4:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jer.%204:2&version=nrsv)

6 [Matt. 10:32-33](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%2010:32-33&version=nrsv); [Rom. 10:9-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%2010:9-10&version=nrsv) 7 [Ps. 50:14-15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps.%2050:14-15&version=nrsv); [1 Tim. 2:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Tim.%202:8&version=nrsv) 8 [Col. 3:17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Col.%203:17&version=nrsv)

##### Q & A 100

Q 100. Is blasphemy of God’s name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent and forbid it?

A. Yes, indeed.1 No sin is greater or provokes God’s wrath more than blaspheming his name.  
That is why God commanded it to be punished with death.2

1 [Lev. 5:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev.%205:1&version=nrsv) 2 [Lev. 24:10-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev.%2024:10-17&version=nrsv)

**A short history of the Name**

*25 Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” 26 Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.*

*At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord.*

Genesis 4 (see also Genesis 12:1-8)

*13 Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?”*

*14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”*

*15 God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.*

Exodus 3

*7 “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*

Exodus 20

*4 So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. 5 Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”*

*8 Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. 9 “O Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes,” he said, “then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance.”*

*10 Then the Lord said: “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you. 11 Obey what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 12 Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. 13 Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. 14 Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*

Exodus 34

*1 O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

Psalm 8

*13 “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, 14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

2 Chronicles 7

*27 See, the Name of the Lord comes from afar,*

*with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke;*

*his lips are full of wrath,*

*and his tongue is a consuming fire.*

Isaiah 30

*“Build up, build up, prepare the road!*

*Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people.”*

*15 For this is what the high and lofty One says—*

*he who lives forever, whose name is holy:*

*“I live in a high and holy place,*

*but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit,*

*to revive the spirit of the lowly*

*and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

Isaiah 57

*27 “Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name!”*

*Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.*

*30 Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. 31 Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. 32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” 33 He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.*

John 12

*Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

Revelation 22

**Being holy because our Father’s name is holy**

The second sentence is ***a petition respecting God's name****--*"May your name be kept holy." By the "name" of God we mean all those attributes under which He is revealed to us--His power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, and truth. By asking that they may be "holy," we mean that they may be made known and glorified. The glory of God is the first thing that God's children should desire. It is the object of one of our Lord's own prayers--"Father, glorify your name." ([John 12:28](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2012.28).) It is the purpose for which the world was created. It is the end for which the saints are called and converted. It is the chief thing we should seek, that "in all things God may be glorified." ([1 Peter 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Pet%204.11).)

J. C. Ryle

1. Set apart Christ

*13 Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? 14 But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect . . . .*

1 Peter 3

2. Holy name leads to holy people

*6 “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.*

*13 “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*

John 17

3. W

*20 On that day holy to the Lord will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord’s house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. 21 Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord Almighty.*

Zechariah 14

**Resources for further study**

The poster for Matthew does a good job of showing the 5 Parts of the gospel, reflecting a “new Torah”, can be found at [*https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/*](https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/)

Here are some of our growing number of prayer resources:

Lora Copely’s “Extraordinary Prayer” article at <https://www.abideproject.org/articles/extraordinary-prayer>

Becket Cook’s story of his mother’s prayer at [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFWl9eWkmWg*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFWl9eWkmWg)

Larry Stockstill has a good summary of the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer at [*https://larrystockstill.com/blog/prayer-template*](https://larrystockstill.com/blog/prayer-template)

Keller has a good listen at [*https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/the-upside-down-kingdom-5106/*](https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/the-upside-down-kingdom-5106/)or the .pdf version at [*https://www.scribd.com/document/258555474/Upside-Down-Kingdom-Tim-Keller*](https://www.scribd.com/document/258555474/Upside-Down-Kingdom-Tim-Keller)

Keller also has an 8-part series on the Lord’s Prayer on .mp3 at [*https://www.monergism.com/lords-prayer-8-part-mp3-sermon-series*](https://www.monergism.com/lords-prayer-8-part-mp3-sermon-series)

Sinclair Ferguson’s sermon on this text at [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne2B6v6rzQc*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ne2B6v6rzQc)

[*Monergism.com*](file:///I:\Summer%202023\monergism.com) has many resources on the Sermon on the Mount at [*https://www.monergism.  
com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/matthew/sermon-mount-ch-5-7*](https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/matthew/sermon-mount-ch-5-7)

Ryle has a commentary of Matthew 6 at [*https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm*](https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm)

The CRCNA has lots to offer, see

[https://www.crcna.org]( https://www.crcna.org › files › the_lords_prayer) *[› files › the\_lords\_prayer]( https://www.crcna.org › files › the_lords_prayer)*

I learned a lot from Piper’s sermon on the God’s Name at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/hallowed-be-thy-name-in-all-the-earth*](https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/hallowed-be-thy-name-in-all-the-earth)

Piper also has a good sermon at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/our-deepest-prayer-hallowed-be-your-name*](https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/our-deepest-prayer-hallowed-be-your-name)

Bob Deffinbaugh has a sermon on this passage at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/fatal-failures-religion-3-externalism-matthew-61-18*](https://bible.org/seriespage/fatal-failures-religion-3-externalism-matthew-61-18)

Spurgeon has an interesting prayer take is at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-secret-of-power-in-prayer/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-secret-of-power-in-prayer/%23flipbook/)

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**Matthew chapter 6**

[J.C. Ryle](https://www.gracegems.org/23/ryle_sermons.htm), 1856 at [*https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm*](https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm)

*"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.  Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.  But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,  that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.*

*"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.  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.  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.  Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.* [Matthew 6:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%206.1-8)

In this part of the sermon on the mount the Lord Jesus gives us instruction on two subjects. One is that of giving alms. The other is that of prayer. Both were subjects to which the Jews attached great importance. Both in themselves deserve the serious attention of all professing Christians.

Observe that our Lord takes it for granted, *that* ***all who call themselves His disciples will GIVE ALMS.*** He assumes as a matter of course, that they will think it a solemn duty to give, according to their means, to relieve the needs of others. The only point He handles is the *manner* in which the duty should be done. This is a weighty lesson. It condemns the selfish stinginess of many in the matter of giving money. How many are "rich towards themselves," but poor towards God! How many never give a farthing to do good to the bodies and souls of men! And have such people any right to be called Christians, in their present state of mind? It may be well doubted. A giving Savior should have giving disciples.

Observe again that our Lord takes it for granted, *that* ***all who call themselves His disciples will PRAY.***He assumes this also as a matter of course. He only gives directions as to the best way of praying. This is another lesson which deserves to be continually remembered. It teaches plainly that prayerless people are not genuine Christians. It is not enough to join in the prayers of the congregation on Sundays, or attend the prayer of a family on week-days. There must be private prayer also. Without this we may be outward members of Christ's church, but we are not living members of Christ.

But what are the rules laid down for our guidance about almsgiving and praying? They are few and simple. But they contain much matter for thought.

In GIVING, ***everything like ostentation is to be abhorred and avoided.***We are not to give as if we wished everybody to see how liberal and charitable we are, and desired the praise of our fellow men. We are to shun everything like *display*. We are to give quietly, and make as little noise as possible about our charities. We are to aim at the spirit of the proverbial saying, "Don't let your left hand know what your right hand does."

In PRAYING, *the principal object to be sought, is to be alone with God.* We should endeavor to find some place where no mortal eye sees us, and where we can pour out our hearts with the feeling that no one is looking at us but God. This is a rule which many find it very difficult to follow. The poor man and the servant often find it almost impossible to be really alone. But it is a rule which we must all make great efforts to obey. Necessity, in such cases, is often the mother of invention. When a person has a real desire to find some place, where he can be in secret with his God, he will generally find a way.

In all our duties, whether giving, or praying, the great thing to be kept in mind is, *that* ***we have to do with a heart-searching and all-knowing God.*** Everything like formality, affectation, or mere bodily service, is abominable and worthless in God's sight. He takes no account of the quantity of money we give, or the quantity of words we use. The one thing at which His all-seeing eye looks is the nature of our motives, and the state of our hearts. "Our Father sees in secret."

May we all remember these things. Here lies a rock, on which many are continually making spiritual shipwreck. They flatter themselves that all must be right with their souls, if they only perform a certain amount of "religious duties." They forget that God does not regard the quantity, but the quality of our service. His favor is not to be bought, as many seem to suppose, by the formal repetition of a number of words, or the self-righteous payment of a sum of money to a charitable institution. Where are our hearts? Are we doing all, whether we give or pray, "as to the Lord, and not to men?" Do we realize the eye of God? Do we simply and solely desire to please Him, who "sees in secret," and by whom "actions are weighed?" ([1 Sam. 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Sam.%202.3).) Are we sincere? These are the sort of questions, with which we should daily ply our souls.

**MATTHEW 6:9-15**

*In this manner, therefore, pray: 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.  "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.  But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* [Matthew 6:9-15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%206.9-15)

Perhaps no part of Scripture is so well known as this. Its words are familiar, wherever Christianity is found. Thousands, and tens of thousands, who never saw a Bible, or heard the pure Gospel, are acquainted with "Our Father," and "Paternoster." Happy would it be for the world, if this prayer was as well known in the spirit, as it is in the letter!

Perhaps no part of Scripture is so *full*, and so *simple* at the same time, as this. It is the first prayer which we learn to offer up, when we are little children. Here is its simplicity. It contains the germ of everything which the most advanced saint can desire. Here is its fullness. The more we ponder every word it contains, the more we shall feel, "this prayer is of God."

The Lord's prayer consists of ten parts or sentences. There is one declaration of the Being to whom we pray. There are three prayers respecting His name, His kingdom, and His will. There are four prayers respecting our daily needs, our sins, our weakness, and our dangers. There is one profession of our feeling towards others. There is one concluding ascription of praise. In all these parts we are taught to say "we," and "our." We are to remember others, as well as ourselves. On each of these parts a volume might be written. We must content ourselves at present with taking up sentence by sentence, and marking out the direction in which each sentence points.

The first sentence declares ***to whom we are to pray****--*"Our *Father* who is in heaven." We are not to cry to saints and angels, but to the everlasting Father, the Father of spirits, the Lord of heaven and earth. We call Him Father, in the lowest sense, as our Creator; as Paul told the Athenians, "in him we live, and move, and have our being--we are also his offspring." ([Acts 17:28](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2017.28).) We call Him Father in the highest sense, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, reconciling us to Himself, through the death of His Son. ([Col. 1:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Col.%201.20-22).) We profess that which the Old Testament saints only saw dimly, if at all--we profess to be His children by faith in Christ, and to have "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." ([Rom. 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom.%208.15).) This, we must never forget, is the sonship that we must desire, if we would be saved. Without faith in Christ's blood, and union with Him, it is vain to talk of trusting in the Fatherhood of God.

The second sentence is ***a petition respecting God's name****--*"May your name be kept holy." By the "name" of God we mean all those attributes under which He is revealed to us--His power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, and truth. By asking that they may be "holy," we mean that they may be made known and glorified. The glory of God is the first thing that God's children should desire. It is the object of one of our Lord's own prayers--"Father, glorify your name." ([John 12:28](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2012.28).) It is the purpose for which the world was created. It is the end for which the saints are called and converted. It is the chief thing we should seek, that "in all things God may be glorified." ([1 Peter 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Pet%204.11).)

The third sentence is ***a petition concerning God's kingdom****--*"May your kingdom come." By His kingdom we mean first, the kingdom of *grace* which God sets up and maintains in the hearts of all living members of Christ, by His Spirit and word. But we mean chiefly, the kingdom of *glory* which shall one day be set up, when Jesus shall come the second time, and "all men shall know Him from the least to the greatest." This is the time when sin, and sorrow, and Satan shall be cast out of the world. It is the time when the Jews shall be converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, ([Rom. 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom.%2011.25),) and a time that is above all things to be desired. It therefore fills a foremost place in the Lord's prayer. We ask that which is expressed in the words of the Burial service, "that it may please you to hasten your kingdom."

The fourth sentence is ***a petition concerning God's will****--*"May your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." We here pray that God's laws may be obeyed by men as perfectly, readily, and unceasingly, as they are by angels in heaven. We ask that those who now obey not His laws, may be taught to obey them, and that those who do obey them, may obey them better. Our truest happiness is perfect submission to God's will, and it is the highest charity to pray that all mankind may know it, obey it, and submit to it.

The fifth sentence is***a petition respecting our own daily needs****--*"give us this day our daily bread." We are here taught to acknowledge our entire dependence on God, for the supply of our daily necessities. As Israel required daily manna, so we require daily "bread." We confess that we are poor, weak, needy creatures, and beseech Him who is our Maker to take care of us. We ask for "bread," as the simplest of our needs, and in that word we include all that our bodies require.

The sixth sentence is ***a petition respecting our sins****--*"Forgive us our debts." We confess that we are sinners, and need daily grants of pardon and forgiveness. This is a part of the Lord's prayer which deserves especially to be remembered. It condemns all self-righteousness and self-justifying. We are instructed here to keep up a continual habit of confession at the throne of grace, and a continual habit of seeking mercy and remission. Let this never be forgotten. We need daily to "wash our feet." ([John 13:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2013.10).)

The seventh sentence is ***a profession respecting our own feelings towards others****--*we ask our Father to "forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." This is the only profession in the whole prayer, and the only part on which our Lord comments and dwells, when He has concluded the prayer. The plain object of it is, to remind us that we must not expect our prayers for forgiveness to be heard, if we pray with malice and spite in our hearts towards others. To pray in such a frame of mind is mere formality and hypocrisy. It is even worse than hypocrisy. It is as much as saying, "Do not forgive me at all." Our prayer is nothing without charity. We must not expect to be forgiven, if we cannot forgive.

The eighth sentence is ***a petition respecting our weakness****--*"Bring us not into temptation." It teaches us that we are liable, at all times, to be led astray, and fall. It instructs us to confess our infirmity, and beseech God to hold us up, and not allow us to run into sin. We ask Him, who orders all things in heaven and earth, to restrain us from going into that which would injure our souls, and never to allow us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. ([1 Cor. 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor.%2010.13).)

The ninth sentence is ***a petition respecting our dangers****--*"deliver us from evil." We are here taught to ask God to deliver us from the evil that is in the world, the evil that is within our own hearts, and not least from that evil one, the devil. We confess that, so long as we are in the body, we are constantly seeing, hearing, and feeling the presence of evil. It is about us, and within us, and around us on every side. And we entreat Him, who alone can preserve us, to be continually delivering as from its power. ([John 17:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2017.15).)

The last sentence is ***an ascription of praise****--*"yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." We declare in these words our belief, that the kingdoms of this world are the rightful property of our Father--that to Him alone belongs all "power,"--and that He alone deserves to receive all "glory." And we conclude by offering to Him the profession of our hearts, that we give Him all honor and praise, and rejoice that He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And now let us all examine ourselves, and see whether we really desire to have the things which we are taught to ask for in the Lord's Prayer. Thousands, it may be feared, repeat these words daily as a form, but never consider what they are saying. They care nothing for the "glory," the "kingdom," or the "will" of God. They have no sense of dependence, sinfulness, weakness, or danger. They have no love or charity towards their enemies. And yet they repeat the Lord's Prayer! These things ought not to be so. May we resolve that, by God's help, our hearts shall go together with our lips! Happy is he who can really call God his Father through Jesus Christ his Savior, and can therefore say a heart felt "Amen" to all that the Lord's Prayer contains.

**MATTHEW 6:16-24**

*"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.  But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,  so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.  "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;  but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.  For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.  "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.  But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!  "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.* [Matthew 6:16-24](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%206.16-24)

There are three subjects brought before us in this part of our Lord's sermon on the mount. These three are fasting, worldliness, and singleness of purpose in religion.

***Fasting****,* or occasional abstinence from food, in order to bring the body into subjection to the spirit, is a practice frequently mentioned in the Bible, and generally in connection with prayer. David fasted, when his child was sick. Daniel fasted, when he sought special light from God. Paul and Barnabas fasted, when they appointed elders. Esther fasted, before going in to Ahasuerus. It is a subject about which we find no direct command in the New Testament. It seems to be left to every one's discretion, whether he will fast or not. There is great wisdom in this. Many a poor man never has enough to eat, and it would be an insult to tell him to fast. Many a sickly person can hardly be kept well with the closest attention to diet, and could not fast without bringing on illness. It is a matter in which every one must be persuaded in his own mind, and not be hasty to condemn others, who do not agree with him. One thing only must never be forgotten. Those who fast should do it *quietly, secretly, and without ostentation*. Let them not "appear to men" to fast. Let them not fast to man, but to God.

***Worldliness***is one of the greatest dangers that beset man's soul. It is no wonder that we find our Lord speaking strongly about it. It is an treacherous, harmful, enticing, and powerful enemy. It seems so innocent to pay close attention to our business! It seems so harmless to seek our happiness in this world, so long as we keep clear of open sins! Yet here is a rock on which many make shipwreck to all eternity. They "lay up treasure on earth," and forget to "lay up treasure in heaven." May we all remember this! Where are our hearts? What do we love best? Are our chief affections on things in earth, or things in heaven? Life or death depends on the answer we can give to these questions. If our treasure is earthly, our hearts will be earthly also. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be."

***Singleness of purpose***is one great secret of spiritual prosperity. If our eyes do not see distinctly, we cannot walk without stumbling and falling. If we attempt to work for two different masters, we are sure to give satisfaction to neither. It is just the same with respect to our souls. We cannot serve Christ and the world at the same time. It is vain to attempt it. The thing cannot be done. The ark and Dagon will never stand together. God must be king over our hearts. His law, His will, His precepts must receive our first attention. Then, and not until then, everything in our inward man will fall into its right place. Unless our hearts are so ordered, everything will be in confusion. "Your whole body will be full of darkness."

Let us learn from our Lord's instruction about fasting, ***the great importance of cheerfulness in our religion.*** Those words, "anoint your head, and wash your face," are full of deep meaning. They should teach us to aim at letting men see, that we find Christianity makes us happy. Never let us forget that there is no religion in looking melancholy and gloomy. Are we dissatisfied with Christ's wages, and Christ's service? Surely not! Then let us not look as if we were.

Let us learn from our Lord's caution about worldliness ***what immense need we all have to watch and pray against an earthly spirit.*** What are the vast majority of professing Christians round us doing? They are "laying up treasure on earth." There can be no mistake about it. Their tastes, their ways, their habits tell a fearful tale. They are not "laying up treasure in heaven." Oh! let us all beware that we do not sink into hell by paying excessive attention to lawful things. Open transgression of God's law slays its thousands, but worldliness its tens of thousands.

Let us learn from our Lord's words about the "single eye," ***the true secret of the failures****,* which so many Christians seem to make in their religion. There are failures in all quarters. There are thousands in our churches uncomfortable, ill at ease, and dissatisfied with themselves, and they hardly know why. The reason is revealed here. They are trying to keep in with both sides. They are endeavoring to please God and please man, to serve Christ and serve the world at the same time. Let us not commit this mistake. Let us be decided, thorough-going, uncompromising followers of Christ. Let out motto be that of Paul, "One thing I do." ([Phil. 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil.%203.13).) Then we shall be happy Christians. We shall feel the sun shining on our faces. Heart, head, and conscience will all be full of light. *Decision* is the secret of happiness in religion. Be decided for Christ, and "your whole body will be full of light."

# Our Deepest Prayer: Hallowed Be Your Name

John Piper at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/our-deepest-prayer-hallowed-be-your-name*](https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/our-deepest-prayer-hallowed-be-your-name)

What an unspeakable and undeserved privilege it is to stand in this pulpit again and look out on you, the flock that the great Shepherd has called me to feed. I am thrilled to be back with you. Thank you for your great generosity in letting me be away for those months. I don’t know how long the Lord will give me to live. But I do know that as long as I live, those eight months will bear fruit in my soul, in my marriage, in my family, and in my ministry. My prayer and my hope is that you will be nourished by that fruit.

As I was leaving back in April, I said that it was time for a spiritual reality check for these four things: my soul, my marriage, my family, and my ministry. So I wrote a report about the leave of absence, addressing these four things, which will be published as my annual report, and which you can [read at Desiring God](http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/john-pipers-report-on-his-leave-of-absence). I won’t say it all again here in this message, but it might be helpful to say a little, before we turn to God’s word.

## On the Leave of Absence

The work that God is doing in my own soul and the work he is doing in our marriage are almost indistinguishable, because all sin is sooner or later relational. I said when I left that I wanted to set the sights of my Holy Spirit gun ([Romans 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.13)) on species of pride in my life. All sin is rooted in pride. So let me be more specific.

“Prayer is iridescent with eternity and woven into ordinary life.”

I would name my most besetting (and I hope weakening) sins as selfishness, self-pity, anger, quickness to blame, and sullenness. And all of these have been most often manifest at home, more than anywhere else. So for these eight months, I have tried to go deep and to go hard after the roots of these things. The Lord has revealed himself in his word in some very precious ways. He has also retaught me some very basic strategies for putting to death the uprisings of sin in my heart.

Time will tell, and Noël will tell, and you will tell, whether the progress I have made is deep and durable, or not. I pray it is. How God is doing these things will, no doubt, weave its way into messages and writings in the months and years to come. I hope they will be of benefit to your own soul and your relationships — whether single or married.

## A Sermon on Prayer

So let’s begin that process with a sermon on prayer. What has God been teaching me about prayer in this spiritual warfare, and how might it make a difference in your life? I choose to focus on prayer because it’s the close of our annual Prayer Week, and because it has been with me during the whole leave of absence — both as a steady cry to God for his help in our souls and marriage and family and ministry, and as a recurrent focus of reflection and thinking. I prayed a lot, and I thought a lot about praying.

I love the prayers of the Bible. They shape my own prayers more than anything else. I love the prayers of Paul in [Philippians 1:9–11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil%201.9%E2%80%9311), and [Ephesians 1:16–21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph%201.16%E2%80%9321) and [3:14–19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ephesians%203.14%E2%80%9319), and [Colossians 1:9–12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col%201.9%E2%80%9312). I love the prayer of Jesus in John 17. And I love the whole book of Psalms, which is the inspired prayer book of the church — filled with such a range of emotions that the cry of our heart in almost any experience can find words in the Psalms.

## The Lord’s Prayer: Simple and Spectacular

But the prayer in the Bible that has gripped me most during this leave is the Lord’s prayer in [Matthew 6:9–13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.9%E2%80%9313). This is probably because, in God’s providence, I was memorizing the Sermon on the Mount with many of you. So week after week I was reviewing Matthew 6 in my mind, and so saying the Lord’s Prayer over and over.

As I thought about it and prayed it, it had an effect on the big picture of my life, and it had an effect on the nitty-gritty, daily wrestlings in my life. I hope it will have a similar effect on you as you pray it.

The Lord’s Prayer is very true to life in this sense. Life is a combination of spectacular things and simple things. In almost everyone’s life there are breathtaking things and boring things. Fantastic things and familiar things. Extraordinary things and ordinary things. Awesome things and average things. Exotic things and everyday things. That’s the way life is.

## God’s Name, Kingdom, and Will

And, looked at one way, that’s the way the Lord’s prayer is. Almost everyone notices that it has two parts. The first part (verses 9–10) has three petitions; and the second part (verses 11–13) has three petitions. The first three petitions are:

* hallowed be your name
* your kingdom come
* your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We are asking God to bring about these three things: cause your name to be hallowed; cause your kingdom to come; cause your will to be done as it’s done by the angels in heaven.

## Our Food, Forgiveness, and Holiness

The second three petitions are:

* give us this day our daily bread
* forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors
* lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

You can see the difference — and feel the difference — between these two halves. The first three petitions are about God’s name, God’s kingdom, God’s will. The last three are about our food, our forgiveness, our holiness. The first three call our attention to God’s greatness. And the last three call attention to our needs. The two halves have a very different feel. The first half feels majestic and lofty. The last half feels mundane and lowly.

## The Mingling of Eternity and the Everyday

In other words, there is a correspondence between the content of this prayer and the content of our lives. The big and the little. The glorious and the common. The majestic and the mundane. The lofty and the lowly.

[Ecclesiastes 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eccles%203.11) says, “God has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.” I take that to mean that the world and the human soul are iridescent with wonders linked to eternity. And yet our humdrum, ordinary, mundane experiences of this world keep us from seeing the wonders and from soaring the way we dream from time to time. Even we believers who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God — even we say, “We have this treasure in jars of clay” ([2 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%204.7)). Our spirit is alive with God’s Spirit, but our bodies are dead because of sin ([Romans 8:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%208.10)).

## Prayer for Eternity

That’s the way life is. And that’s the way this prayer is — iridescent with eternity and woven into ordinary life.

* Verse 9: Father, cause your great and holy name to be honored and reverenced and esteemed and treasured above all things everywhere in the world (including my heart).
* Verse 10: And cause you glorious, sovereign, kingly rule to hold sway without obstruction everywhere in the world (including my heart).
* Verse 10: And cause your all-wise, all-good, all-just, all-holy will to be done all over this world the way the angels do it perfectly and joyfully in heaven — and make it happen in me.

That’s the breathtaking part of the prayer. And when we pray it, we are caught up into great things, glorious things, global things, eternal things. God wants this to happen. He wants your life to be enlarged like that. Enriched like that. Expanded and ennobled and soaring like that.

## Prayer for the Everyday

But then we pray,

“Jesus wants us to feel the fatherhood of God as an expression of his readiness to meet our needs.”

* Verse 11: Father, I am not asking for the bounty of riches. I am asking for bread. Just enough to give me life. I want to live. I want to be healthy, and to have a body and a mind that work. Would you give me what I need for my body and mind?
* Verse 12: And, Father, I am a sinner and need to be forgiven everyday. I can’t live and flourish with guilt. I will die if I have to bear my guilt every day. I have no desire to hold any grudge. I know I don’t deserve forgiveness, and so I have no right to withhold it from anyone. I let go of all the offenses against me. Please, have mercy upon me and forgive me and let me live in the freedom of your love. And, of course, we know now what Jesus knew when he said this. He knew he would also say of his death: “this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” ([Matthew 26:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.28)). When we pray for forgiveness, we expect it not merely because God is our Father, but because our Father gave his Son to die in our place.
* Verse 13: And Father, I don’t want to go on sinning. I’m thankful for forgiveness, but, Father, I don’t want to sin. Please, don’t lead me into the entanglements of overpowering temptation. Deliver me from evil. Guard me from Satan and from all his works and all his ways. Grant me to walk in holiness.

That’s the earthy part of the prayer. The mundane, daily, nitty-gritty struggle of the Christian life. We need food and forgiveness and protection from evil.

## Our Father — In Heaven

And I think these two halves correspond to the two things said about God in the way Jesus tells us to address him at the beginning in verse 9: “Our Father — in heaven.” First, God is a father to us. And second, he is infinitely above us and over all — in heaven. His fatherhood corresponds to his readiness to meet our earthly needs. His heavenliness corresponds to his supreme right to be given worship and allegiance and obedience.

For example, in [Matthew 6:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.32), Jesus tells us not to be anxious about food and drink and clothing because “your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.” In other words, Jesus wants us to feel the fatherhood of God as an expression of his readiness to meet our most basic needs.

And then consider [Matthew 5:34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%205.34), where Jesus says, “Do not take an oath . . . by heaven, for it is the throne of God.” In other words, when you think of heaven, think of God’s throne, his kingly majesty and power and authority.

## Majestic and Merciful

So when Jesus tells us in [Matthew 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.9) to pray, “Our Father in heaven,” he is telling us that the prayer-hearing God is majestic and merciful. He is high, and also dwells with the contrite ([Isaiah 57:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2057.15)). He is a king, and he is a father. He is holy, and he humbles himself. He is far above us, and ready to come to us. He has plans for the whole earth and for the universe, and wants us to care about these great plans and pray about them; and he has plans for your personal life at the most practical level and wants you to pray about that. So on October 5th last year, I wrote in my journal:

My heart’s desire is to be used by God for  
   the hallowing of his name and  
the coming of his kingdom and  
   the doing of his will. To that end I pray for  
   Health — give me daily bread;  
Hope — forgive my debts; and  
   Holiness — deliver me from evil.

In other words, it seems to me that the great designs of God are first and mainly about God. His name being hallowed, his will being done, his kingdom coming. And the rest of the prayer is how I can be fitted to serve those great designs. My bread, my forgiveness, my deliverance — my health, my hope, my holiness — are for the purpose of being part of God’s great purposes to glorify his name and exalt his rule and complete his will.

## The Unique First Petition

But there was one more exegetical insight that came as I pondered and prayed this prayer again and again during the leave of absence. There is something unique about the first petition, “Hallowed be your name.” It’s not just one of three. In this petition, we hear the one specific subjective response of the human heart that God expects us to give — the hallowing, reverencing, honoring, esteeming, admiring, valuing, treasuring of God’s name above all things. None of the other five requests tells us to pray for a specific human response of the heart.

If you combine this fact with the fact that this petition comes first, and that the “name” of God (“hallowed be your name”) is more equivalent to the being of God than is his kingdom or his will, my conclusion is that this petition is the main point of the prayer and all the others are meant to serve this one.

## One Great Passion

In other words, the structure of the prayer is not merely that the last three petitions serve the first three, but that the last five serve the first.

So on October 9th last year, I wrote in my journal:

My One Great Passion!  
   Nothing is more clear and unshakeable to me than that the purpose of the universe is for the hallowing of God’s name.  
His kingdom comes for that.  
   His will is done for that.  
Humans have bread-sustained life for that.  
   Sins are forgiven for that.  
Temptation is escaped for that.

And then on the next day, October 10th, I wrote:

Lord, grant that I would, in all my weaknesses and limitations, remain close to the one clear, grand theme of my life: your magnificence.

## Prayer for Pressures and Problems

Here is the sum of the matter. Sooner or later life almost overwhelms you with pressures and problems — physical problems (give us daily bread), relational and mental problems (forgive us our debts), moral problems (lead us not into temptation). And what I want you to see is this. You have a Father. He is a thousand times better as a Father than the best human father. His fatherhood means he cares about every one of those problems, and he beckons you to talk to him about them in prayer, and to come to him for help. He knows what you need ([Matthew 6:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.32)).

“The great designs of God are first and mainly about God.”

That’s the way we usually attack our problems. And so we should. We attack them directly. I have this financial problem, or this relational problem, or this bad habit problem. Father, help me. That is right and good.

But Jesus offers us more in this prayer. There is more — not less than that, but more. There is an indirect attack on our problems. There is a remedy — not a complete deliverance from all problems in this life, but a powerful remedy — in the first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, especially the first one.

## Attacking Indirectly

God made you be a part of hallowing his name, extending his kingdom, and seeing his will done on the earth the way the angels do it in heaven. In other words, he made you for something magnificent and for something mundane. He made you for something spectacular and for something simple. He loves both. He honors both. But what we fail to see often is that when we lose our grip on the greatness of God and his name and his kingdom and his global will, we lose our divine equilibrium in life, and we are far more easily overwhelmed by the problems of the mundane.

In other words, I am pleading with you not to lose your grip on the supremacy and centrality of hallowing the name of God in your life. I am urging you from the Lord’s Prayer that you go to God for bread, and for healing of relationships, and for the overcoming of besetting sins, and for the doing of God’s will, and for the seeking of God’s kingdom — all of it, all the time for the sake of knowing and hallowing, reverencing, honoring, valuing, treasuring God’s name (God’s being, God himself) above all things.

## Feet on the Ground, Heart Rising to God

Keep your feet on the ground. That’s why the second three petitions are there. But let your heart rise into the magnificence of God’s global will, God’s kingdom, and most of all God’s holy name — his being, his perfections.

You may not see it clearly now, but I testify from the Scriptures and from experience, there is more deliverance, more healing, more joy in the hallowing of his name than perhaps you ever dreamed. Let’s pray all year in the fullness of this prayer.

# Jesus on Prayer (Matthew 6:5-15) Bob Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-prayer-matthew-65-15*](https://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-prayer-matthew-65-15)

### Introduction[189](https://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-prayer-matthew-65-15" \l "P1838_637121)

[Matthew 5](javascript:%7b%7d) – 7 contains the well-known Sermon on the Mount. The sermon is about righteousness that comes from the heart. Religion tends to be about external forms and obedience to rules, but here Jesus challenges us to evaluate ourselves by an inner standard. This contrasts with the prevailing wisdom of the time. The “teachers of the law” strove to fence the Law by a stringent oral law. Thus a “Sabbath day’s journey” encoded how far one could travel and not break the command to not labor on the Sabbath. It might well be that one could journey more without breaking the commandment, but if you kept the oral standard, you were so far from breaking the Law that you were “safe.” So the Law was fenced by obedience to an even stricter standard.

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount also fenced the Law, but did so by looking at the heart. For example, He says,

“You have heard that it was said to an older generation, ‘Do not murder,’ and ‘whoever murders will be subjected to judgment.’ But I say to you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. And whoever insults a brother will be brought before the council, and whoever says ‘Fool’ will be sent to fiery hell” ([Matthew 5:21-22](javascript:%7b%7d)).[190](https://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-prayer-matthew-65-15" \l "P1843_638577)

Murder is an external sin. It is obvious and visible. It is easy to condemn the murderer. But Jesus tells us to take care less we even have a seething anger against another. Our anger can be visible or invisible. It matters not; we have the seeds of murder in our heart, and we had best uproot them by the Father’s grace. And so Jesus teaches about a life lived and judged by attitudes in the heart. There is nothing here by which we can judge others. We can only take His words, and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, judge our own lives and move to change.[191](https://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-prayer-matthew-65-15" \l "P1845_640027)

So Jesus’ instruction on prayer is in the broad context of a sermon about the heart as the real source of good and evil in us. It also has a more immediate context expressed in the opening lines of [Matthew 6](javascript:%7b%7d):

Be careful about not living righteously merely to be seen by people. Otherwise you have no reward with your Father in heaven ([Matthew 6:1](javascript:%7b%7d)).

With these words, Jesus speaks of outward versus inward religious practices. Giving, prayer, and fasting are most often associated with religion and, in the following section of the sermon, Jesus speaks again of the inner heart versus outward forms. In [Matthew 6:2-4](javascript:%7b%7d), He speaks of giving. In [Matthew 6:5-15](javascript:%7b%7d), He speaks of prayer, and in 6:16-18, He speaks of fasting. His treatment of all three topics is the same: if you have the outward form only or if the outward form focuses attention on you, the public acclaim that you receive—real or imagined—is all the benefit you will derive.

Of course, a visible spiritual life is not of itself bad. Paul wrote to the Corinthians and said:

I am not writing these things to shame you, but to correct you as my dear children. For though you may have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, because I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I encourage you, then, be imitators of me ([1 Corinthians 4:14-16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Paul said, “Be imitators of me. What you see me do, do yourselves.” Godly men and women are often the first models of godly living that a new believer has. I certainly benefited, over 30 years ago now, from men decades old in their faith. Now I hope to be the same to those younger than me. The difference for Paul to the Corinthians is that he did not derive his self-image from the attention. He was a bondservant of Jesus Christ and spent himself for the church and her people. Men and women like that are worth emulating.

But it is different for those who give to be recognized for their giving, or who entertain with great prayers or fast in agony for the admiration of others. They have erected outward forms only. They have confused the approval of others with approval of the Father.

In this lesson, we will look into what Jesus said about prayer as He discusses its outward forms and instructs concerning the inner reality.

### Putting Prayer in Its Place

Jesus’ instruction on prayer in Matthew begins this way: “Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray while standing in synagogues and on street corners so that people can see them. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you” ([Matthew 6:5-6](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Jesus develops two basic kinds of prayer. The first is “showcase prayer” by which the person praying actually draws attention to himself. He wants to be known as spiritual and holy. His religion gives him status, and by public prayer, he maintains and feeds it. The second kind of prayer is “relational prayer.” This is prayer that seeks time with the Father. Jesus, for teaching purposes, draws a distinct line between the two, but we must acknowledge that most people will fall somewhere between the two extremes. It is also important to understand that no one can read the mind and intentions of another heart. What might seem to be the height of arrogance may only reflect upbringing. Or gentle, quiet prayers may come from one who has no private prayer life at all. Jesus’ instructions are for us to know and personally apply His words and to let the Holy Spirit guide and train our hearts in these matters.

There are, however, some warning signs to which we might want to pay attention.

* Do I have an “I am speaking to God” voice? This may be a matter of upbringing. Nevertheless, none is needed, and such a change in voice can draw attention to the one praying—unless one is in an environment that expects it, in which case not changing the voice can draw attention.
* Elegant words and lots of them. This may be a matter of gifting and natural oratory, but again none are needed.
* Personal agenda. It’s hard to excuse this one. You pray according to what you want done and what others need to do to help it along.
* Gossip. “Please God. Help Jane resist the temptation to keep seeing that guy.” Such public prayers are only fruitful if Jane is there and has asked for intercession on that subject.
* Public prayer of any kind without a private prayer life. It is a given that if you are not speaking to the Father when you are alone, there is no good speaking to Him publicly.

So Jesus advises us to go into our rooms and shut the door. This is the “normal” opposite of standing on a street corner. If He had used a phrase like “pray in private” or “pray alone,” all kinds of extreme ideas may have developed. How private do you need to be? Must we become hermits or monks to have a prayer life? Jesus simply meant that there are places and ways to pray that are between the Father and us. By entering such places, we demonstrate that we “**believe that He exists and rewards those who seek Him**” ([Hebrews 11:6](javascript:%7b%7d)). In such a place:

* We can have an “I am speaking to God” voice if that helps us connect with Him and give Him honor.
* We can use elegant words as a way of offering Him our best.
* We can have a personal agenda, because it is now between the Father and us, and He can open and close doors as He sees fit.
* We can pray for Jane. Since it is just between the Father and us, we are more likely to be showing genuine concern for her welfare.
* And, of course, we now have a basis for praying in public.

We can be in our own rooms or in public and still pray privately. As Paul wrote, “**Pray without ceasing**” ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The private life is one measure of who we are. Too many times I have seen good public families suddenly come apart from within. It became apparent that the life behind the closed doors of the home was far different from the public family persona. If we believe that God exists and rewards those who seek Him, it will affect our most private of lives, because we will know that He is there. We then know that there is, in fact, no private life. Lest this cause you great fear, guilt, and concern, remember that Jesus says that, “… **your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you**.” Showcase prayer has the single reward of public acclaim. The rewards of relational prayer is that it can:

* Direct the heart
* Receive answers and close or open doors
* Strengthen the character and spirit
* Increase faith and spiritual gifting
* Bring a deeper sense of the Father’s presence and care

These are good things and worth having

### Putting Prayer in Perspective

Jesus’ instruction on prayer in Matthew continued with this admonition:

“When you pray, do not babble repetitiously like the Gentiles, because they think that by their many words they will be heard. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him” ([Matthew 6:7-8](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Jesus contrasts prayer to the Father with the prayers of the Gentiles. He describes Gentile prayer as the repetitious babbling of many words. What might this mean, and how do we relate this to our prayers?

* “**Like the Gentiles**”. The Gentiles did not worship the true God.
* “Repetitious babble” connotes a lack of real content.
* “Many words to be heard” suggests rituals, incantations, and technique.

Gentile prayer is about the manipulation of spiritual forces and entities that do not generally care about you as an individual.

We can, of course, now give Jesus’ words a Christian spin:

* “**Like the Gentiles**”—Praying to God in Name, but not in knowledge. This is similar to what Paul wrote to the Romans about the Jews who did not accept Jesus as their Messiah, “**For I can testify that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not in line with the truth**” ([Romans 10:2](javascript:%7b%7d)).
* Repetitious babbling—Praying without real content. Perhaps this would be like reciting liturgical prayers without connecting to their content.
* Many words to be heard—Praying with an attitude that God is not listening and must be manipulated to answer.

In answer to this, Jesus says that our Father knows what we need even before we ask. We are praying to our Father, which means that we are in a family relationship. We are part of His life, and He anticipates what we need. We can, therefore, come to Him as transparent people. We can come before Him glad, sad, or mad, and He will be there in full understanding. Manipulation is not required.

If our Father knows what we need before we ask, why should we pray? There are two reasons. The first is because of the rewards of prayer that go beyond just meeting our needs. The second is that there are many other things for which to pray such as the needs of others and the advancement of the Father’s Kingdom. We do not need such things, but they should have a place in our prayers.

So Jesus has given instructions about the place and manner of our prayers. We are to have a private life of prayer, and we are to pray to a real Person. This Person is interested in our needs and in us and does not need to be manipulated.

### Directing the Heart

So what makes for a good prayer? How are we to pray? During His sermon, Jesus began a model prayer for us with these words:

“So pray this way: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored, may your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” ([Matthew 6:9-10](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Jesus tells us to pray to “**Our Father in heaven**.” This should set our mental attitude as we come to a time of prayer. From the Old Testament and much of the New, we understand that we are praying to God, and that He is our Lord and King. We owe Him our lives and our service. But Jesus tells us that we can come to Him and call Him, “**Father**.” This connotes a more significant relationship than we would imagine. But Jesus is very serious about just this aspect. The entire sermon has many references to God as our Father. This relationship is our primary motivation for the lives that we should live.

God as Father is a two-way relationship. As Father, He loves us, and we honor Him. He protects, and we abide. He provides, and we give thanks. He instructs, and we emulate. He disciplines, and we mature. He touches, and we respond. He commands, and we obey. So much of the time we focus on command/obedience, and we forget all the other wonderful aspects of our walk with our Father. When we approach Him in prayer, He is all these things for us, and we need to be all these things to Him.

Jesus tells us to pray in first person plural, “***Our* Father … .**” Prayer, even in private, is to have a community focus. We can pray for our own needs, of course, but it must not stop there. We are to be intercessors. We pray “**Give us … ,**” and we are asking for the Father’s provision for family, friend, and foe. We pray “**Forgive us … ,** ” and we seek reconciliation with the Father and among ourselves. We pray “**Lead us …**” and “**Deliver us** **…**” because we all need proper guidance and protection.

We are to pray that the Father’s name “**be honored**.” This is both a request and an attitude. As a request, we are asking for the knowledge of the Father to fill the earth and for the earth to respond in honor. It is our chance to grieve over those things, in our lives and the lives of others, that bring dishonor to the name: hypocrisy, judgment that triumphs over mercy, mercy that triumphs over instruction and discipleship, those who hate God, etc. It is a time to recognize and put away our hypocrisy. As an attitude, we can begin our prayers with worship, praise, and thanksgiving. We worship who He is. We praise Him for His works, and we thank Him for His care and provision.

We ask for the Father’s kingdom to come. Along these lines, we pray for the spread of the gospel and the establishment of the rule and reign of the Father in the hearts of men and women. We pray for the welfare of the distressed and oppressed. We pray for physical healing, deliverance, change of hearts, broken relationships, and such things as would change with an acceptance of the Father and His ways. We also look forward to Jesus’ return to live and rule among us.

So we begin our prayers by focusing on the One to whom we pray. He is Father and King. Turning our hearts to Him helps us to become like Him.

### Sustaining the Heart

What we need as people occupies the next section of Jesus’ model prayer:

Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors ([Matthew 6:11-12](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The most literal understanding of “**daily bread**” is a loaf of bread in my hands to last me for the day. Some might say that is all that He means for us to ask for. I believe it is better to expand daily bread to include all that others and we need. I would, in fact, extend it beyond the material and into prayers for the needs of our bodies and our hearts:

* Food and Shelter—“**But if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that. Those who long to be rich, however, stumble into temptation and a trap and many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction**” ([1 Timothy 6:8-9](javascript:%7b%7d)).
* Righteousness—“**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied**” ([Matthew 5:6](javascript:%7b%7d)).
* The Father’s presence—“**Whom do I have in heaven but you? I desire no one but you on earth … . But as for me, God’s presence is all I need. I have made the sovereign Lord my shelter, as I declare all the things you have done**” ([Psalm 73:25, 28](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Even though there is nothing in Jesus’ prayer for asking about anything but basic needs, there are two reasons to imagine that requests can go beyond this. The first is that Paul tells us to pray for everything. “**Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, tell your requests to God in your every prayer and petition—with thanksgiving**” ([Philippians 4:6](javascript:%7b%7d)). The second is the example of the wedding in Cana, where Jesus, in answer to His mother’s request, turned water into wine in a way that exceeded the needs of the party. We have a generous God. When Jesus boils prayer down to “**daily bread**,” He is encouraging thanksgiving. Ask for anything, expect the basics, and give thanks for everything.

The welfare of our souls and bodies also depends on two-way forgiveness. Guilt and bitterness eat away at us. Both are associated with personality troubles and physical ailments. We can make both a matter of prayer. “**Forgive us our debts**” takes care of our true moral guilt for the things that we do wrong. And because we have forgiveness, we can take honest assessments of ourselves, which hastens our sanctification. However, because bitterness is as bad or worse that unresolved guilt, Jesus tells us to link the two. “**Father, forgive us to the same degree that we forgive others.**” Jesus has more to say on this, and I will defer more comments until that time as well. Suffice it to say that it is unbalanced to ask to have our guilt removed so that we can stand comfortably in the Father’s presence, when there are people that we exclude from our lives because they wronged us. If it is good for us to receive forgiveness, it is even better that we give it. Plus, if we have a heart that carries no grudges, then we have confidence at this point in our prayer that we have received the Father’s forgiveness. That is an excellent thing.

If the Father answers what we have prayed so far, we would have healthy bodies and souls fit for service in the Kingdom of God.

### Keeping the Heart

Jesus concludes His model prayer with these words: “**And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one**” ([Matthew 6:13](javascript:%7b%7d)).

What does Jesus mean by our asking, **“… do not lead us into temptation … ?”** Is it that we need to fear that the Father will lead us into temptation unless we pray? Will He set us up to see if we will fall? The letter of James tells us, “**Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires**” ([James 1:13-14](javascript:%7b%7d)). I think most would agree that we must understand Jesus’ words in light of our own propensity to sin.

The Father does not directly tempt us to evil, but He does bring us to moments of testing. And with testing, comes the temptation to quit and not press on. The famous example of Peter’s denial illustrates such a failure. The night before, Peter had confidently asserted that he would stick by Jesus no matter what. Only a few hours later, Peter denied in strong language that he even knew Jesus. When we pray to not be led into temptation, we are asking the Father’s help in avoiding such situations. We ask for doors to be closed that have difficult situations on the other side. We ask for our hearts to be strengthened and focused on good things. We ask for wisdom to recognize and avoid troubling circumstances.

Although we are morally culpable for our actions, it can also be said that even the first sin in our race was not committed in a vacuum. The serpent in Eden, later identified as Satan or the devil, tempted Eve and prevailed. The Lord had commanded that the man and woman not eat from a single tree in the center of Eden. Satan attacked at that point and helped bring forth the sin. And so we need to ask for protection from his schemes.

Satan seeks our failure and prays for it. In Job, we have the record of such a prayer: Then Satan answered the Lord, “Is it for nothing that Job fears God? Have you not made a hedge around him and his house and all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his cattle have increased in the land. But extend your hand and strike everything he has, and he will indeed curse you to your face!” ([Job 1:9-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

It is interesting that before this, we have a record of Job making offerings on behalf of his children – just in case they sinned. We are not told that Job ever made an offering for himself. Like Peter, he was self-assured. Like Peter, Satan asked to sift Job like wheat. It is just such situations that we pray against in our prayers. We acknowledge our weakness and ask for strengthening. We ask to receive our lessons according to the way of wisdom and instruction.

There are other sources of temptation that we must guard against. The world values make constant appeal. Our inner natures are weak and would like to go along. Through prayer, we can become a different kind of person.

Ultimately, it gets down to character that flows from within. “When is a thief not a thief?” When I ask this question, I usually hear, “When he is not stealing.” That is not correct. A thief who is not stealing is a thief who is out of work. A thief is not a thief when he labors with his own hands in order to have something to give to someone in need ([Ephesians 4:28](javascript:%7b%7d)). Such is the goal of this prayer. To change us from thieves to givers, from adulterers to loving husbands and wives, from proud to humble, from hating to loving, from bitter to forgiving, and so on. For each negative, we need to find and nurture its opposite. Prayer can help us do that.

This ends Jesus’ prayer model according to the most reliable manuscripts. Some manuscripts tack on something like, “For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.” I have chosen to go with the more attested reading. In the first place, we can give honor to the Father at the beginning of the prayer. In the second place, if Jesus did not include the ending, there is questionable value in using it. It is a grand ending, but Jesus ended His model with a reminder of our humility. The prayer moves from the greatness and glory of God to our total dependence on Him. I think it is better left that way.

### An Important Condition

Anyone following Jesus’ instruction on prayer closely would have noticed that we are to prayerfully link our receiving forgiveness from the Father to our forgiving others. It is not a command from the Father to us. It is rather to be a request from us to the Father. This is, indeed, a strange thing and one that would prompt the question, “Did you really mean that my forgiveness is based on the degree to which I forgive?” Jesus answers this anticipated question this way: For if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive you your sins ([Matthew 6:14-15](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Jesus states in very direct terms that what we are to pray is the way things are. There is actually incredibly good news here. There is no one who has done as much damage to me as I have done to the kingdom of God—or would do if given enough time for my self-centered attitudes and actions to propagate. So if I come before the Father bearing no grudges for anything done to me, then I can ask Him to bear no grudge against me. Jesus’ prayer assumes that I have forgiven others before coming before the Father.

There are two important parables that back up this reality. This first even raises the ante by saying that we must forgive from the heart: “For this reason, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. As he began settling his accounts, a man who owed ten thousand talents was brought to him. Because he was not able to repay, the lord ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, children and whatever he possessed, and repayment to be made. Then the slave threw himself to the ground before him, saying, ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything.’ The lord had compassion on that slave and released him, and forgave him the debt.

“After he went out, that same slave found one of his fellow slaves who owed him one hundred silver coins; then he grabbed him by the throat and started to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe!’ Then his fellow slave threw himself down and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will repay you.’ But he refused. Instead, he went out and threw him in prison until he repaid the debt.

“When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were very upset and went and told their lord everything that had happened. Then his lord called the first slave and said to him, ‘Evil slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me! Should you not have shown mercy to your fellow slave, just as I showed it to you?’ And in anger his lord turned him over to the prison guards to torture him until he repaid all he owed.

“So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if each of you does not forgive your brother from your heart” ([Matthew 18:23-35](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The second is a story that includes a parable and shows that the degree to which we love the Lord can depend on the degree to which we have been forgiven.

Now one of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went into the Pharisee’s house and took his place at the table.

Then when a woman of that town, who was a sinner, learned that Jesus was dining at the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfumed oil. As she stood behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the perfumed oil.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner.”

So Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.”

He replied, “Say it, Teacher.”

“A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

Simon answered, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.”

Jesus said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then, turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss of greeting, but from the time I entered she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with perfumed oil. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which were many, are forgiven, thus she loved much; but the one who is forgiven little loves little.”

Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace” ([Luke 7:36-50](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The issue of forgiving others comes down to two things. The first is gratitude. We have been forgiven an enormous debt. Even the smallest and most petty of our self-centered mischief does real damage to the kingdom of heaven. We need only to look at the fallout from Adam and Eve’s simple disobedience to know that the debt that we owe is our lives. Our forgiveness cost the Father the life of His Son in exchange. Our forgiving others is simple gratitude. How dare we not! The second is that by forgiving, we emulate the character of the Father. By this, we honor His name. Our Father is known for His mercy and forgiveness. When we show mercy and forgiveness, we strive to be like Him. In this way, we give honor to His name.

Someone might now be asking, “Am I saved if I do not forgive others?” Since this prayer model seems to be a daily prayer by inclusion of a request for daily bread, then this would seem to be a daily request for forgiveness of what we have done wrong that day. It is operational forgiveness. It is what Jesus meant when He told Peter, “**The one who has bathed needs only to wash his feet**” ([John 13:10](javascript:%7b%7d)). But even placing this aside, salvation does not depend on us. Paul in Ephesians writes:

For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not of works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them ([Ephesians 2:8-10](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Saved by grace that comes by faith that is the gift of God. We can contribute nothing to our salvation, which is all the more reason to gratefully forgive those who have wronged us—whether they seek that forgiveness or not.

Besides, we do not want to live unforgiving lives. It is like drinking poison and saying to our offender, “There! Take that!”

Along these lines, I recommend that you read *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom. In that book, you will find the depths to which we as Christians are able to forgive.

### The Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes

You can take each line in the model prayer and find at least two of the beatitudes that reinforce it. When you are done, all the beatitudes are mentioned at least once.

**“Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored.”**

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” ([Matthew 5:8](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God” ([Matthew 5:9](javascript:%7b%7d)).

**“May your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them” ([Matthew 5:3](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them” ([Matthew 5:10](javascript:%7b%7d)).

**“Give us today our daily bread.”**

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied” ([Matthew 5:6](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” ([Matthew 5:5](javascript:%7b%7d)).

**“And forgive us our debts, as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors.”**

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” ([Matthew 5:4](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” ([Matthew 5:7](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God” ([Matthew 5:9](javascript:%7b%7d)).

**“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”**

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them” ([Matthew 5:10](javascript:%7b%7d)).

“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things about you falsely on account of me. Rejoice and be glad because your reward is great in heaven, for they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way” ([Matthew 5:11-12](javascript:%7b%7d)).

I am not inclined to add anything else. I find the pairings interesting and instructive. I hope you do as well.

### Some Final Thoughts

Let’s look at the entire text again:

“Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray while standing in synagogues and on street corners so that people can see them. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you. When you pray, do not babble repetitiously like the Gentiles, because they think that by their many words they will be heard. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So pray this way:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored, may your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we ourselves have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

“For if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive you your sins” ([Matthew 6:5-15](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Jesus’ commentary about prayer is more than twice as long as His model prayer. The prayer, itself, is a marvel of simplicity and wisdom. It tells us to whom we are praying and for what we should pray. I believe that it also ranks what we pray about in priority order. This is significant, because we can focus on our Father and His kingdom and ask for daily provision before asking forgiveness! In this way, Jesus communicates the Father’s abundant mercy and grace. As Jesus has already said in this same sermon,

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” ([Matthew 5:44-45](javascript:%7b%7d)).

The application of this text, as with many others, must be personal and by the direction of the Holy Spirit. Typically we have no insight into the hearts and motivations of others. Suppose you come across someone loudly praying on a street corner. Do Jesus’ words above apply? You cannot tell. Jesus, for example, prayed in public ([John 11:41, 42](javascript:%7b%7d)). Daniel was in a situation where it would have been wrong to pray in secret ([Daniel 6:10](javascript:%7b%7d)). The one who retires into a secret place each day to pray may still have a hypocritical heart—he prays in secret and somehow lets everyone know he prays in secret.

So you need to read this passage concept by concept and bring your heart next to it.

* Are your prayers mostly about you and your circumstances? Consider interceding for others.
* How in tune are you to what the Father might be doing around you and the part you might play? Jesus said that He only did what He saw the Father doing. Prayer and connection with the Father is the key to our doing the same.
* Does “**forgive … as we have forgiven**” give you dread, or is it full of promise because your heart bears ill will to none? If you are not comfortable, do the hard work of letting go of your anger.
* Do you plead for your family, church, community, country, and enemies? Remember that the model prayer is in first person plural.
* Some people have memorized this prayer, and they use it as a guide in their private prayers. That is a good thing and a practice that I would recommend.

It is the nature of Jesus’ teaching that the bar He raises is higher than our grasp. But in the reaching, we reach higher all the time.

May the Father bless you and visit you in your times of prayer.

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[191](https://bible.org/seriespage/jesus-prayer-matthew-65-15" \l "P1845_640028) There is a modern parallel to the difference between an oral law that seeks to fence a written statute and an issue of the heart. Those who would outlaw private gun ownership are seeking to prevent murder through a stricter set of laws that outlaw weapons. As in Jesus’ time, such stricter codes are bound to fail, whereas an emphasis on the heart and character of men and women is better able to promote a peaceful and safe society.