

BE021008
WHO DO YOU LOVE
4. Prayer

Prayer is an unnatural activity

Imagine this situation... I have a problem with my neighbor, let's say that his dog comes into my yard every night and does his business there. Well, my first reaction is often to take the situation into my own hands – figuratively of course. So I do everything in my power to bring the situation under control:

- I consult city laws about pet control.
- I start rehearsing the speech I'm going to give my neighbor.
- I talk to a local police officer.
- I buy a gun - just in case.

I'm not going to *wait* or *trust* or *ask* for help. I'm going to TAKE CONTROL. So step one: I mention to my neighbor that there's been some pretty big pigeon dropping in my yard lately. A small hint. Tactful. Humorous. But it happens again. So step two, I leave the evidence on my neighbor's doorstep – a bigger hint. But my neighbor returns it in my mailbox. Step two, I consult my lawyer who says...

"I guess you better clean your mailbox."

So I storm over – step three – and rail against my neighbor and I say,
If your dog ever, EVER comes into my yard again, he's a dead dog.
Understand?!?

And we think, "I've done everything to get that situation under control." I've talked, I took action, I made phone calls, made threats. But there's one thing I didn't do.

I did not PRAY.

Because prayer is not natural. Prayer is counter intuitive. In a foxhole it might be natural, but most of life, it is not natural. Arrow prayers are easy, but sustained, devoted, regular prayer that changes things... we fight for that kind of prayer.

And yet we know... if you want to grow in our love for God, you cannot, not pray. So for many of us, this isn't a love thing, it's a guilt thing all the way:

- You don't pray enough,
- you don't pray right.

If the goal of your prayer life is to absolve guilt, then we've missed the point. Nothing I'll say will make any difference to you. In fact this whole sermon will just pile on MORE guilt.

UNLESS we get the right goal in mind. Prayer is about intimacy with God. Prayer grows intimacy. Prayer grows us, enables us to know him more, and therefore to love him better. We're here to love God more. As the Psalmist says:

Ps 42:8 Through each day the LORD pours his unfailing love upon me,
and through each night I sing his songs,
praying to God who gives me life.

Prayer is about the increase of Life – with God. Intimacy with God. How many us want that? How many of us want more clarity? How many us want more power? This is what prayer is about. Not a check on your spiritual brownie points list. Not a work to gain favor... a habit to access power.

THE MASTER’S PRAYER MODEL

If you watched Jesus pray... you’d get the point.

Ever see someone do something in such a masterful way that you say “teach me to do that!” Guitar* lessons.

This same thing happens in Luke 11, when the disciples are watching a master at work. They’re just in awe so they ask: “Master, please, teach us to pray the way you do.” So they could have more of the Life that Jesus demonstrated.

So Jesus gives them a prayer model. Not a rote prayer to repeat mindlessly, but a model of HOW to pray in a way that changes things. It contains six parts. Let me review them and then we’ll look at each individually.

YOUR NAME – holy
YOUR KINGDOM – come
YOUR WILL – done

In the first parts of this prayer model I want you to notice what is glaringly absent. Personal pronouns. I, me, mine, ours, we, us. These come later. Jesus is saying, in this that when you go to pray, your first deal is getting reoriented, from me centric to God centric. Your purposes to God’s purposes .

The first thing that praying the way Jesus taught does to grow you, is to change your perspective:

- From temporal to eternal
- From selfish to Godly
- From my PURPOSES to God’s PURPOSES

Now, the last three parts :
GIVE US – our daily bread
FORGIVE US – our debts
DELIVER US – from evil

So in this part of the model Jesus is saying prayer is all about the release of God’s POWER in your life. Once you’ve arranged your life around God’s purposes, God’s

power starts to flow into your life in all these areas – and wouldn't that be cool.
*Journaling.

So let's now take each of these parts by themselves:

1. YOUR NAME

Jesus underlines that Prayer is about intimate connection and love for God simply by one word: **Father**... This is amazing, NOBODY EVER addressed God like that. Until Jesus made him accessible to us. Not just by showing us the father, but by granting access through his own sacrifice on our behalf.

But the modifying prepositional phrase... "in heaven" is key too, because it establishes that we are talking about the God of heaven and earth, the Creator, the one true God... not a "god essence" in you or me rather but a CAUSE of the universe, outside the earth and the physical universe altogether... IN HEAVEN.

That's the God we're praying to. And because he is our FATHER God wants to be IN RELATIONSHIP with you... we've been drawn into his family thru Jesus.

Paul said in Romans 8:15 "so you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family – calling him "Abba, dear Father"

And when you use the prayer model of Jesus, you regularly orient yourself toward God, in such a way that the content of your prayers will be radically affected in two ways:

- First, God's concerns get first billing.
- Second, our needs, get second billing.
 - o BUT, I want you to see that even though we're demoted to second place, our concerns are now seen through the perspective of this amazing God who is capable of answering prayer.

2. YOUR KINGDOM

The kingdom of God is our next concern. YOUR NAME, YOUR KINGDOM... which is simply God's royal rule. When we pray Jesus wants us occupied with expansion of his rule.

To pray that this wonderful new kingship and rule would come... is to pray that it would expand.

- Through my own life first and
- through the expansion of the church second and
- third through the coming of Jesus Christ to consummate history.
- "Your Kingdom come!"

There's several kingdoms you could seek to expand. Your own... Your country, your company, But Jesus said... here's what my Followers do. They daily ask their Father to expand HIS kingdom. We're saying:

Expand your rule, and oh, by the way... start with me! There are places here where it's still MY kingdom. It's still MY rule that reigns supreme. End that abomination now, I repent of it...

Like the Psalmist in:

Ps 139:23-24 we pray:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Jesus is saying,

"Daily, habitually give up on your own rule... and say, YOUR rule, God. Let it come and let it come to my life."

3. YOUR WILL

The first part of Jesus prayer model is made complete by praying about God's will – the things that God wants. Now, Jesus has us pray for God's will to be done on earth which presumes what? That God's will is not being done perfectly on earth. God gives us free will and then he asks us to freely conform our will to his will.

But that's easier said than done. Why? Because we're not so sure about God's will, are we? The Bible says

(Rom 12:2) "God's will is good and perfect..."

Do we trust that's true? See what happens is, when we think, as in heaven, so on earth, we think:

God... here's what I want to get done. Here's what heaven on earth looks like to me. A little more this, a little more that. More peace, less trials. Less sermons.

Imagine God is saying:

wait... what about what *I* want to get done? Why aren't we starting with that? Because what I want to get done... is bring a little more heaven to earth.

Remember, what Jesus asks us to pray... he himself did pray. I remind you that Jesus was confronted with everything we are... when in the Garden of Gethsemane, he wrestled with his Father... to the point of bloody sweat, he agonized over whether he would go with the Father's plan, to love you to the bitter end...

In fact, I remind you that Jesus' human will was to NOT go through with it.

"If it be possible please let this cup pass from me..."

YET, he prayed, NOT what I will, but what you will. Friend do you pray like this? Maybe that's why you've given up on prayer, or find it difficult. You're just going through your shopping list every day, and see nothing change in you or around you.

Friends, you can't pray that way, about God's Name, God's Kingdom, God's Will, sincerely and regularly and not be changed. See, when you pray like this... you can't go

more than a day without getting recalibrated around God's agenda and purposes.
(Consecration)

So then we get to the last three parts of Jesus prayer model, where we switch to personal pronouns... our, we and us. But the emphasis is on how **we** can access **God's** power.

- Power for daily bread
- Power for forgiveness
- Power for victory over temptation.

4. GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD

Here is where it's OK to crack out our shopping list. To pour out our hearts to God. Why? If Jesus said God already knows what we need why do we have to ask? Because sometimes waits to act until we ask.

Why? Because he wants you to learn that you have a good father in heaven who loves to give good gifts to his children. If you got everything you wanted or needed as soon as the thot hit you, what would you learn? **You would learn that you are the center of the universe. You would take everything for granted. You might start to worship yourself, thinking that all you do is magically blessed somehow.**

But if you have to ask, and sometimes to wait... then we learn the truth. That we are creatures. Made to live dependently on our God at the center. To trust him. To love him more than his gifts.

Royce. Never stop asking. Persistently, daily, with faith.

5. FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS

Forgiveness is as indispensable to the life and health of our souls as food is for our bodies. So Jesus taught us to pray regularly "forgive us our debts."

Notice that Jesus puts sin in terms of debt. Sometimes we like to think that time cancels sin, but it doesn't. It maybe fades in our memory, but when we screw up, that creates a debt in the moral fabric of the Universe that has to be paid. That's why Jesus has to die.

And that's what happens on a small level when we have to forgive someone else. We have to pay their price for them. We have to take the loss. We absorb the debt. Which is why Jesus ties our forgiveness from God, with our willingness to forgive others.

Who doesn't want forgiveness from God? We all do. So Jesus taught us to never even bother to approach God with our sins in need or forgiveness unless we're willing to look at what others owe us.

- Will we release them?
- Will we have grace for them, as we're asking for grace from God?

Jesus said very bluntly:

Matt 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.

You want to grow... learn to confess your sins every day, and when you confess, think of what others have done to you. Your husband, your wife, your kids, your boss, your teachers, your friends.

Friend, if you want to come to worship today with this burden, Jesus said, stop! It's fruitless. Get this fixed first. Let prayer orient you around God's grace every day, so you can be a person of grace who receives grace and gives it out.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, DELIVER FROM EVIL

- We've addressed our material needs,
- our moral need for wholeness, forgiveness and restoration toward God and others...
- now it's our spiritual need to be delivered and protected from evil.

These two should be seen as one request. They are the negative and positive side of the same request... no temptation, yes protection from evil. Scholars think this is best understood as EVIL ONE, a reference to the Devil.

What this acknowledges, is that we are really in a battle and that all around us, unseen, every day, are the subtle forces of the devil and his cohorts, speaking to us, tempting us, opposing us, trying to hurt us.

Peter said the Devil sneaks around the roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

That's the enemies intent for you. So when you use Jesus prayer model, you have a daily reminder that A) you have an enemy. So start being cognizant of the fact that you need protection. Was that marriage spat just a spat, or was the enemy in there, trying to meddle and harm? Was that just a set back, or what it spiritual resistance?

At the same time... B) the focus of your life, is not on the enemy, but on your Deliverer: "God, the enemy has power, but your power is greater... deliver me! I need you to protect me, I live in a hostile world that's gone mad. Protect my mind, my family, my heart... protect me from what is unseen."

Now, Jesus is not thinking you won't have any trouble if you pray. What you will have is power to resist. No one escapes temptation. Jesus said, in this world you WILL have trouble. And Paul said:

- **1 Cor 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. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.**

Friend, if you don't take that escape... then it doesn't matter if God WANTS to deliver you from evil, YOU apparently don't want to be delivered. SO you won't be. You can count on this, God will not overrule your will. You can live out of your flesh... It's always an option friend even as a Christian. No wonder Jesus has us begin prayer by clarifying the WILL question first:

our father in heaven, ***your will*** be done, not mine!

CONCLUSION

Friends... again, I call us to be a strange kind of people. Prayer is the most unnatural human activity... it's dependant, intentionally desperate. Let's be that kind of upside-down, Kingdom people who pray...