

PRAYING In The Bible

Jesus Prayer: The Template

Luke 11:1-4 *“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” 2 He said to them, “When you pray, say:” ‘Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. 3 Give us each day our daily bread. 4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.’”*

The big question with prayer is how. How should we pray to be most effective? Because, prayer is about being effective right? Is it about getting the attention of God in heaven? If we pray and we are His children then He will answer. The “how” is to gain what we want, right? When God answers it should be “yes.” Why would God ask us to pray if the answer would be “no?” I think a bigger question should be: does God have an obligation to answer us? To further that, does God have an obligation to say yes? We believe He loves us beyond measure. The word ‘no’ does not seem very loving. How to pray to stoke Gods love? That is a good question.

I begin this study on prayer a little confused. God knows, but He asks us to pray. I suspect that God does not answer yes all that often. Does He hear all our prayers? Psalm 116:2 *“Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.”* There is an expectation that God must listen. The Bible does talk about God paying attention. Isaiah 59:2 *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”* Yes, I am confused. So, which is it: hear or not hear? Let us begin this study of prayer by looking at the template of prayer by Jesus. Maybe there is a clue into this strange thing called prayer.

Clearly, John the Baptist taught His disciples to pray. In-fact John was probably praying to God all the time. Repentance for sin has prayer for forgiveness mixed in it. Yet, Jesus does not start His prayer this way. Is this template (by Jesus) a point-by-point way to pray effectively?

The answer should be yes, because Jesus prayed. Yet, I think we miss the point of this prayer. It is not about robotically praying a certain way. No, it is about the order of respect. God, hallow (Holy) is your name. Your kingdom come (or reign). Give us bread (you provide). Forgive our sins (because only you can). That is really the context of Jesus prayer. Yet, there is more. We are to forgive as God forgives us. I suppose that is confession of our failed humanity. Then we ask for protection from the ourselves and the Devil. Do you realize that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness right after He was baptized. This template has more to do with who you look to in times of prayer. Acknowledging the person, you lean on when you are in need. Jesus decided that person was the Father in heaven.

On an airplane we are asked to put the mask on first. Wouldn't you save your child first? The issue is that if your dead you cannot save your child. Put the mask on first. Jesus' prayer is the same thing. Why don't we ask God for protection and food first? Aren't we in trouble if the devil is attacking us and were dying of starvation? It is a good point. Yet, in Gods world it works the other way around. Do we need tools to save us like a mask? Or, do we need God to be that mask?

Jesus' prayer is so honoring and smart towards His Father. Hallowed means revered and honored. What is prayer? It is a conversation with God. Most of us cannot have a conversation with the President. Yet, we should respect the office. Verse two does two things. It lets God know that we respect Him. The second thing is that we respect the office. *Thy Kingdom come!* So often we blame the government or we blame God. To come in reverence and respect takes away the blame and looks for help and solutions. This is a brilliant way to begin talking to anyone.

Verse 3 is short and sweet. I know God that you provide so we thank you for providing. In the desert, Moses and the Israelites could have starved. Getting out of Egypt was one thing. Surviving the desert was another. God provided manna from heaven daily. Jesus is saying that daily God still provides. That God can save us, take care of us, and provide for us. I think that the word “give” is the key. It comes off as a demand or expectation. Yet, if you know the Father, you will know that He gives. God gives freely without payment or works. It is who He is. Jesus knows that.

This ties into the last verses. Repentance and a contrite heart are required. Yet, Jesus is asking God to forgive our sins. The mercy and grace of God abounds. Yet, a repentant and contrite heart would forgive others. It would extend grace and mercy to those around us. Finally, all our prayer and love for others is done with a purpose. It is to not lead us into temptation. God does not temp. Those that revere God and humble themselves before others are usually in the will of God. Temptation has no power in the will of God. It is when we step outside the fundamentals of this prayer that we are tempted.

Is this the only way to pray? As we shall see over the next few months the answer is no. The Bible is full of many different types of prayer. Yet, each type has the foundation that Jesus is talking about. A respect for God and a love of our fellow human beings. We cry out in prayer. Sometimes it is shouts of praise. In times of need it could be anguish or in a song. Prayer is communication. Everyday life is different. That goes for prayer too. Jesus’ template is worth using time and time again. Do not lose sight of His intent. It is not about receiving half as much as giving adoration to the one who loves to give.