

MINISTUDY Jesus Teaches Us How to Pray

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Jesus Christ kept in close personal contact with His Father in heaven. Consequently, Jesus' life was filled with love, faith and power from God. His frequent and fervent prayers made possible His victory over sin and death.

Jesus' disciples were aware that their teacher knew how to draw close to the eternal God and call upon His help in every situation. So one of them asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). Jesus' instructions are preserved for us today in Luke 11 and Matthew 6.

Let's study our Savior's inspired guide to meaningful and effective prayer.

1. Did Jesus begin by telling His disciples to repeat His sample prayer over and over, or were they to pray in a similar way -- "in this manner"? Matthew 6:9. Hadn't He previously told them not to repeat the same prayer" Verse 7.

Notice that Jesus did not call this the "Lord's Prayer" as many do today, or in any way encourage His disciples to memorize this particular prayer and repeat it when they prayed. He had just forbidden them to do that. Jesus was simply outlining the correct approach to God in prayer and the basic things we should ask for.

2. Notice how Jesus began His sample prayer. To whom did Verse 9. He say we should pray"

Jesus came to reveal the Father to mankind (John 1:15), and He always addressed the Father in His prayers. This Father-child relationship is also open to all of us. Such a private relationship with our heavenly Father should be as real and intimate as the physical relationships we ideally should have with our human fathers or children.

3. Where did Jesus say the Father lives? Matthew 6:9.

Jesus said that our Father is in heaven. When you address the Father in your private prayers, realize that you are having a personal audience with the supreme ruler of the universe. Most people would treasure a private audience with one of this world's rulers. Think how infinitely greater is our privilege of coming to the throne room of the universe, to talk with the Ruler over all at any time, day or night'

4. Should we "hallow," or honor, the Father's name when we pray to Him" Matthew 6:9, last part.

As we begin our prayers, we should not only address and think of God as our Father, but also honor and praise His name and His office as Creator and Ruler, as well as His character of unselfish love, great goodness and generosity.

God's name and all that it stands for is to be held in absolute reverence. Our deep respect and awe for our heavenly Father should be total. Addressing God in an attitude of praise, worship and adoration (see Psalms 18:1-3 and 104:33) focuses our attention on the greatness of the being to whom we are praying.

5. How did Jesus continue His sample prayer"? Matthew 6:10, first sentence.

This section of Jesus' prayer outline is perhaps the most overlooked and misunderstood of all. Praying "Your Kingdom come" is asking for and looking forward to the time when God's government will be established on this earth through the return of Jesus Christ as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16). It is earnestly

desiring the time when real and lasting peace will be ushered in and all mankind will know and follow God's way (Isaiah 1 t:9).

Instead of injustice, starvation and war, there will be peace, happiness and great prosperity in the world tomorrow. It will be the prophesied time of the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:19-21) under the government of God, when the Ten Commandments will be the standard for daily life everywhere.

6. But before God's Kingdom can come, did Jesus say that the advance news of its coming must be proclaimed as a "witness to all the nations"? :Matthew 24:14.

Those who have their hearts in the end-time work of God are praying daily that the broadcasting and publishing of this really good news to the world by God's Church today will expand in ever increasing power and authority. Only after this work is done will God's Kingdom come.

7. What did Jesus say in the second part of Matthew 6:10?

In this section of our prayers, we should ask God to help us understand and do His will. We need to ask God to help us study and understand the foundation of all knowledge, the Holy Bible, which reveals what we are, why we were born and how to achieve His awesome purpose for our lives. We also need God's help, inspiration and guidance in expressing His love, joy, warmth and affection to all those with whom we come in contact. Ask Him to help you be patient and gentle. Ask for meekness, humility and the power of self-control over your temper, weaknesses and lusts.

Ask God for the living faith of Jesus Christ, which will allow you to believe and trust God totally - to know that His way and His law are right. and that He stands behind and backs up His will. His laws and His promises to those who serve Him.

8. What is the next request of Jesus' sample prayer? Matthew 6:1 1. Can we ask this in confidence if we are seeking, as our highest priority, God's Kingdom and His righteousness? Verse 33 and I John 3:22.

Although not put first, this request is certainly necessary. We can confidently ask God to supply our physical daily needs, such as food, clothing and shelter, as long as we are seeking first the Kingdom of God and keeping His commandments. In your personal requests you can detail your needs and ask God to guide you to do your part. God knows of these needs even before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8). However, He has not promised to automatically supply what we do not ask for. God wants us to never forget that He is the ultimate supplier of everything we have.

J- Is our "daily bread" dual? Matthew 4:4. Who did Jesus say is the spiritual "bread of life"? John 6:35.

In addition to physical food, we need spiritual nourishment. This is obtained by studying the Bible daily to learn the mind of Jesus Christ. We should ask God daily for the spiritual understanding of His words of eternal life and the strength to live by them.

10. Are we also to ask forgiveness of our sins? Matthew 6:12. ("Debts" would have been better translated "sins.")

All of us sin daily by breaking God's commandments in one way or another. We need to recognize and repent of our sins, then ask our loving and merciful Father to forgive us (Psalm 86:5). Remember to ask that "our," not "my," sins be forgiven. Learn to be concerned for other people by having godly love and compassion for them as well.

11. Should we also be forgiving toward others? Matthew 6:12, 14-15. Also notice the principle in Matthew 5:23-24.

Remember that God will forgive us only if we are willing to forgive others. If you cannot first

rid yourself of feelings of bitterness, resentfulness or hatred toward others, then ask God to clean up your mind by replacing the spirit of hate with His Spirit of love so that your prayers will not be hindered.

12. What is the last request of Jesus' sample prayer? Matthew 6:13, first sentence. But doesn't the Bible elsewhere state that God does not tempt anyone? James 1:13. Is it rather the devil and his demons who are stalking us, watching for a chance to tempt and even destroy us? Ephesians 6:12 and I Peter 5:8.

Jesus' statement in Matthew 6:13 is better translated: "Bring us not into sore trial, but deliver us from the evil one [Satan]." God tempts no one, but He does sometimes permit us to fall into trials and troubles of our own or Satan's devising in order to test us.

We should pray daily and earnestly that God would not permit us to be brought into any severe trial or temptation, as He promises in I Corinthians 10:13. We should also ask that He would give us the spiritual help to recognize sinful thoughts and temptations, to reject them and to do His will.

13. Before closing our prayers, in whose name should we acknowledge that we are praying? John 16:23, second sentence.

All our requests should be made in Jesus Christ's name. We can rightfully ask the Father for things "in Jesus' name" when we know it is His will - that Jesus Christ's authority stands behind our requests.

14. How did Jesus say we should close our prayers to the Father? Matthew 6:13, last part.

As Jesus' inspired outline of prayer begins with praise and adoration of our heavenly Father, so does it close. This reminds us once again to whom we are praying and of the character and office of the true God who rules over His vast creation.

Finally, as Jesus shows, we are to affirm the content of our prayer -- that we really mean it - by concluding with "Amen_" The word amen simply means "he it so."