

The Disciple's Prayer - Part One (Matthew 6: v. 1-13)

“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. ² 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. ³ But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

⁵ “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.

⁶ 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. ⁷ 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.

⁸ “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹ In this manner, therefore, 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 this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

¹³ 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.

Introduction

Prayer is a very big subject, however it is a very important subject. It is the most talked about but the least practiced thing in the Christian life. Therefore we are going to look at this subject with the view not to just talk more about it but to practice it, both in our own private devotions and in the corporate life of the Church here at O.I.C.

A life of prayer is proof of God dependency. This is true not just of us as individuals but also of the corporate life of any Church. The early Church was born in prayer and throughout Acts we have many examples of small Churches getting some great answers to prayer.

Perhaps the most famous is in Acts 12: v. 5-17 (Read in the N.L.T.)

v. ⁵ But while Peter was in prison, the church prayed very earnestly for him.

⁶ The night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, fastened with two chains between two soldiers. Others stood guard at the prison gate. ⁷ Suddenly, there was a bright light in the cell, and an angel of the Lord stood before Peter.

The angel struck him on the side to awaken him and said, “Quick! Get up!” And the chains fell off his wrists.

⁸ Then the angel told him, “Get dressed and put on your sandals.” And he did. “Now put on your coat and follow me,” the angel ordered. ⁹ So Peter left the cell, following the angel.

But all the time he thought it was a vision. He didn't realize it was actually happening. ¹⁰ They passed the first and second guard posts and came to the iron gate leading to the city, and this opened for them all by itself. So they passed through and started walking down the street, and then the angel suddenly left him.

¹¹ Peter finally came to his senses. "It's really true!" he said. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jewish leaders had planned to do to me!" ¹² When he realized this, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer.

¹³ He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!"

¹⁵ "You're out of your mind!" they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel." ¹⁶ Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. When they finally opened the door and saw him, they were amazed.

¹⁷ He motioned for them to quiet down and told them how the Lord had led him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers what happened," he said. And then he went to another place.

Prayer is the only form of communication available to the believer, therefore it is vital that we understand as much as possible about this great subject.

Jesus said in John 15: v. 5 "apart from Me you can do nothing". Therefore what Jesus teaches us about prayer is going to be very valuable.

The only place that we are going to discover about prayer is from the Bible.

We are going to start with the Disciple's Prayer and then we are going to examine "whole Church prayer" from the Acts of the Apostles and finally look at some of Paul's prayers in the New Testament letters.

I hope that after this we will have a good idea what prayer is all about. I hope also that we will be motivated to align our prayer lives alongside the teaching of scripture.

It is easy to get into a "Rut" in our prayer lives and in the life of a Church, however God wants to get us out of our "Rut" and move us forward in our prayer lives and in the prayer life of O.I.C.

Before we start to examine what Jesus teaches us about prayer in Mathew's Gospel I would like us to look at Luke's Gospel chapter 11 v. 1.

Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

It tells us in v. 1 of Luke chapter 11 that as Jesus was praying that a certain disciple asked Jesus for teaching on prayer. Something of what Jesus was saying to God, stirred this young disciple to want to pray better. He heard prayer from Jesus that moved him to discover more about prayer and therefore be a better equipped disciple.

In this context Jesus gave this disciple a "model" to follow. It was like getting a set of plans to build a house. You know what it should look like but you have to put in the work in order to see results. It just doesn't happen, it is jolly hard work. It is the same with prayer, you must put in the effort to pray if you want to see results.

Although we call this prayer the Lord's Prayer because Jesus taught it to us, it is however a prayer for disciples. Therefore I am going to call it the Disciple's Prayer.

Let us now go back to Matthew's Gospel as we seek to unpack the Disciple's Prayer.

1. Our Father in Heaven (v. 9)

Before we can begin to pray, we must first know God personally as our "Father in Heaven" or our "Heavenly Father". We must know on what basis we have the right to approach such a supernatural awesome person. The person who can create something out of nothing. The person who created this world in six 24 hour days. The person who created man from the dust of the earth and breathed life

into him. The person who made woman from man and the person who is in sovereign control of everything that happens in this great vast universe of ours.

On what basis can we approach this amazing God?

God is 100% Holy and we are all 100% sinful. How can we talk to Him.

There is only one way that we can come to speak to God, and that is on the basis of "adoption". Until we are adopted into God's family, God is our "Judge" and not our "Father" Our sin separates us from God and He will not hear our prayers.

Isaiah 59: v. 1-2 says "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor is His ear heavy that it cannot hear? But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."

The Bible teaches us that before we become Sons of God and be adopted into His family we are enemies. (Romans 5: v. 10)

When Jesus died on the cross, He satisfied God's requirements, for the punishment of our sins. Jesus did what was required to bring us back into God's family.

When you put your faith and trust in Jesus and believe that He was punished for your personal sin, then God adopts you into His family and He becomes your Heavenly Father.

Jesus said in John 14: v. 6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life, No one comes to the Father except through Me."

In 1 Timothy 2: v. 5 it says "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."

Although God is still big and great and awesome, we can come to Him as our Heavenly Father on the basis of what Jesus has done on the cross to take the punishment for our sins.

When we come to God as our Heavenly Father we must be fully aware of the great privilege that we have to do this because God's son Jesus Christ shed His precious blood on a cross for this process to take place.

Coming to God is FREE, but it wasn't cheap to purchase this right, it cost the poured out blood of His only Son Jesus Christ.

By nature we were enemies of God, but through Jesus He adopts us as Sons and Daughters. (Galatians 4: 4-7)

To address God as our Father must remind us of all that we owe Jesus who made it possible. We can't pray without being reminded of our Salvation in Christ.

All prayer to God is a prayer of "GRACE". We don't deserve to be sons or daughters of a Heavenly Father, but by His love and Grace He receives us because of Jesus.

There are two parts to "Our Father in Heaven"

The first part is "Intimacy" based upon the work of Jesus, adopting us into God's family.

The second part is "Awe". He is a Father in Heaven.

I don't know what comes to your mind when you think about "Fatherhood". It may be that your experiences of an earthly Father are quite negative. However the Bible teaches us that our Heavenly Father represents two words, "Care" and "Authority".

When God becomes your Heavenly Father, He will provide for you. You don't have to worry about what you will eat, drink or wear.

Matthew 6: v. 25-34 says this:

²⁵ “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing?”

²⁶ Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are.

³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? ³¹ “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’”

³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

There are many other verses in the N/T that encourage us to believe that our Father in Heaven cares for our needs.

When we pray “Our Father who is in Heaven...” we are not only praying to our great provider but also to someone who has loving authority over us.

Just as a human father should lead, correct and discipline his children, so we should expect our Heavenly Father to do the same.

God is not like the unloving human father in proverbs that spares the rod. (Prov.13:24)

He is a loving Father who treats us as sons. Quote Hebrews 12: v. 5-11.

⁵ And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said,

“My child, don’t make light of the LORD’s discipline,
and don’t give up when he corrects you.

⁶ For the LORD disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

⁷ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? ⁸ If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

⁹ Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn’t we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? ¹⁰ For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how.

But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. ¹¹ No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

When we pray “Our Father who is in Heaven “ We not only receive His wonderful provision but we also open ourselves up to the discipline of His word.

We can’t pray well until we are reading our Bible constantly and opening up ourselves to God’s discipline through His word, the Bible.

Prayer is not a one way conversation to God. He speaks back to us through the Bible.

Yes He assures us of His provision, but He also requires us to be obedient to His word.

When we pray “Our Father in Heaven” we need to remember that He knows what is best for us. We need to trust Him as our “Heavenly Father”

Being obedient to His word gives us peace in our heart and we are more attracted to pray, because we don’t have a Father/Son relationship problem.

1 Corinthians 2:9 says;

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
and no mind has imagined
what God has prepared
for those who love him.”

God knows us, God loves us, and God cares for us. God gives the very best to those that leave the choice to Him.

When we come to God in prayer we can praise and thank Him for what He has done for us in Jesus and who is, our great and awesome creator of this amazing Universe.

2. “Hallowed be your name”

The first petition of the Disciple’s prayer follows naturally from recognizing who we are speaking to. What this means is; may your name be recognized as HOLY, treated as HOLY, and revered as HOLY.

What Jesus is really saying here is that the first thing that we must do when we come to prayer is to seek God’s Glory in all things. It is NOT first to concern ourselves with what we want.

The principle of seeking first God’s Glory can be seen throughout the scriptures.

It was foremost in the mind of Joshua after the defeat at the battle of Ai in Joshua chapter 7: v. 6-9.

⁶ Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. ⁷ And Joshua said, “Alas, Lord GOD, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all—to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us?

Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan! ⁸ O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?

⁹ For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear *it*, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth. Then what will You do for Your great name?”

Jesus said in Matthew chapter 6: v. 33 “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you....”

The 10 Commandments could be divided up into two sections. The first group deals with our relationship to God and the second group deals with or relationship to each other.

Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 10: v.31 when he says “Therefore whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the Glory of God.”

Paul was concerned that God’s Glory came before anything else, and whatever we did, God’s Glory was foremost in our mind.

May I ask all of us a question, including me?

Q. When we come to prayer, is God’s Glory the foremost thing in our mind?

Are we wanting God to come out of it best? Or are we wanting ourselves and our own needs to be the real issue in our prayers? Do we want God's agenda to shine forth or do we want our agenda to be the focus.

It is easy to be self-centered in prayer and Jesus wants us to first of all seek God's Glory in all that transpires from our praying.

The famous preacher from Scotland, a man by the name of Robert Murray McCheyne said this "What a man is on His knees before God, that he is and nothing more."

In essence he was saying that our prayer life reveals what we are like.

Jesus is saying here that our first focus when we come to prayer is not our material needs but "God's Glory".

Firstly we begin our prayers by focusing on God Himself and His Glory.

It is a good idea to learn some of the Hebrew names for God and focus on them when you come to prayer. There are at least 145 Hebrew names for God in the Bible. Each of these names brings out the character of God and what He has done for His people.

As you focus on these names, you are praising God for who He is.

In the discipleship course that I am writing for O.I.C. there are a list of Hebrew names that you can learn in order to first focus upon them, as you begin to pray.

I will give you one to focus on today and remember.

If you want the other 144 you will have to go on the discipleship course when it is completed.

1. El Shaddai = God Almighty. You can look up the following references in the Bible where this Hebrew name for God appears. Genesis 17: v.1, Genesis 35: v. 10-11, Exodus 6: v. 2-3, Numbers 24: v. 4, Job 32: v. 8.

We can praise God because He is the El Shaddai, the Almighty God, He holds the universe together, He know all things, He is mighty in strength and power.

If you look through the Psalms of David you will notice that David quite often focuses on God's Glory first.

Psalms 19: v. 1 – "The heavens declare the Glory of God"

Psalms 24 : v. 1 " The earth is the Lords and all its fullness...."

Psalms 46 : v. 1 "God is our refuge and strength.."

Psalms 66 : v. 1 "Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth, sing out the honor of His name..."

We could go on there are many more....

However I think we have got the picture.

We begin our prayers by focusing on God and who He is and desiring for His name to be glorified here on this earth. Here is Osaka, here in O.I.C.

3. "Your Kingdom Come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven."

The Greek idiom "kingdom of" means to rule or reign. When Jesus said that the kingdom of Heaven is at hand, He meant that God was about to assert His authority over the earth. When Jesus defeated satan by dying on the cross, it was then possible for God to reign in people's hearts.

When you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you forsake your former allegiance to Satan and are restored to fellowship with God, on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ.

To pray "Your kingdom come" means to say something like this.

"May you have full control of my life, I bow down to your authority, as your subject I submit to your will for my life."

How many Christians are really prepared to pray that sort of prayer?

I have been in ministry for 30 years and I haven't heard many Christians pray like that.

And yet this kind of prayer according to Jesus is a blue print for a disciple's prayer.

The first time I seriously prayed that prayer, God asked Wendy and I to give up our home, go and train at Bible College in Scotland and then sent us out to Japan as Missionaries. We were serious about wanting God's will for our lives and God was serious about making sure that we went to the right Bible College to train for ministry.

What Jesus is saying here is that in all our praying we need to have a very active concern for God's will in our lives and in any given situation.

When we constantly read the Bible and search the scriptures we discover what God's will is.

Then we should earnestly seek to obey His will.

God will always find a way to show you His will if you are willing to obey it.

Moses had a problem when he discovered that it was God's will to use him to rescue 2 million Jews in slavery in Egypt. God gave him a staff that could turn into a snake and evidence that God was able to work miracles, then Aaron his brother to be his mouth piece.

God was not interested in Moses's ability; He was interested in His availability.

When we pray, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done, we are handing over our lives to God, for His plans and purposes for us.

Turn with me to Matthew Chapter 3: v.2. It says "REPENT" for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Let us also turn to Mark 1: v. 15 "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand, REPENT, and believe in the gospel."

When we "REPENT" we turn away from our old life of going our own way and doing what we want and turn to God and say I want to go your way.

So to sum up what we have learnt about prayer so far.

1. We must be adopted into God's family before we can call Him Father. This is done as we believe the Gospel message about Jesus Christ.
2. As our Heavenly Father He has authority over our lives. Yes He will provide and protect us but He will also discipline us.
3. God's glory must be foremost in our minds when we come to prayer.
4. We must first recognize who God is and praise His name before we concern ourselves with our personal needs. We must value God's honor.
5. We must be prepared to surrender our lives to God and seek His will and His purposes here on earth.