



Pray Give Fast

Matthew 6:1-18

Text

Matthew 6:9-15

Topic

Jesus gave His disciples a model for prayer that introduced a radical new intimacy with God as our Father

Title

"God is Dad"

Introduction

A child was watching his mother scan through and delete a long list of junk e-mail on the computer screen.

"This reminds me of the Lord's Prayer," the child said.

"What do you mean?" the mother asked.

"You know. **That part about 'deliver us from E-mail.'** "

No matter how many times he'd heard the Lord's Prayer, the kid got it wrong.

You and I have more than likely heard the Lord's Prayer a lot. Obviously we want to get it right.

I don't mean the words themselves. We can easily memorize them. No, I mean the intent of the prayer.

You see, this was never meant to just be repeated as a formal prayer. It's a model for prayer, given by the Lord to His disciples. It would be better to call it the Disciple's Prayer.

When you study it as a model for prayer, one thing you immediately notice about the Lord's Prayer, something obvious but important, is that it transports you to Heaven and then takes you back to living on the earth.

I will therefore organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Pray As If You Are Seated Next To Your Father, and #2 Pray As If You Are Sent Out By Your Father.

#1 Pray As If You Are Seated Next To Your Father (v9-10)

Jesus spent a lot of time praying. It's been said many times that if Jesus spent so much time praying, how much more do we need to spend time in prayer. True, but don't miss the underlying motive. Jesus came to earth from Heaven. For all eternity He had been in Heaven, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. On earth He continued His fellowship with them through prayer. In other words, prayer wasn't a formal activity. It was, for Jesus, His joy to communicate with Heaven while physically confined to the earth.

I sometimes think more praying would occur if we remembered the joy of it, rather than stressing it as a duty. It's not one of the "have to's," it's a "get to."

If you are a Christian **you** are seated in Heaven. The apostle Paul said this, in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

Ephesians 2:5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up together, **and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**

You are seated, spiritually speaking, in Heaven next to the Father. From that new vantage point you can't help but have the perspective of verses nine and ten.

Matthew 6:9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

“In this manner,” or according to this model or pattern. In Luke's account Jesus gave His disciples this model after they approached Him and asked, “Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples.”

Commentators and historians say that it was common for religious leaders to teach their disciples formal prayers, by which they would have a sense of their uniqueness. Apparently, John the Baptist followed that tradition.

How interesting, then, to notice that Jesus had not taught His disciples any formal prayers! They may have felt somewhat second-rate. Here they were, committed to following Jesus – yet they had no formal, identifying prayers. John's disciples would be reciting formal prayers; so would disciples of various rabbi's. Jesus' disciples had no such prayers. When they went to the Temple, or synagogue, it would be embarrassing.

Jesus was not interested in formal prayers, or formal praying. He would introduce an intimacy in “prayer” that was radical and revolutionary.

“Our Father” captures that sense of intimacy. Intimacy is something precious, something personal. Anyone can call me Gene, or Pastor Gene. Only my kids can call me Dad or Daddy.

Here's another way of looking at it. When my kids talked to me, they never addressed me by saying things like, “O provider of all my food.” Or, “You who hold the keys to the car.” They didn't use “Thee” or “Thou” **ever**. They were respectful; but I was their Dad.

Is God your Father? You can only address God as Father if you have been born into the family of God by believing on Jesus Christ to save you.

Your Father is “in Heaven,” above the heavens. He is seated over the heavens, overseeing and supervising everything that occurs beneath Him.

When you see things from the vantage point of Heaven, everything looks different. Seated with Him you have no doubts everything is working for good for them that love Him, that His plans for the universes are being accomplished by His providence and power.

"Hallowed be thy name," more correctly translated, would read, "Let your name be made holy." Seated in Heaven I understand God's holiness, or if you prefer, His 'perfectness.' I see mankind's sinfulness and understand that history is God working-out His plan of redemption to save sinful men.

Look at it this way. When my perspective is earthly, I wonder about all the evil and all the terrible things that happen. When I remember I am seated in Heaven, I see a thrice-holy God saving a lost world by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

The word, “come,” is in a verb tense meaning *come once and for all*. The “kingdom” is a reference to the literal ruling of this planet by Jesus Christ. We believe He is coming back and when He does He will rule over the earth, restoring it, for one-thousand years. After that He will create a new earth and new heavens and rule them forever.

Your prayers are to be influenced by the future hope of the Lord's return. From your vantage point in Heaven you realize that the ultimate help for this earth and all the people on it is the return of Jesus to establish His kingdom. When earth is ruled the same way Heaven is ruled, only then will peace and prosperity will be possible.

“Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” *Heaven is in great shape!* There are no problems there. The earth is a mess. It got that way because

Adam and Eve sinned and have passed-on their sin to their offspring. Human history is the story of God intervening to save the human race from Hell for heaven. Your prayers should be influenced by the fact that God is accomplishing His will on the earth.

You **do** have needs on earth, and we're going to look at them in a moment. First, *linger in the heavenlies!* God is your Dad. Seated right next to your Dad, in Heaven, you understand the big picture.

#2 Pray As If You Are Sent Out By Your Father

(v11-15)

In the remainder of the Lord's Prayer Jesus gave His disciples a perspective on their lives on earth: **Live as though Dad were standing right next to you!**

Your Dad is standing right next to you on earth, to provide what you need.

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread.

The particular word "daily" can mean both "today's bread" and "tomorrow's bread." So, which is it?

It's probably both! If you're praying in the morning, you need today's bread. If you're praying at night, you need tomorrow's bread. The point is that you live in total dependence upon your Father to provide what you need on earth.

You can't help but be reminded of the bread God provided on a daily basis back in the Old Testament. After He delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, He gave them manna from heaven. They were to go out each morning to gather it. They gathered twice as much just before the Sabbath Day. Everyone had enough; there was no lack.

Bread is a basic staple of life. In the context of Jesus teaching you how to pray, you are to be confident that your Father knows what you need and will provide it.

You can draw at least two stunning conclusions from this:

1. If He doesn't provide something... *Then you don't need it!*
2. He will sometimes provide a kind of bread you don't necessarily want, but that you need; e.g., suffering.

Your Dad is standing right next to you on earth, to help you with other people.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

In Luke's account it reads, "and forgive us our sins." That's the idea. In verses fourteen and fifteen Jesus will comment on exactly what He meant. It has to do with your fellowship and relationship with others on the earth.

The key that unlocks the meaning is the simple word, "as." Let's say you are having a problem with someone. You are holding a grudge against them; or you have some bitterness towards them. Your Father is right there, standing next to you. If you are out of fellowship with the other person, you are also out of fellowship with God. You see, if you pray in the context that God would forgive you "as" you have forgiven them, you are reminded **God has forgiven you so much!** He is your example of forgiveness and He can empower you to forgive others who have wronged you.

Matthew 6:13 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.

The word for "temptation" means a trial or testing which, if yielded to, will lead to sin. There are two things you need to know about temptation:

1. First – God does not tempt you to sin.
2. Second – God does allow you to be tempted.

Temptation comes from the evil one. That's not to say you are always (or ever!) being attacked by the devil himself. It is a general observation. Satan – not God - tempted Adam and Eve. God allowed it. They yielded,

and it led to sin. Their encounter with the evil one in the Garden of Eden set the stage for you to be tempted.

Jesus came to earth. He, too, was tempted by the evil one. There, in a bleak wilderness, tempted by Satan after forty days of fasting, Jesus relied upon the Word of God, and was victorious. He prevailed by depending upon His Father to help Him.

Your Dad is standing right next to you on earth to help you resist the perils of temptation. You can be confident that none of the temptations that He allows are beyond your ability to resist, provided you will depend upon Him and not your own strength.

To put it another way: You can follow the example of Jesus in the wilderness rather than the example of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” Seated in Heaven, we understand God is working-out His plan on the earth. That plan involves the Second Coming of Jesus to establish the “kingdom” of God on the earth and, beyond that, the recreation of the heavens and the earth for a sinless eternity. As we wait for it, we have the “power” and the “glory.”

- “The power” reminds me I can do all things on the earth, endure all things, through Jesus Christ who strengthens me.
- “The glory” reminds me that my life on the earth is not my own but to be lived in such a way that it points to Jesus and gives God the glory He deserves.

Your Father provides what you need; and He is standing there to help you in your problems with people, and through your perils. When those principles guide you, you depend upon His power to reveal His glory.

The model for prayer seems to end with “Amen.” Jesus next commented on forgiving others, to clarify what He meant in verse twelve.

Matthew 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

Matthew 6:15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Let me say first of all that this has nothing to do with your salvation. Jesus was addressing you as a member of God's family. Your salvation is not contingent upon your forgiving others.

Think of this as you would the relationships in your own family. If you are fighting with your siblings, holding grudges, reserving forgiveness, then your parents have to deal with it. They have to discipline you.

Forgiving others is something we have a really difficult time with. The Lord was always trying to illustrate how readily we expect forgiveness but how often we withhold it from others. Whether it is the parable of the unmerciful servant or the talk about forgiving someone seventy-times seven in a single day for the same offense, we need to wrap our heads around forgiveness.

There are all kinds of formulas and procedures folks have suggested when it comes to asking for forgiveness and for extending it. It comes down to what one commentator said: "...forgiveness is to care more about a person than about what he has done."

Do I care about the person? Then I will be ready to forgive, wanting to forgive, walking in forgiveness. There may still be a process that needs to happen - asking for forgiveness and granting it. But I will not be angry and bitter and resentful and such because I care more about the person than about what he or she has done to me,

As a parent you might discipline your child by sending them to their room. I've heard some parents say, "Don't come out of your room until you are ready to ask forgiveness."

Then it becomes a waiting game! How long are they willing to remain in their room? How long can you leave them there?

Regardless of the effectiveness of that strategy in your earthly family, it can serve as an illustration. It seems as though some Christians live their entire lives as if they've been sent to their 'room' until they will ask for or extend forgiveness to others. They are out-and-about, serving in the church, living their lives. But all the while they are confined to a small way of thinking because they refuse to care more about the person than what they have done.

Maybe you need to come out of your room!

I wonder if Jesus' disciples weren't just a little disappointed? After all, they wanted a formal prayer, and Jesus was encouraging them to pray informally.

There's something strangely appealing about formalism, about religion. But it appeals to our flesh, to our own sense of righteousness - making us feel as though we are doing something to make ourselves right with God.

This is just one reason we are so opposed to the recent movement within what is called the emergent church towards a greater formalism in prayer. They claim to be rediscovering 'ancient' or 'lost' methods of prayer that somehow empowered the early church.

If those formal methods and meditations were so crucial, don't you think Jesus would have both practiced them and taught them?

He did not. In fact, He obliterated them once-for-all in giving us instead the pattern for prayer.

You're seated next to Dad in Heaven; He's standing next to you on earth.

Talk to Him as if you believed that were the case - **since it is!**