

How to Pray

MATTHEW 6 VERSES 9-13 (JESUS SPEAKING)

#	BIBLE TEXT	WHAT WE CAN LEARN
9	After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.	Exalt God in our prayers and in our lives! Give God the highest and most important place in all things! Notice, that God comes first.
10	Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.	We should desire what God desires.
11	Give us this day our daily bread.	We are dependent on God for our very lives. The food we eat and all of life's necessities come from God.
12	And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.	God desires that we be debt free, not just in terms of money, but also in terms of outstanding promises, grudges we hold and outstanding sins.
13	And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.	Our great desire is to remain in close communion with God. Temptations are not sins, but we are, however, like sheep, easily led astray. We should seek God's grace that we are not led into temptation or ensnared by evil. We declare God's greatness and exalt him again.

INFORMATION

This text is known as the "Lord's prayer" and is commonly referred to by Christians. It is not required that we recite the exact words of the Lord's Prayer, but we should keep the structure of the prayer in mind and remember to follow the general prescription. Jesus was God in the flesh, and even so, he exalted God the Father, and so should we. Sometimes we remember the Lord's Prayer but forget the prelude. Before giving us the Lord's Prayer, Jesus provided some basic guidelines for prayer.

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

The act of praying is not to inform God of our needs or to announce to the world what we are praying for or that we are righteous because we pray. In prayer, we confide in God as a friend. It is a quiet and intimate experience that we perform to be closer to God.

The Bible in other passages tells us that we should pray constantly. This could be quite challenging if we believe that praying requires that our heads be bowed and eyes closed as is the custom in the church. Driving and praying could prove fatal if we prayed constantly and only prayed with our eyes closed and heads down. This custom is a loose symbolic reference to the parable in Luke 18:9-14 where a Pharisee and a publican (a tax collector) are referenced praying in the temple. The Pharisee stood and prayed, proclaiming his good deeds, while the tax collector stood some distance away and did not lift his head or eyes towards heaven and beat upon his chest declaring to God that he was a sinner and pleading for mercy. This, like many things we see in the church, is a tradition. The practice is not forbidden by the Bible and certainly is not wrong in itself, but neither does the Bible require it.

Additional Thoughts

Jesus prayed often. So should we. Consider these passages.

Relevant Passages

Matthew 11:25-26

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. 26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Matthew 14:23

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Luke 6:12

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Luke 22:32

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Luke 22:41-44

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, 42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. 43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

How to Pray (Continued)

In fact, Jesus did not say that this was required form, even though, He Himself, prayed looking towards Heaven. Some will say that Jesus could do that because he was sinless and perfect and had no need to bow his head; this is true, but it ignores an important point. Christians are also blameless in the eyes of God! Our sins are forgiven and through Jesus we have direct access to God. We can choose to pray with our eyes closed and our heads bowed, or we may choose to pray with our heads looking towards Heaven, or with our eyes on the road (this is recommended when driving). Like all things in our walk with God, what's in our hearts is what matters, not our outward appearance.

WHAT IT MEANS TO OUR FAMILY

There are many ways to worship God, and all of them are beneficial to us. Prayer is unique because it is intended to be a personal and intimate conversation between us and our Savior and Creator. We need to know the truth concerning prayer and not be beguiled by the traditions of the church. The tradition of the church (to bow our heads and close our eyes) is not bad, but if we do not know the truth we may believe that this is the only way to pray. In fact, the corporate prayer we have in Church today is far from the deep personal and intimate experience prayer can be to us. We should continue, steadfastly, in prayer and make it a part of our lives, a necessity for a Christian just as much as breathing.

Additional Thoughts

Great men of God prayed. So should we. Consider these passages.

Relevant Passages

Genesis 20:17

So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.

Numbers 11:2

And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched.

1 Samuel 8:6

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord.

2 Kings 6:17

And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

2 Kings 20:5

Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord.

Job 42:10

And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.