

Praying as God's People

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—**Matthew 6:6**

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 6:5-15

with God, although there are occasions where public prayer during worship is appropriate in acknowledgment of blessings received or anticipated, as well as an expression of thanksgiving.

Jesus also gave an example of a proper form of petition that is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer.” It is characterized by simplicity, brevity, and reverence. It acknowledges the sovereignty of God and ascribes honor and praise to the Creator. This is followed by an

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privileges enjoyed by the people of God is access to our Heavenly Father through the medium of prayer. “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.” (Matt. 6:5) Thus prayers must be sincere if they are to be acceptable to God.

Our Key Verse emphasizes that prayers should be an occasion of personal communion

expression of confidence that divine authority will be manifested in the establishment of a kingdom on earth with conditions that are in harmony with the righteousness existing in the heavenly domain. After giving priority to God's interests, personal needs are presented, acknowledging dependence upon the Heavenly Father for sustenance. Although "daily bread" is usually associated with temporal provisions, the need for spiritual food to sustain believers should be the main intent of this request.

In requesting forgiveness, emphasis is again placed upon the quality of mercy that should be manifested by Christians toward others who may offend. The inability of the Lord's people to perform perfectly in their actions, and a continual need to seek divine forgiveness for transgressions, should cultivate compassion and sympathy for others in their hearts. In view of personal weaknesses and failings under trial, believers may pray not to be abandoned in such situations, but to receive grace sufficient for the occasion and not lean on their own strength. Similarly, recognition that there is an evil one is a reminder not to trust self, but to call upon the Lord for safety and deliverance.—vss. 9-15

Jesus also denounced another form of religious hypocrisy. "When ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (vs. 16) Sincere believers would not resort to fasting in an outward and ritualistic manner to be seen of others as an attempt to appear holy, but instead, should do so in secret that thus they might experience closer communion with the Heavenly Father.

Let us ever heed the Master's following admonition in our approach to the Almighty. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."—John 4:23 ■