

A Model for Prayer

Key Verse: *“After this manner therefore pray ye.”*
—*Matthew 6:9*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 6:9-15

ANOTHER IMPORTANT LESSON given by the Master in his sermon on the mount was a model prayer. The expression in our Key Verse, “after this manner,” in the original Greek means “in this way,” and elsewhere in the New Testament has been translated “likewise.” (Luke 14:33; 15:7,10) Thus, Jesus was not stating the exact words which we must recite each time we pray, rather he gave an example of how to arrange our prayers. One cannot help but notice its brevity, simplicity, directness, and orderliness. Jesus’ example prayer shows that the chief aim of our prayers should be to glorify God and to express our desire for the fulfillment of his plan and purposes.

Jesus’ example prayer begins, “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” Prior to this time no Israelite ever prayed using the expression “Our Father.” Instead they used the words “LORD” or “LORD God of Israel,” because they had been a house of servants. The example prayer Jesus gave assured his disciples that although they were Jews, God would recognize those fully consecrated to him during the Gospel Age as sons, not as servants. (Gal. 4:1-7; Heb. 3:5,6; I John 3:1,2) The words “Our Father” imply a recognition that there are other sons who also have been adopted into God’s family. (Rom. 8:14-17) “Hallowed be thy name” expresses reverence, adoration, and appreciation of God’s goodness and greatness, which should be part of our prayers.

Next Jesus states, “Thy kingdom come.” (Matt. 6:10) Accordingly, our prayers should express our earnest expectation and desire for God’s kingdom to soon be established on the earth, fulfilling all the promises God has given for the blessing and restoration of mankind.—Isa. 35:1-10; Jer. 31:34; Hab. 2:14

The following words, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,” indicate our prayers should express a continuing desire to know and follow God’s will in our daily life. “In earth” and “in heaven” emphasize our longing for God’s will to be done, or accomplished, with regard to both the heavenly and earthly phases of God’s kingdom.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matt. 6:11) “Daily bread” reminds us of God’s provision of food for the nation of Israel—“bread from heaven”—which sustained them in the wilderness for forty years. (Exod. 16:4-35) This expression in Jesus’ model prayer shows the need to recognize our continual dependence upon God each day, especially for spiritual food. This is the “true bread from heaven”—Christ Jesus and the lessons which he proclaimed.—John 6:32-58

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matt. 6:12) In prayer we should acknowledge our sins and shortcomings, seeking forgiveness through the merit of our Savior. By so doing, it will assist us to be merciful, compassionate, and forgiving toward others.—Eph. 4:32

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matt. 6:13) The word “temptation” means “a putting to the proof.” Paul states that the Lord’s followers would have temptations and testings to prove our faith. These, the apostle says, are “such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (I Cor. 10:13; II Pet. 2:9) As we approach God in our prayers, let us continually realize his loving care in all matters of our life. ■