

Praying Properly

Key Verse: “*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*”
—Matthew 6:9

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 6:5-15

AFTER JESUS HAD FIN-ished “praying in a certain place” a disciple asked, “Lord, teach us to pray.” (Luke 11:1-4) We should not suppose this disciple had never before prayed when he asked this question. However, the disciples seem to have realized that not only were Jesus’ teachings considerably different from those of the scribes and

Pharisees on various points, but also his manner of prayer was different. Hence they desired to have his instruction on prayer.

Jesus’ lesson concerning prayer is recorded in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. (Luke 11:1-13; Matt. 6:5-15) We are not to understand that Jesus meant to repeat his words verbatim when praying, but rather he said, “After this manner pray.” In other words, Jesus gave us not the exact words to say, but rather he provided a general example of the style and content of our prayers—simple, brief, direct, orderly, and reverent. Therefore, we should avoid repeating the same formal words in every prayer, or think that by giving a long prayer we will impress those listening or somehow be more acceptable to our Heavenly Father.—Matt. 6:7

“Our Father which art in heaven.” (vs. 9) The expression “Our Father” would have been new to the Jews, for they had been a nation of “servants.” (Ezra 5:11; Neh. 1:6)

In the New Testament, however, the apostle states concerning those Jews who accepted Jesus, “to them gave he power [Greek: privilege] to become the sons of God.” (John 1:12) “Hallowed be thy name” expresses a reverential adoration and appreciation of God’s goodness and greatness. Our first thought in prayer should be upon God, not on ourselves, nor upon others precious to us.

“Thy kingdom come.” (Matt. 6:10) We should pray for God’s kingdom to soon come, which he has promised shall bless all mankind and will be the eternal solution for every problem, trouble, and evil of the present world. This hope of the kingdom will help us to pass through the trials and difficulties of today as we contemplate the prospect of a time of blessing to all.

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” We should express our trust that God will fulfill all of his many promises. “Give us this day our daily bread.” (vs. 11) We should acknowledge our continual dependence upon God, accepting his providential care and direction in our daily lives with regard to both spiritual and temporal matters.

“Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.” (vs. 12, *International Standard Version*) We often come short of God’s perfect standards and therefore should express in prayer our need of his compassion and mercy, seeking forgiveness through the merit of our Savior, and expressing our desire to change. We also are to ask our Heavenly Father to help us develop mercy toward others who may sin against us.—Matt. 5:44

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matt. 6:13) We should request that God guide our steps in life so that no trial comes upon us that we would be unable to bear, and that he help us learn from the trials he permits for our growth. (I Cor. 10:13; Rom. 8:28) Thus we see the manner of prayer given to us by Jesus in order to be pleasing to God, as we express to him our desire to do his will from our heart.—Eph. 6:6 ■