



SERIES: Becoming Spiritually Fit 2022

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Saturday, 01/15/22

Scripture: Matthew 6:9-13

TITLE: What to Pray

This week we've been taking an in-depth look at prayer. This is an extremely important and also a somewhat confusing spiritual discipline. We have talked about what prayer is, whether God listens when we pray, whether prayer works, and how and when to pray. These are all great questions. But I believe you could know all of this information and still be left asking "what should I pray?"

We should distinguish between the questions of how to pray and what to pray. How to make it be more focused on the execution of the prayer. Where do we pray, how much should we pray? Should we pray individually or in groups? Should my prayer speak many words or be very short?

The one we dialed in on, "what we should pray," I believe the heart of the question is "what I should focus on when I pray." And "what sort of things should I pray for?"

If you've prayed in groups of people before, I'm willing to bet you've heard some prayer requests that made you stop and wonder, "is that something we really should pray for?" As someone who works with younger students, I can relate. Sometimes I get prayer requests like, "help us win a basketball game," or, "help me pass the test I didn't study for." It can be difficult navigating the sorts of things that we shouldn't necessarily pray for. But I think it might be helpful to focus our attention more on what Jesus clearly shows us we should focus on and ask for when we pray; this might help us discern what sorts of things we should and should pray for.

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, He responds with the most famous prayer of all time. In the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13, ESV), Jesus said:

"Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'"

I believe this is Jesus' blueprint for prayer where He's showing us the sorts of things we should focus our hearts and minds on when we pray and the sorts of things that we should be actively seeking from God to help guide us on our Christian journey.

The irony is that many times when I hear the Lord's Prayer said, it's recited in a kind of empty way that reminds me of kids saying the pledge of allegiance at school every day. I think our tendency can be to go on autopilot and say the words, but we don't think about the words we are saying.

The Lord's prayer was never meant to be words we say. It was meant to demonstrate what our focus should be. So, let's look at the Lord's prayer a little closer.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

From the start, Jesus is showing us the focus should be on the glory of God. To be hallowed is to be respected. We want God to be seen as holy. We should remember who we are talking to: the God of the universe!

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

We want to see God's kingdom, His rule, and reign here and now on Earth. We want things to be the way God designed them to be with Him in charge. Above all, we should pray that God's will be accomplished and that His will would become our will.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

We should pray and remember that we are entirely dependent on God to provide us with everything we need every day. See, both physically and spiritually we need the bread of life.

“And forgive our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

We should pray and repent, turn away from our sin, ask for forgiveness, and pray that we might have a heart that would forgive others who sin against us.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Lastly, when we pray, we should ask God to give us spiritual strength, through the Spirit, to overcome the many temptations of sin in this world. We know that we are in a spiritual battle with the many forces of evil around us in this life. Praying for this can make us aware each day of the spiritual battle we are in and remind us that we need the power of God to overcome the temptation.

So what should we pray? When we communicate with God daily, we should focus our attention on His glory and pray that our will aligns with his will. We should pray to thank God for everything He's provided for us. We need to pray for forgiveness for our sins as well as pray for a heart of forgiveness that reflects the Gospel. And we should pray for the power to overcome the temptation of sin and evil in our world.

Prayer is so much more than making a list of requests from God, we pray to communicate with God, to be drawn closer to God and for our desires to become God's desires. We pray to reorient our minds and souls on the God of the universe. We were created by Him, we were created for

Him, we were created to have a relationship with Him, and we need Him to guide us so that we might glorify Him and everything we do through the ups and downs of this Christian Life. With all this in mind, the people of God should be a people who truly pray without ceasing!