

PRAYING LIKE CHILDREN

Matthew 6:5-8

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Prayer is the most important part of how we relate to God, allowing us to express both our thankfulness and need. God desires that we pray directly to Him, speaking to Him about what is on our heart. He clearly is not interested in mindless repetition nor does He burden us with time requirements or other mindless activities. In fact, when you pray, don't worry about everyone else; just pray to your Father. This is why, according to Jesus, we ought to do most of our praying when we're alone. That way we can focus entirely on the Lord rather than on the people around us. Instead of trying to impress others by showing them how pious we are, we can concentrate on God and our relationship with Him.

Matthew 6:9-13

"This, then, is how you should pray:

*'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us today 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 the evil one.'*

The Lord's prayer stands as a model for how we should pray. We address God as 'our Father in heaven' (calling to mind both his immanence and transcendence). There are six requests in this model prayer. The first three concern our relationship to God (notice the pronoun 'your'). The last three concern our lives and relationships with one another (notice the pronouns 'us' and 'our').

This prayer teaches us that instead of diving in with a list of all our physical needs, we first acknowledge that our relationship with God is primary. We desire that He be set apart in our lives as first and special. We desire for His mission in this world to move forward; we want lost people to come into His kingdom. We ask God to fix our broken world.

Hiding nothing, we also humbly acknowledge our needs—both physical and spiritual (bread, forgiveness, deliverance)—knowing that God provides all that is necessary for our past, present, and future. We pray with the unshakeable conviction that, even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer on account of Jesus. In fact, we are certain that God is delighted to hear from His children.