

Lord, Teach Us to Pray. (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4)

"Lord, teach us to pray" was a request made by one of Jesus' disciples after seeing Him praying in a certain place. One might ask, don't they know how to pray? They must have prayed all their lives. Even the feeblest child can pray. The book of Job tells us that the young raven cries out to God for food (Job 38:41). So, what prompted this disciple to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray? Notice, they didn't ask Jesus to teach them how to preach. Think about that! I believe through the process of association that what He does in the solitary place is why things happen—demons fall before Him, the blind see, the dead are raised, lepers are cleansed, and all manner of diseases are healed.

The quality and quantity of Jesus' praying made the disciples see how little they knew about prayer. We all need to go to the Lord and say, "Lord, teach me how to pray." But thanks be to our Lord who asked His Father to send us the Holy Spirit to teach us all things. The Apostle Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought (Romans 8:26).

In this passage, Jesus taught His disciples a prayer model that is generally referred to as the Lord's Prayer. In fact, our Lord's prayer occurred at the Garden of Gethsemane, where He prayed for us to be one just as He and His Father are one. But here He gave them a prayer model. Now, let us look at the elements of this prayer model:

- (1) **Praise.** "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name." This is giving reverence to God for who He is—our Father. We sanctify, acknowledge, and praise His holy name. Unbelievers say this prayer, but only believers can refer to God as our Father, because as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God (John 1:12). God is the Creator of all. But some make Satan their father. "You are of your father the devil" (John 8:44).
- (2) **Power.** "Your kingdom come. Your will be done." This is an expression of our willingness to submit to His authority or will now that He might rule in our lives. The psalmist says, "The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (Psalm 103:19). We are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). God wants our lives here on earth to be lived in the center of His will, as it is in heaven.
- (3) **Provision.** "Give us day by day our daily bread." This is the part we readily remember very well. Here we are asking our Father for our daily needs, both physical and spiritual. Your children's tuition fees, mortgage, car note, etc., are included. We express both our dependence on and confidence in Him.
- (4) **Forgiveness.** "And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us." We simply cannot hold a grudge against anyone and maintain a prayer life that gets results. There are many instances where mental confusion and emotional frustration can be

attributed to harboring bitterness against others. In fact, the medical profession has shown that people who hold resentment in their hearts are more susceptible to certain types of diseases.

- (5) ***Deliverance from Temptation.*** "And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one." The word "temptation" here means test or trial. Many tests and trials could be overcome in advance by the child of God who is enjoying the fellowship with the Father that a proper prayer life brings.
- (6) ***Praise.*** And He concluded by saying, "For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." Starting with praise and ending with praise.

So, what is prayer?

Prayer in the Bible involves dialogue or communication between God and people, especially His covenant partners. Prayer is not just talking to God, but also listening to Him. It is fellowship with the Unseen and Most Holy One. It is by prayer that God has given us the right to take hold of Him and His strength.

Our spiritual life depends on prayer. Dr. Ravi Zacharias said, "The day you believe that your prayer life is the most critical aspect of who you are spiritually, your life will be dramatically changed." James Montgomery in his hymn "Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire" describes prayer as the Christian's vital breath and native air.

All who have walked with God have viewed prayer as the main business of their lives. Moses conversed with God (Exodus 3:1-4:17) and interceded for Israel (Exodus 32:11-13; Numbers 11:11-15). By prayer Joshua discerned sin in the conquest community (Joshua 7:6-9), but he was tricked when he did not discern God's opinion by prayer (Joshua 9).

When the apostles were tempted to invest their energies in other important and necessary tasks, in Acts chapter 6, they determined to give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4). John Wesley said, "God does nothing but in answer to prayer," and backed up his conviction by devoting two hours daily to prayer.

When Jesus saw that the harvest was plentiful but there were few laborers, He asked His disciples to pray (Matthew 9:37-38). It's consoling that Jesus would ask us to pray for this need when His single prayer can accomplish more than millions of ours. But God wants us to enter communion with Him, and we do it by prayer. It is through prayer that we foster our relationship with the Father. We all know that any relationship without fellowship is lifeless. It's like a marriage without love.

How do we develop a consistent prayer life?

When we forget that our spiritual life depends on prayer, we can become slothful, so we need to have a consistent prayer life:

1. Schedule a regular prayer time—it's making an appointment with the Almighty God. If possible, early in the morning. Mark 1:35 tells us, "And in the morning, a great while before day, He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there prayed." David said, "Early will I seek Thee" (Psalm 63:1). And in Psalm 5:3, he said, "In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation." It's a meeting between you and your Heavenly Father—you do not hire someone to do the meeting or fellowship for you. It is more important than your business meeting.
2. Find a quiet place—maybe in your room (put your phone away). Do not allow technology to distract you. Don't start with Yahoo, WhatsApp, or Gmail. "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" (Matthew 6:6).
3. Write down your prayer list. Use a notebook or folder and find Scriptures that support your list. For example, if you are praying for an unsaved family member, you can write Acts 16:31 by his name: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Isaiah 43:26 tells us to put Him in remembrance—remind Him of what He said. Not that He forgets, but we are approaching Him by His Word. Having a list will help you focus. It also helps you remember to thank Him when the prayer is answered. Your list should not include only you and your family. Remember 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (all people), your church, and your neighbors, and as you wait on the Lord, He will put some people or nations in your spirit to include in your daily prayer. I remember that while I was writing my list, it came to my spirit to specifically pray for Indonesia and Tanzania.
4. Remember to always seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:26 says, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses; for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."