

Learning from the Sermon on the Mount #23
“The Correct Attitude for Prayer: Deepening Our Relationship with God the Father”
Message Notes, July 18, 2021

Matthew 6:9-13 NCV

⁹ So when you pray, you should pray like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, may your name always be kept holy. ¹⁰ May your kingdom come and what you want be done, here on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us the food we need for each day. ¹² Forgive us for our sins, just as we have forgiven those who sinned against us. ¹³ And do not cause us to be tempted, but save us from the Evil One.’ [The kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours forever. Amen.]

■ **The Order of the Prayer:** Physical needs→mental/psychological needs→spiritual needs

a. Realistic: God knows our reality, that we are so concerned about our immediate daily problems that we cannot think of anything else.

- When we pray about our physical needs, we realize that our physical life is only one part of what *life* really is
- We come to realize that fellowship with the Lord is what sustains life, and so we begin to pray about that relationship
- We then notice the obstacles that pull us away from that important relationship, and we begin to pray about them

b. Unrealistic: After praying for the "Kingdom of God" to come, it seems logical that the order we should pray in would be first about the spiritual, which is our relationship with the God of that Kingdom, then about the mental/psychological, which is our relationship with others, and then finally about our own needs...

■ **Daily Needs (Food)**

1. The meaning of *daily* (each day)

a. "Today's sustenance" can be translated "tomorrow's need." The implication is "Give us today what we need every day.

b. We should seek for only what we need for each single day, but that is difficult to do

c. "Sustenance" is not limited to food, but refers to all the necessities of life

Proverbs 30:7-9 NCV ⁷ "I ask two things from you, LORD. Don't refuse me before I die.

⁸ Keep me from lying and being dishonest. And don't make me either rich or poor; just give me enough food for each day. ⁹ If I have too much, I might reject you and say, 'I don't know the LORD.' If I am poor, I might steal and disgrace the name of my God.

✧ Trust that the Lord knows just the right amount for me and will give me what I need, when I need it.

2. The attentiveness of God (the great God of the universe is attentive to my personal needs!)

a. Ultimate attentiveness **Matthew 10:29-31** ²⁹ Two sparrows cost only a penny, but not even one of them can die without your Father's knowing it. ³⁰ God even knows how many hairs are on your head. ³¹ So don't be afraid. You are worth much more than many sparrows.

b. Unbelievable truth: the God of eternity past and present, who moves history and rules the world, is concerned about the details of my daily needs **Psalms 37:25** I was young, and now I am old, but I have never seen good people left helpless or their children begging for food. (David's experience)

✧ If you believe this to be factual, how much less trouble will you have in life?

3. Why daily? (Why not provide for everything all at once?)

a. Jesus said, "Don't be like the people who don't know God and continue saying things that mean nothing, thinking that God will hear them because of their many words (vv.7-8), but isn't that contradictory to what he said here?

- Think of the Father and the Son's trust relationship: Prayer keeps us in constant contact and communion with God, and He is always delighted with our fellowship
- By praying about our needs, we will discover what they truly are (prayer benefits us)

b. To confirm that all things are dependent on God

- We realize that without God's support, we have not been and will not be able to live
- We realize that we have no need for anything else, because God is with us.

- ✧ Have you noticed that your relationship with God tends to be important only when you are in trouble or need something?

■ Image of the “Father”

1. Distorted image of Father

- a. Kierkegaard: Due to his father's guilt and distorted view of God, he said, "To pray to God is to feel guilt.
 - b. Franz Kafka: "I was nothing to you...I lost my confidence in your presence, and soon it turned into an endless guilt" ("Letter to My Father").
 - c. Freud, "The Oedipus Complex": Human morality generally emerges from inner guilt over a secret desire to kill one's father and claim the mother as one's own ("Moses and Monotheism")¹
- ✧ Have you ever felt fear or estrangement from God because of the overlap between your earthly father and the image of God the Father?

2. The biblical God the Father

- a. “Abba, Father”: a whole new concept of prayer **Romans 8:15** The Spirit we received does not make us slaves again to fear; it makes us children of God. With that Spirit we cry out, “Father.”
 - We have been given a new relationship completely different from the earthly parent-child relationship that we have experienced.
 - In the Old Testament, the phrase "God the Father" is rarely used so that culture and time do not influence our perception of Him²
Matthew 6:6 When you pray, you should go into your room and close the door and pray to your Father who cannot be seen. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.
 - Completely new idea at that time: Praying in public places like synagogue and street corners was common, but Jesus had private prayer time with God and encouraged his disciples to do the same
- b. God who transcends fatherhood and motherhood **Isaiah 49:15** The LORD answers, “Can a woman forget the baby she nurses? Can she feel no kindness for the child to which she gave birth? Even if she could forget her children, I will not forget you.
 - By emphasizing motherhood, this passage is revealing God's nature
- c. Learning from the relationship between God the Father and Jesus **John 17:1, 21-26** ¹After Jesus said these things, he looked toward heaven and prayed, “Father, the time has come. Give glory to your Son so that the Son can give glory to you...²¹Father, I pray that they can be one. As you are in me and I am in you, I pray that they can also be one in us. Then the world will believe that you sent me.
 - This is the final prayer Jesus prayed for His disciples, but he had shown them how he prayed all along, especially modeling His close relationship with the Father
 - Just as the Father and Son are one, so the disciples are to seek “oneness” with the Father and with each other, and finally, in John 17:26, as Jesus has revealed to them what the Father is like (his Name) and invited them to have the same fellowship that Jesus has with the Father.
 - Human beings were created in the likeness of the trust relationship within the triune God, and can now be restored to the original human condition (returning home)
 - Revealing God's glory: A life lived according to God's will reveals His glory (17:1)

- ✧ We have learned that developing a trust relationship with God leads to the restoration of our true humanity. How intimate is your relationship with God? Is it deepening? Is there distance?
- ✧ Do I believe that if I trust God and live surrendered to His will, He will meet all of my needs at the best time? Do I believe that about my current needs?
- ✧ How can I deepen my relationship with God more? Take time to be still and meditate in His presence.

¹ Freud interprets that the Israelites killed Moses, which created in them an intense moral sense in them, summarized as the Ten Commandments.

² James Houston *Prayer: The Transforming Friendship*