

## "Help Me Pray"

The disciples once asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." I too need to improve my prayer life and draw closer to the God of heaven. Let's pray more often and more effectively.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Most of us have heard the Lord's Prayer at one time or another. Luke's version is a little shorter than the one that we read in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 6, but there are many of the same points in both places. Jesus taught us to pray in this way. And this passage is worth a very close examination. And it's our task to go to the Bible and see what Jesus our Lord desires from us—not looking at what Jesus will accept, but what He desires. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

I believe all of us feel the need to re-enroll in the school of prayer. Recently a friend asked me to help him learn to pray more effectively. As I pondered his question, I thought about my own prayer life and how I need to improve. Today we're going to the Bible to find out how to pray more effectively. To do so, we must listen to what Jesus taught his disciples. We must pay close attention and take seriously the model prayer He gives.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He wasn't trying to teach a ritual prayer that we memorize and repeat without serious consideration. Rather, He was helping them to know what to pray when we speak to God, the Father. Like the disciples, we too need to learn how to pray acceptably to our Father. Our task is to please God and to pray in the way that He desires. Worship to God is when holy people praise a holy God in a holy way. The worship and prayer in spirit and in truth matters. God seeks such people, and we should be such people.

We offer this study free on the importance of prayer. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). And you can watch Search on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Luke 11:1 to 4, and explore how we can pray more effectively to our Father in heaven.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke, chapter 11, verses 1 through 4, and the disciples are wanting to learn how to pray. "It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He'd finished, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.' And He said to them, 'When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, As we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'" Those are things that are really valuable to pray.

Let's pray together. "Father, Heavenly Father, hallowed be Your name, and may Your love and Your grace always be showered upon us as we strive to do Your will. Help us to forgive others as You've forgiven us, and give us each day our daily bread. Lead us not into temptation. And Father we're thankful for all our blessings. In Jesus name, Amen."

If we wish to make our prayers more effective, we should remember we're praying to God. God is occasionally called a father in the Old Testament. He's called the Father who created us in Isaiah 63:16 and Malachi 2 and verse 10; but, for the most part, the Old Testament rarely speaks of God as a Father.

Jesus, however, uses the phrase “our Father, who is in heaven.” Have you ever thought about that? When we pray, we’re not talking to a peer, an acquaintance, or even to a boss. We’re speaking to a Person greater than a governor, a senator, or the president. We’re speaking to the God who created us and who is the Ruler of heaven and earth. And we should give Him our utmost respect.

Throughout his life, Jesus called the God of heaven his Father. The relationship of father and son is different than merely a creature to his creator. God is not some strange and distant “Force” out there in the universe; no, He’s close like a father to his children. And when we become Christians, we also become children of God. John said about Jesus in John 1, verses 11 to 13: that “He came to his own, and his people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” Through Christ, we too can say “our Father.”

Then, have you considered the phrase, “Hallowed be your name” (that is, God’s name)? The word “hallowed” is an old word that means to make holy or to consecrate as sacred. I fear we’ve lost the sense of the sacred in our day. We’ve forgotten holy things are to be revered. God is God, and we’re not. We’re speaking in prayer to the One who has all power and all authority. We’re speaking to the One who will judge our souls. We’re speaking to our God, who knows all things, who is all-wise, all-loving, and entirely pure and holy. When Isaiah came in to the presence of God in Isaiah, chapter 6, he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. The seraphim called out, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!” My friend, when you pray, do you think of the holiness of God?

Isaiah said in chapter 6, verse 5: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I’m a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” When we compare the holiness of God to our own sinful lives, we realize how none of us can stand righteous before God on our own. We’re all lost without Christ. We’re all sinful people living in a sinful land. Remarkably, because of Jesus and His blood, we can be cleansed from that sin. God’s grace shouldn’t lead us to take God for granted. Rather it should cause us to appreciate God all the more.

Titus 2:11 to 14 says, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” Well, how can we approach God in prayer and how we do that really affects how we live. God wants us to pray to Him with reverence in our hearts and in our lives. We can’t live like pagans and expect to come running, a God to come running to hear our prayers. James 5 and verse 16 says, that “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” Reverence is not merely to be in our tone of voice; it must also be in our lives.

Second, Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The kingdom of Jesus, of course, came in the church. Paul wrote the church in Colossae and said in Colossians 1:13 to 14, that “He [speaking of God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us in to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” The kingdom, or the church, is where the King Jesus rules. Jesus taught us to pray the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven. And how I wish every person were doing the will of God on earth! Can you imagine the blessing if everyone followed God’s will?

This would be a world without crime, without war, or violence. People would honor father and mother, honor marriage, and value children. We would treat others the way that we want to be

treated. And we wouldn't be so self-centered but would care for the poor and the downcast. We'd give thanks and stop complaining. We'd show trust and not deceive. We'd be genuine not fraudulent. We'd lift up rather than tear down. It's easy for us to want everyone else to live out the prayer "Thy will be done"; but what about us? You and me? Can we pray that? Are we willing to live by the will of God? It's futile to pray something that we don't mean.

Next, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Give us each day our daily bread." Have you thought about how dependent we are on God? All we possess comes from His hands. Life sometimes hands us a mixed blessing. People work hard, and God blesses them richly with fine houses and cars. And then, as time goes by they forget what God has done for them. No one wants to be forgotten, especially not God. Yet people go through life forgetting all that God has done for them, that every "good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (James 1 verse 17). God is good to us. He gives us the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. The houses we enjoy are from His hand. Indeed He gives us daily the things that we need.

The Psalmist David reminds us in Psalm 103:1 to 5, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." God blesses us from day to day to day. We must never forget his benefits. Prayer reminds us of our own weakness before God. It's God who gives us the strength and wisdom to make a living. Moses said in Deuteronomy 8 and verse 18, "You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth." Whatever we have comes from God. And prayer helps us to remember and be thankful for all of God's blessings.

Next, we should pray, "forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us." Most people would rather forget about their sins, yet the Lord reminds us not only to confess our sins but to ask God to forgive us. Some today say there's no such thing as sin, but down deep in their hearts we know, and they know, that sin is real. Our consciences tell us when we've done wrong, and we can't escape it. Let's face it; we need God's forgiveness. And so we're asking God not to hold the things we have done wrong against us. And none of us want to be enemies of God. We don't want to stand against the God who one day will hold our souls in His hand. We want the blessing and love of God in our lives, and sin stands in the way of that blessing. And so we need forgiveness, freedom from sin. The only way we can get that as Christians is to confess and repent of our sins and ask God's forgiveness.

1 John 1:9 and 10 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we haven't sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." Confessing sin takes away the deceitfulness. We're no longer hiding from God but revealing not only that we sinned but also our sorrow for our sins. Godly sorrow should lead us to repentance. And we shouldn't confuse admitting our sins with repenting of them. Repentance is a change of heart that leads to a change of behavior. And just because we admit to God that we've sinned doesn't mean that we've stop committing the sin. Repentance is turning away from sin (because we love God) and turning to God's ways. We deceive ourselves when we ask God to forgive us and then we keep on repeating those same sins. Let's confess and forsake our sin, so we may show God our love.

Now forgiveness isn't a one-way street. God expects us to forgive those who sin against us. If we won't forgive others, we can't ask God to forgive us. If God's love hasn't caused us to love others, how can we expect God to bless us? Jesus said in Matthew 6:14 to 15, "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." True prayer comes from hearts willing to live what they pray. God knows our hearts. And when our hearts and our lives match our words, God hears our prayers; but when we rebel against God's will, God closes his ears against us.

Remember, Isaiah 59:1 and 2 says, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." The most important step in praying effectively is to get our souls right with the living God. Remember what James said as we mentioned, in James 5, and verse 16: that "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." God will hear our prayers if we put Him first in our lives, if we love Him, and if we stay away from what is sinful. God invites us to pray and wants to hear from us. And so, let's live for the Lord and take our requests to His throne. God is waiting for us.

Abraham Lincoln said, "I've been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day." Many people cheat themselves by failing to pray to God. They cheat themselves out of a relationship with God, out of the help of God, and out of the blessing of God by failing to pray. We can never grow good at praying if we never pray. And those who pray in the sunshine find themselves well able to pray when the clouds roll in, but those who never pray until trouble comes round, always have that hard times in their prayers. Jesus began the agony of the cross praying "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And He ended His time on the cross, praying, "Father into Your hands, I commit my spirit." Jesus couldn't help but pray at the hardest moments. He knew how much He needed His Father. And we too need our Father's love and His ear.

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father, hallowed be Your name, and father we admit our sins and ask You to forgive us. We admit that we have done wrong, and help us to forgive others who've sinned against us. Father, help us each day to love You, and may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray, Amen."

We need God as much as we need air to breathe, water to drink, and food to eat. We can't do without Him, and we don't have to. We can have God in our lives helping us every step of the way. And if you're not yet a Christian, I hope that you'll not waste another day of your life waiting to become one. If you believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; if you're willing to repent of your sins; if you're willing to confess the name of Jesus before others; and if you'll be baptized in water in the name of the Lord for the forgiveness of your sins, the Lord will forgive all your sins, and add you to His church, and make you His child.

Why not become a Christian today and enter into a loving relationship with the Lord Jesus. Nothing is more important than this! If you're not a Christian, don't waste another day without the grace of God in your life! Don't allow sin to keep you separated from God! Get right with God. And dear Christian friend, don't complain that God is not hearing you, if indeed you are not listening to God. So many Christians today wonder why God is distant. But it isn't God who pulled away from you, but you who have pulled away from God. When Christians quit the Lord, quit the church, and quit living righteously, they shouldn't be surprised that God is not any longer close to them. They have deserted

God. My friend, the Lord would love to have you come back to Him. Won't you do that today? Won't you come back to God?

We hope today's study about prayer will help you draw closer to God. And if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or, call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry," that's one word. And be sure to like the programs that you watch; that helps spread the program. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you to become a Christian and to draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well, we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word and tell a friend about this program, tell them you're watching. And as always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.