

Prayer 101

Written by: Lane Palmer, Youth Ministry Specialist, 03-01-2002

"When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered only by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, because your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! (Matthew 6:7-8)

The disciples struggled with the whole area of prayer. Perhaps like us, they were unsure of the "how to's" of communing with God. So they did the smart thing: they asked Jesus. The Lord then proceeded to give them a model that encompasses the heart, soul, mind, and strength of what prayer is in Matthew 6:9-13:

*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.*

Amen.

But that was 2000 years ago, have we not been able to improve on the original version? Nope. If anything, Christianity has distorted, warped, misconstrued, and otherwise perverted Jesus' perfect pattern into a self-serving idolatrous evangelical idiom. So let's go 'old school' today and consider some important ideas surrounding this impeccable prayer.

- I cannot say OUR if my religion has no room for others and their need.
- I cannot say FATHER if I do not demonstrate this relationship in my daily living.
- I cannot say WHO ART IN HEAVEN if all my interest and pursuits are in earthly things.
- I cannot say HALLOWED BE THY NAME if I do not give Him honor, glory, and trust.
- I cannot say THY KINGDOM COME if I am unwilling to have His Kingdom grow in my heart, my home, my church, my country, my world.
- I cannot say THY WILL BE DONE if I am unwilling or resentful of having it done in my life.
- I cannot say ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN unless I am truly ready to give myself to His service here and now.

- I cannot say GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD without expending honest effort for it or by ignoring the genuine needs of our brothers and sisters.
- I cannot say FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.
- I cannot say LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tempted.
- I cannot say DELIVER US FROM EVIL if I am not prepared to fight in the spiritual realm with the weapon of Word and Prayer.
- I cannot say THINE IS THE KINGDOM if I do not give the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.
- I cannot say THINE IS THE POWER if I fear what my neighbors and friends may say or do.
- I cannot say THINE IS THE GLORY if I am seeking my own glory first.
- I cannot say FOREVER if I am too anxious about each day's affairs.
- I cannot say AMEN unless I honestly say, "Cost what it may, this is my prayer."

(Author unknown)

So here's a suggestion. Each day this week, go through the Lord's Prayer in a fresh way with a different perspective. Consider how each of those statements impacts you before you bring them before God. Only then will you be able to experience what Christ intended by the words: "this, then, is how you should pray..."

Questions:

1. How vibrant and effective is my prayer life?
2. Based on the Lord's Prayer, what areas of my life need to change?
3. Do I really believe that God wants to use me to advance His kingdom? Why or why not?