

The Purpose of Prayer

Matthew 6:5 through Matthew 6:13 (NKJV)

⁵“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

⁸“Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven.
¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
¹³ And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus takes time to teach on prayer. Traditionally we call this prayer the Lord’s Prayer. I believe that it may more accurately be called the Model Prayer because it is an example of how to pray.

The prayer that the Lord actually prayed is found in John 17. There he prays for the disciples and the church. It is a prayer that includes his disciples in this time also. But the Model Prayer gives us everything we need to be successful in our prayer lives. It reveals the recipient of our prayers, the purpose of our prayers, and much more.

For the five Sundays in May, we will use the Model Prayer as a backdrop for our discussions on prayer. Our goal is to help every believer strengthen their prayers and grow in their relationships with God. Last week, we began with the Dynamics of Prayer. Today we will discuss the Purpose of Prayer.

Jesus opens this prayer with “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” When we consider the

idea of God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven, we can use the imagery of an ambassador for a model for our discussion. An ambassador is the highest ranking diplomat who represents his home country within a foreign country.

Ambassadors have all of the kingdom benefits of their home kingdom. They are representatives in residence by one government to another. Ambassadors are authorized messengers who carry out one government's mission to another.

For example, the U. S. Ambassador to Botswana is Stephen J. Nolan. He resides in Botswana and meets with Botswana's head of state to discuss policies on behalf of the U. S. But his life is not governed by the laws of Botswana.

The Glorious Kingdom

Jesus said "Hallowed be your name." To hallow means to make holy. When we pray we need to acknowledge the holiness of God. Sometimes when I pray, I rush into whatever is on my mind. I just start at my feelings and pour them out to God. But no matter how much I want to tell him all about my day, I need to stop and hallow his name.

I have noticed in my prayer life that giving God praise for his goodness and his greatness at the beginning of my prayers, helps me approach him with the right perspective. I remind myself of how holy God is. I praise him for his miracles in my life and acknowledge that only he could deliver me. I begin to bring the glory and he is properly seated on the throne of my heart.

We must remind ourselves that this is God we are talking to. Yes he is our friend but he is also worthy to be praised. Sometimes we pray to a little God in a box. We pray to a limited idea of who God is. We pray small prayers because we are praying to a small God. God is bigger than that.

Our God is holy. Our God is all powerful. Our God is all knowing. Our God is able to save. Our God can do more than we can ask or think. There is no one like our God. We need to be convinced. We need to be reminded. Don't forget, Jesus said whatever we asked in his name would be done so the Father would be glorified in the Son. That means we need to also pray for things that bring glory to the Father.

Any time we pray for deliverance, God reaches down to save us and he gets the glory. Any time we pray for healing, God mends our wounds and gets the glory. When we pray for financial freedom, God supplies our needs and he gets the glory. When you are tired and pray for rest, God refreshes you and he gets the glory. Every time we

hallow his name and pray prayers of faith, God is lifted up before the world. Our prayers reflect the glory of God and the glorious kingdom.

The Work of the Kingdom

Prayer is a tool that allows us to petition for the power and resources that are needed to build the kingdom. It is important because our purpose as individual believers and as a church is to share the good news of the kingdom. Jesus said go ye therefore and teach all nations.

We express it today in our purpose statement when we say we want every believer to “fulfill their purpose in life missions.” At some point our very lives must become an outreach ministry. That doesn’t mean we have to know everything about God, it just means we have to share what we do know with those who don’t know.

All of us can share our testimonies. All of us can lift him up and give God the glory.

Outreach works like this: we go as Jesus commanded us, but God does the work. None of us can save a soul. We are only qualified to be his representatives and tell his story. We lift Jesus up but he draws all men unto himself.

We sometimes know how to do church work, but we fail to invite God into the work. Prayer is the beginning of anything we do as believers. Sermons begin with prayer. Programs begin with prayer. Everything begins with prayer

When an ambassador serves in a foreign nation, part of his job is to win the people over by displaying the goodness of his home country. In doing so, the ambassador may be able to get those in the foreign country to sympathize with the policies of his home country.

We must do the same for Christ. We are his representatives in the earth. If Jesus says we need to pray for the kingdom to come and God’s will to be done, then it also means we need to be living like we are from the kingdom and doing the will of God.

When we put God on display for answered prayers and kingdom benefits, its just like a good ambassador who promotes his country. People who don’t know God will get a glimpse into what living for him is like. People who need help will see that God answers prayer. People who are looking for a change in their lives will want to become citizens of heaven.

The Benefits of the Kingdom

There is no doubt that being in the kingdom has benefits. Sometimes we forfeit the benefits by not invoking them through prayer. It brings to mind the song lyrics from What a Friend We Have In Jesus: "Oh what peace we often forfeit. Oh what needless pains we bare, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."

Philippians 4:6 through Philippians 4:7 (NKJV)

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Paul didn't say in "some things by prayer." He said in "everything by prayer". We are to make our requests known to God. God desires we seek him. God desires to have us call upon him and have a relationship with him. On Wednesday night, Rev. Jackson shared with us that even though God knows all things and knows what we need before we ask, he didn't make us like robots. We have a free will and God desires that we exercise that free will to seek him in prayer.

When it comes to the issues of this life, Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. If we seek the kingdom all of the benefits will be added unto us.

Prayer then is an exercise in seeking God. Unfortunately some of us are not seeking. God has sought us out and shined his light before us. We have come into the family of faith and joined the church. But we do not commit to the daily habit of seeking God in prayer.

It's a shame. God wouldn't hear from some of us if we didn't bless our food. What we are really saying is, we do not have faith that God is our source and supply. We do not have faith to believe God will answer us. We must understand that prayer is an act of faith. It is a function of our faith.

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)⁶But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Jesus said God allows the sun to shine on the just and the unjust. But when we are in the kingdom, we have access to God who is able to do much more for us. God is good and God blesses us, but God is a **rewarder** of those who diligently seek him.

James says we have not because we ask not. Kingdom blessings are ours if we ask. The presence of God is ours when we pray. The sovereignty of God is working for us when we invite him into our lives. The power of God is available to us when we approach his throne. The joy of the Lord surrounds us when we seek his face.

The healing power of God rests on us, when we are broken before him. The goodness of God is working for us when we are called according to his purpose. The comfort of God will hold us when we are lonely. The righteousness of God will lift us up when we bow our knees. The holiness of God will cover us when we pray. The salvation of God will keep us safe when we pray.

When things don't look so good, we need to pray "thy kingdom come, thy will be done." When trouble is on every hand, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done." When the world turns against us, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done." When we need a miracle, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done."

We need to ask God to do it for us right here, right now, on earth, as it is in heaven. Dry my tears on earth, because there are no tears in heaven. Heal my body on earth, because there is no sickness in heaven. Restore my joy on earth, because there is no sadness in heaven.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in my trouble, in my trial, in my circumstances, in my lack, and in my mess.

Conclusion:

Prayer is a glorious and wonderful tool in the life of a believer. It is vital to our success in ministry and our quality of life. We are citizens of the kingdom who should hold diplomatic immunity in the world which we live.