

# The Lord's Prayer, Prescriptive or Descriptive

Prayer is an important part of Christian life. It is direct communication with the Lord. Jesus taught his disciples how to pray and that is what we are going to discuss; The Lord's Prayer, prescriptive or descriptive.

## Introduction

During our past two videos starting 2021 we have talked about tools to help us succeed in our walk with Jesus in this life. During both of these previous videos, we touched on scripture reading and prayer as being the two chief elements. Reading and studying scripture is pretty straight forward. Many people new to the Christian faith as well as some seasoned saints have questions on how to pray. You're not alone. The disciples asked Jesus that very question in Luke 11:1.

## Luke 11:1

(1) One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Jesus then taught them to pray, and that is what we are going to do today. We are going to look at the example prayer Jesus gave to his disciples and examine the parts of it. This way we can pray effectively and know that what is in our heart is heard by God.

## The Lord's Prayer

The most common version that people would recognize as *The Lord's Prayer* is found in the gospel of Matthew chapter 6 verses 9 through 13. Let's read that passage of scripture.

## Matthew 6:9-13

(9) "This, then, is how you should 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 today our daily bread. (12) And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (13) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Some of you that have some history with the Bible or Christianity may be wondering about the end. If you have heard the Lord's prayer as it is recorded in Matthew 6:9-13 in the King James Version of the Bible or its derivatives you are used to hearing or reciting, "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen."

There is nothing wrong with that line. However, it is not in most modern Protestant translations of the Bible and it is not in the Roman Catholic version either. This is because it is not found in most ancient manuscripts and therefore has been removed from most modern translations. The great theologian John Calvin addresses this. He wrote about this ending saying, "not only warm our hearts to press toward the glory of God ... but also to tell us that all our prayers ... have no other foundation than God alone."



## Prescriptive

Many prescribe the Lord's prayer to be used to pray. In other words, this is what you should pray, or at the least end each time in prayer with. This has been taught by many denominations that rely on liturgy for centuries. It stems from the days when clergy were starting to be elevated to a place between people and God instead of leading people to God.

For centuries people looked to priests and monks to take their petitions to God and grant forgiveness from God. This, along with a very low literacy rate following the dark ages, led people to follow priests blindly and hope they spoke for God. In this environment, it is easy to see how people were taught to recite this prayer and believe everything was okay.

Scripture does not support this doctrine. Each one of us has the ability and privilege to speak to the Lord ourselves in our own words sourced in our own hearts.

## Descriptive

Matthew records Jesus' teaching on prayer in Matthew 6:5-8.

### Matthew 6:5-8

(5) "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. (6) 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. (7) And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. (8) Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

The first thing to note about Jesus' teaching is the attitude in which we must be when we pray. He tells us not to be like the hypocrites and pray loudly in public for all to see. Our prayer time should be private. He goes on to say in verse seven not to go on and on babbling like the pagans. Many words do not make you heard more. Jesus tells us to not be like them.

This alone points to the fact that just reciting Jesus' example prayer is not true prayer. That is not to say you cannot recite his example and mean it with your whole heart. However, he even tells us in verse 9 that this is *how* you should pray not *what* you should pray.

To further make this point from scripture we can look back to Luke 11:1 which we referenced earlier when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray as John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray, not what to pray. Prayer must come from the heart and soul, not the mind. Don't keep babbling on or just recite what you know in your head. Pour out your heart.

## The Pieces of The Lord's Prayer

Let's look at the pieces of the Lord's Prayer so we know how to pray.



“Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your Name”

We address our prayers to God and no one else. We do not pray to saints or spirits. We pray to God and God alone. We give God all of our praise and glory. So as we pray we need to address God and give Him all of the praise and glory that He is due as our Creator and Ruler of the universe.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven”

This portion of Jesus’ example prayer shows us that as we pray to God, we are to place His will above our own. Even more so, we are to ask Him for His will for our lives. In this, we can live as we will live when we are with the Lord for eternity in Heaven. Worshipping and in constant communication and fellowship with the Lord and all of His creation, living in harmony.

This is not asking God to make earth like Heaven. It is asking God to help us live a life that will be like the life we will live when we do go to Heaven.

“Give us today our daily bread”

This is asking for what we need to accomplish what He has asked us to do this very day. It is acknowledging that God is the source of everything we need to do all He has called us to do. We are all called to worship Him, have fellowship with Him, and be a witness to His love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness to the world. We cannot do that in and of ourselves. We need the Lord’s equipping and provision to accomplish this.

“And forgive our debts as we have forgiven our debtors”

In our prayers we must be honest with the Lord and ask His forgiveness for the sins we have done. Once forgiven, they are forgiven, and this forgiveness does not come from man, it comes from God through Jesus Christ. We need not ask for forgiveness for the same thing over and over. Once it is forgiven God has wiped it clean.

We must also be forgiving others the very same way. As we want and can count on forgiveness from God through Jesus Christ we must forgive others and cast their sin aside bringing it back to the forefront no longer. We cannot expect God to forgive us when we cannot forgive others. This can be difficult. If you are having trouble with forgiving yourself or someone else, we recommend a small video series we produced several years ago titled *Forgiveness*.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”

Asking for God’s direction and protection are critical as we do what He has asked us to do. We need His guidance just as He guided Israel through the desert for 40 years with a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. We also need His protection just as He has protected His people throughout history.

The devil is trying to tempt us and lead us astray every day. We must ask the Lord to make the devil’s schemes apparent to us so we can avoid them.

The Lord’s prayer is an example prayer of how to pray, not what to pray.



## Other Examples of Prayer

The gospel of Luke shares Jesus' example of prayer a little different and shorter. We can read Paul's prayers as he wrote the letters to the different churches. Many of the psalms are David's prayers as he poured out his heart to God.

## Conclusion

Prayer is a personal communication between a believer and God. We do not pray for show or to receive recognition from others. We ask for provision and strength as well as direction for what He wants us to do. We ask for forgiveness for the sins we have committed recently, knowing that we have forgiven others.

This is a guide to how to pray. God wants to talk to you. He wants to have fellowship with you. Until we are with Him in Heaven, this is our way to communicate. There are no right words or special phrases. Just talk to God. Thank Him, give Him praise and glory, ask what you need to ask, and share what is on your heart. If it matters to you, it matters to God.

Learning and memorizing the Lord's prayer is good. It is memorizing scripture and that is always a good thing. You should avoid just reciting it as your prayer. Prayers come from the heart, not from the mind. Pour out your heart to God, don't show off what you have memorized.

Finally, prayer isn't only you talking. There is a time of listening. Prayer is communication with God, not just talking at Him. We need to listen for His side of the conversation. Next week we'll talk about that still small voice.

