

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Lesson Di122-11 Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

How does a child let his parents know his needs? At first the baby can only cry. As the child learns to talk, he or she can ask for milk or food. At that point, parents begin to teach their child the proper way to ask for the things they need or want. As children of God, we make our requests known to him by praying. When he was on earth, Jesus, the Son of God, prayed often to his Father. He constantly shared his life with the Father.

This lesson is the first of four on prayer—another essential of Christian living. So far you have learned about salvation: believing in Jesus, repentance, submission, and faith. The next three essentials had to do with following Christ in obedience through water baptism, scripture memorization, and communion. Then you learned what the Bible teaches about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit. Now we come to the subject of prayer and what Jesus taught us about its importance.

When Jesus left Nazareth, he used Capernaum as the center of his ministry. By this time Jesus, more than 30 years old, had become very popular because of his miracles and teachings. He taught like no one the crowds had ever heard. People came from everywhere to hear him speak about God's Kingdom.

Jesus had been teaching on the hills near Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. Early in his ministry he had called 12 men to be his closest disciples. To them He revealed everything about living a victorious life and the essentials of being his followers. For Jesus, prayer demonstrated his love connection with his Father. Mark tells us, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed"(Mark 1:35); Jesus believed that knowing God's will was even more important than food. As John quoted him, "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34). For Jesus, praying was his highest priority.

A subject that caught their attention one day on a hillside was prayer. As they had followed him they had watched and listened to Jesus pray as he taught and healed people. They realized they needed to know how to pray like Jesus prayed. To be like their master teacher, they needed to know how to connect with God as their heavenly Father.

So that day, after the Twelve had heard Jesus pray, one of them said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Jesus answered their question by teaching them a prayer.

Matthew, one of the Twelve, tells the story this way. Jesus said, "This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.””
Then Jesus added this warning about an essential attitude when we pray, saying, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matt 6:9-15)

Jesus answered their question and taught the disciples a prayer pattern, or model prayer, that honored God. They loved God and wanted to get closer to him. Jesus’ prayer taught them to begin by focusing on God, not themselves. Praying regularly develops this good habit in our lives. Jesus also taught that prayer to the Father was not a time to get attention. He prayed, not to please people, but to connect with God. The religious leaders of that day prayed to impress others, so that they would be regarded as holy. Jesus encouraged the disciples to pray in private, not in front of the crowds as they did. He also said they should not simply be repeating words, but talking to God as their friend and loving Father. He already knows what they need before they ask (Matt 6:5-8).

Jesus demonstrated the priority of this spiritual responsibility. Today Jesus is still ready and willing to teach each person how to pray. God has opened up the way by inviting each believer to come boldly into his presence. The Bible says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb 4:16). Jesus showed them a God who is personal and loving and approachable. Even the small requests are noticed, for he does not forget even a single sparrow (Luke 12:6).

Jesus taught them a model prayer that is foundational. It contains worship, meditation, petition for others and ourselves, asking for forgiveness, and request for overcoming temptation. In the next three lessons we will learn more about the vital part that prayer plays in the Christian’s life.

This lesson is **important** because it encourages the believer to pray daily as Jesus did. The habit of daily prayer is an important part of Christian life and development.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that prayer is the believer’s personal connection with our Father God and must become a daily habit. To commune with God the believer should develop a prayer life based on the “Lord’s Prayer”—the pattern Jesus gave his disciples.

Review questions:

1. How did Jesus stay fresh in his relationship with God? [PAUSE]
A. If you said that Jesus stayed fresh in his relationship with God by praying continually to God, you are correct.
2. Why is prayer important in the life of a Christian? [PAUSE]
A. If you answered, “Prayer is important for the Christian because through prayer he has a close connection with Father God,” you are right.
3. Why did Jesus give his disciples the example of the “Lord’s Prayer?” [PAUSE]
A. If you answered, “Jesus gave the pattern prayer so they would have a foundation on

which to build their own prayer life with God,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to the lesson three times. Then memorize the Lord’s Prayer as recorded in Matthew 6:9-13:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Finally, after learning the lesson tell someone else the story about Jesus teaching the disciples how to pray. While you are telling the story, ask the person why it is important to pray to God and why the disciples felt they needed to learn to pray as Jesus prayed? Then pray with the person.