

Session 4: Prayer

Learning to Pray

- I. **“Here are the two best prayers I know: ‘Help me, help me, help me’ and ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you.’” —Anne Lamott.**
 - A. This is honest, and describes most of us, but is it the best approach?
- II. **Jesus says where you *treasure* is, there your heart will be also.**
 - A. If our heart follows where we put our money, similarly our heart follows where we put our prayers.
 1. For example, if you pray for someone particularly, you find yourself being more concerned and caring for them.
 - a) *Here’s the point:* What we pray and how we pray shape what we believe and how we believe.
- III. ***Lex Orandi. Lex Credendi. Lex Vivendi.***
 - A. The way we pray shapes what we believe and how we live
 - B. Therefore, learning to pray is a central part of discipleship
- IV. **Two sources we can use to learn how to pray:**
 - A. **Scripture**
 - B. **The Lord’s Prayer**



Praying Scripture

- I. **Learning to pray means learning how to turn our Bible into prayer¹**
 - A. Good places to start:
 1. The psalms
 2. The various prayers recorded in Scripture
- II. **The Anglican Book of Common Prayer is one way to pray Scripture**
 - A. It was written not to replace the Bible, but rather to organize Scripture to be used for prayer and worship by individuals and congregations
 - B. As such, 80% of its content comes directly from Scripture!

(You are going to learn more about the BCP in class this week!)

III. **POINT: All of our prayers should flow out of deep immersion in God’s Word.**

¹ From a quote by Robert Murray McCheyne

- A. Prayer and Scripture need each other

The Lord's Prayer

I. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, both implicitly and explicitly:

- A. He taught them implicitly through his example:
1. He healed people with prayers,
 2. He taught that the Temple should be a 'house of prayer'
 3. He said that some demons could be cast out only through prayer.
 4. He prayed often and regularly, sometimes in tears (Heb. 5:7)
 5. He sometimes prayed all night.
 6. The Holy Spirit came upon him and anointed him as he was praying (Luke 3:21–22)
 7. He was praying when the transfiguration happened (Luke 9:29).
 8. He prayed at throughout the great crisis of his arrest, torture and execution (John 17:1–26)
 9. He died praying.
- B. He taught them explicitly in what we have come to call the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6, Luke 11)

The Lord's Prayer (Traditional Version)

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on 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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

II. The Lord's prayer is a pattern meant to shape our whole approach to relationship with God

- A. It begins with an address, goes on to make seven petitions, adds a doxology (a prayer of praise to God), and concludes with "Amen."
- B. It begins with God's glory, His Kingdom, and His Kingly rule as the highest priorities
- C. The Lord's Prayer show us the primary elements of relationship with God

III. The entire prayer is a movement toward God and belonging to Him

- A. *Our Father, who art in Heaven*
1. Reminds us that we belong to God as His children, and He is our "abba"—our loving Father
 - a) "What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father."²
- B. *"Hallowed be thy name"*
1. We begin by praying that God's name, which includes his personal being, character, power, and purposes, would be set apart and honored apart from and above every other name
 2. We pray that this would be true in our own hearts, and also in the world
 3. *The loss of the traditional vision of God as holy is now manifested everywhere in the evangelical world. It is the key to understanding why sin and grace have become such empty terms. What depth or meaning, P. T. Forsyth asked, can these terms have except in relation to the holiness of God? Divorced from the holiness of God, sin is merely self-defeating behavior or a breach in etiquette. Divorced from the holiness of God, grace is merely empty rhetoric, pious window dressing for the modern technique by which sinners work out their own salvation. Divorced from the holiness of God, our gospel becomes indistinguishable from any of a host of alternative self-help doctrines. Divorced from the holiness of God, our public morality is reduced to little more than an accumulation of trade-offs between competing private interests. Divorced from the holiness of God, our worship becomes mere entertainment. The holiness of God is the very cornerstone of Christian faith, for it is the foundation of reality. Sin is defiance of God's holiness, the Cross is the outworking and victory of God's holiness, and faith is the recognition of God's holiness. Knowing that God is holy is therefore the key to knowing life as it truly is, knowing Christ as he truly is, knowing why he came, and knowing how life will end. —David Wells, No Place for Truth*
- C. *"Thy Kingdom Come"*

² J.I. Packer, Knowing God

1. The whole story of Scripture, from Genesis 1 through Revelation, is about the Heavens and the earth being joined together as one—God’s Kingdom being fully established IN His creation!
 2. God’s Kingdom is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, inaugurated through the coming of Jesus (who announced this when he began his ministry), and will one day be fully realized when Jesus comes again.
 3. Living in God’s Kingdom now means defining ourselves as his children, citizens and heirs of His eternal Kingdom, and following his kingly rule.
- D. *“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*
1. God’s Kingdom comes whenever and wherever his will is done
 2. **Question:** How do we know God’s will?
 - a) God’s will is outlined in the 10 Commandments, expounded upon throughout all of Scripture, and culminates in the Law of Christ—love of God and neighbor.
- E. *“Give us this day our daily bread”*
1. **Question:** Wouldn’t it make more sense to pray that God would give us ALL bread we’ll ever need at once? Why pray every single day for just enough to get by?
 - a) Well this tells us a lot about human nature.
 - (1) What happens in Exodus when God gives his people manna to eat in the desert - He says, “only gather what you need.” Do they obey? No. They try to hoard it, it it rots.
 - b) What this petition encourages in us is a “theology of provision.”
 - (1) When we have more than we need, we tend to deny God, to make him peripheral.
 - (2) But if we have too little, we can become desperate, criminal.
 - (3) A theology of provision says, God is the sole provider of all we need - learn in your praying life to trust that He will provide just what you need - God always answers the prayers we WOULD have prayed if we knew all He knows.
- F. *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*
1. “Trespass” is an old word for sin—any action, word, thought or attitude that is contrary to God’s perfect will
 2. Praying this means taking sin seriously, and confessing regularly
 - a) **ILLS: Satirical confession:** *Benevolent and easy-going Parent: We have occasionally had some minor errors of judgment, but they're not really our fault. Due to forces beyond our control, we have sometimes failed to act in accordance with our own best interests. Under the circumstances, we did the best we could. We are glad to say that we're doing okay, perhaps even slightly above average. Be your own sweet Self with those who know they are not perfect. Grant us that we may continue to live a harmless and happy life and keep our self-respect. And we ask all these things according to the unlimited tolerances which we have a right to expect from you. Amen.*
 3. God forgives us not because we deserve it, but because of his great mercy
 4. Jesus teaches that our willingness to forgive others is evidence that we truly believe we have been forgiven (Matt. 18:21-35)
- G. *Lead us not into temptation*
1. Temptation is anything that entices us to abandon total trust in God and His will for our lives.
 2. God never leads us into temptation, nor does he cause sin, but he does allow us to be tested, as He did Jesus (Matt. 4:1-14; Hebrews 5:7-8; Genesis 22, Judges 2, James 1:1-8).
- H. *But deliver us from evil*
1. Evil is the willful perversion of God’s will, defiance of His holiness, the marring of His design for Creation.
 2. Evil existed before the Fall of humanity, in the form of Satan and angels who rebelled against God. (Genesis 3:1-5, John 8:44).
 3. God delivers us from evil ultimately through Jesus Christ, and He redeems evil for His good purposes.
- I. *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.*
1. Prayer ends by pointing back to the beginning, declaring that all of our prayer is ultimately about God’s glory.