

### How About a Prayer Check Up?

There are some things we want to periodically get checked out. We do that with doctors and dentists. Maybe you have an issue and want to stay on top of it. Or you want to make sure everything is fine. You may do that with your car. Maybe you have the furnace guy come to make sure the furnace is in order. We are going to do that today. We are going to have a little check-up on our prayers. I know you are praying people. I know you pray a lot. But today we are to listen to Jesus talk about prayer see if there is any way we can make our prayers better. The first thing we see is the content of our prayers.

*I. Let's review the content of our prayers.*

<sup>1</sup> **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."**

As the Son of God, Jesus was perfect and sinless in every respect. If he got angry, it was a righteous, holy, just anger. He committed no sins, harbored no sinful thoughts. And everything he did was perfect, too. And the same with his prayer life. Boy, did he pray. Sometimes he prayed for hours like in Gethsemane. Sometimes he had to hide from the crowds so he can pray. Perhaps his disciples saw his example of prayer and wanted to improve their prayers. So they asked him to teach them how to pray.

<sup>2</sup> **He said to them, "When you pray, say:**

**"Father,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come.**

<sup>3</sup> **Give us each day our daily bread.**

<sup>4</sup> **Forgive us our sins,  
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.  
And lead us not into temptation."**

Does this sound a little off? Yes. You learned that there are seven petitions or requests in the Lord's Prayer, but only five are listed here. In Matthew all seven are listed. Is this a problem? No. Jesus is summarizing here. He wants to give us an idea what should be the content of our prayers. For example, he teaches us to include all people including those who don't believe yet.

**Hallowed be your name ... your kingdom come.** It is almost an evangelism prayer. With these words we are praying that more people believe in Jesus and are saved and thus consider God and his name holy. We are praying that God's kingdom not only includes us but others who are not yet part of that kingdom.

The second part is for physical blessings, **daily bread**. I love how it emphasizes "today." Don't worry about tomorrow. Let God worry about tomorrow. And yes, this is about our physical needs with the emphasis on needs. God promises to take care of us so we pray that he does.

The third part is back to spiritual blessings, but this time more for you and me and our congregation and fellow believers. **Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive ... lead us not into temptation.** God doesn't have to lead us into temptation. The world is full of it. We ask God to protect us. It doesn't mean we get lazy; we must work hard at it. But we are asking God to get us through this world, past or out of temptation. And finally, we ask for the willingness to forgive as he forgives us. In pre-marriage class I tell the couple that one of the greatest problems in marriage is when we do not forgive. I then remind them that if one commits a sin, he or she does not deserve to be forgiven. No one deserves to be forgiven. But we forgive them anyways. Why? Because God forgave you and God also forgives him or her. Christ didn't die just for you. So we forgive, not because anyone deserves it, but we forgive because God forgives us.

So, what did you pray for the past three days? Good, keep praying. But have you learned anything from Jesus today? Of course. Sometimes our prayer fall into ruts, asking for the same things. Jesus taught us to think bigger. Remember those who don't believe in him yet. Instead of just asking for physical things like a decent life or health, remember your spiritual blessings? Don't forget things like God forgiving you, that you are willing to forgive us, to help you fight temptation, that your life glorifies God.

*II. Let's review how we pray.*

Good, our prayers just got better. But there is more. Next Jesus tells us how to pray. <sup>5</sup> **Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'**

<sup>7</sup> **"Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'** <sup>8</sup> **I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.**

<sup>9</sup> **“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.**

The first thing is to be bold. This guy wasn't shy. Even when it was midnight, he went to his neighbor with a request for food. I wouldn't do that. That is the point. I rather drive around lost for an hour than to ask for directions. Don't do that with God. As this prayer started with "Father," God is not some distant God who doesn't know you or doesn't care about you. He isn't too busy keeping Jupiter in its proper orbit. Kids are not afraid to ask you for something, and when they do, it isn't always convenient for us whether it is that call for a drink of water at three AM to constant requests to play. Our relationship with God is closer than that between a parent and child. We certainly are no longer his enemies; Jesus and the cross forgives our sins. Nor are we insignificant or merely a faceless number to God. He knows how many hairs you have on you head at any time. Don't wait until Sunday to pray. Come to God now.

And be persistent. The neighbor did not grant his request at first. He reminded him how late it was. If he actually got up and did what he asked, the commotion will also wake up his whole household and they all will miss out on that much sleep. If it was me, I would walk away. "Sorry, never mind." But that is the point. Don't walk away. Don't be shy. Sometimes God delays his answer to our prayer. Granted, he may be looking for the best time to answer it, but he has other reasons. He may be teaching you patience.

Or he may see that we need to learn that we need him more than we think. That man in the parable was in a dilemma. Friends came and he didn't have anything to feed them. He had only one option, his neighbor who had already gone to bed. So he went and asked the only one who can help.

And finally, pray with confidence. The neighbor gave him some food. But he didn't just throw a loaf of bread out the door and say, "Now leave me alone. We are told he gave him **as much as he needed**. He fulfilled his request and then some. Maybe he got up and fried up some eggs and bacon and flipped some pancakes for him. God always gives us as much as we need. No, a ten million dollar retirement plan would be nice, we don't need that. All we need is God's promise. Maybe he will get us only through the day

And we can trust that his every answer, even when it is no, is somehow good for us. <sup>11</sup> **“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”** You get the logic here. Sinful humans are not perfect. But generally, people know enough to give people good things like a nice meal instead of a dangerous snake, or an egg instead of a scorpion. If that is somewhat true about imperfect sinful humans, then doesn't it make sense that God, who is perfect and always loving, knows enough to always give us what is best for us? Maybe it is best that grandma goes to heaven today. Maybe it is best she stays with us a while longer. We have feelings on that, but God knows what is best. That is why we pray with the confidence that no matter how God answers your prayer, he is loving you and he is answering your prayers in ways that will always good for you.

Please don't think that God will answer your prayers reluctantly or only because we rudely annoy him until he gives in. That is not the point of this text or these parables. If Jesus wanted to stress the love of God, he would have given us a different prayer, like how the neighbor saw travelers come to his neighbor's house late at night, quickly whipped up a three course meal and took it over there before he had a chance to come and ask. That would emphasize the love of God. Here he is emphasizing something else, how best to pray. I know you pray. I know your prayers are good ones. Jesus did is a favor today. He is making your good prayers better. Maybe we will include in our prayers how needful things like spiritual blessings, and not just for us, but those who don't Christ yet. I think we understand we can be bolder in our prayers and to never stop praying. Look at the confidence in whatever answer he gives us because it comes from a God who only loves us and knows what is best for us. Amen.