

TEACH US TO PRAY

*How To Pray The Bible Way
and Why Many Prayers Are Not Heard*



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Chapter 1: Teach us to Pray

A single request, made by one disciple, uncovers a deep deficiency: *Lord, teach us to pray* (Luke 11:1). That request is striking. It was not the whole group speaking, but one man speaking for the group. Yet what he asked revealed what they all no doubt felt.

This was not a man ignorant of prayer. He had prayed, and prayed often. He had heard others pray. He had lived in a world where prayer was common. Yet something was missing, and though he could not put his finger on it, he knew it was lacking. What he had been doing was not prayer as it ought to be. It lacked substance, it lacked power, it lacked reality, and he could no longer ignore it.

He did not ask to be taught how to speak to God. He wanted to learn how to pray. He understood that prayer is not mere words, not form, not repetition. There is a depth to it he had not reached, and he knew it. That is what drove him to say, *Lord, teach us to pray*.

John the Baptist had taught his disciples the same, proving that prayer is not natural to man. It does not come by instinct, but must be learned. We often assume prayer comes easily, as though a few words directed toward heaven are enough. But that disciple's request proves otherwise. If prayer were natural, he would not have asked to be taught. If it were instinctive, it would not require instruction. The fact is, left to ourselves, we do not know how to pray as we ought. What comes naturally is often shallow, mechanical, and empty. Real prayer is learned, and until a man admits that, he will go on speaking words without ever truly praying.

It is for this very reason that most Christians completely misunderstand prayer. We have replaced what God said with what feels right. We think we must pray to get right, when God says get right first, then pray. We think we should pray for power, while Scripture teaches us to pray with power. We beg and plead with God as though He were unwilling to answer, despite His many promises concerning prayer, such as, Ask, and it shall be given you (Matthew 7:7). We often pray out of fear, when God commands us to pray in faith. We think that if enough people are praying, our odds of receiving an answer somehow increase. Many suppose that simply adding the words, in Jesus' name, guarantees a response. All of this exposes the same problem: we have not understood prayer as God intended it. Until that is corrected, we may pray often, pray long, and pray loudly, yet accomplish very little.

We are told that anybody can pray despite the fact that the Bible teaches otherwise. We are told that God answers prayer but are not told that we must pray in the will of God. We are given promises without conditions, expectation without instruction. So we pray, and when the answer does not come, we grow discouraged. We begin to question prayer, then question God, then give up altogether.

The fault is not with God, nor with His promises, but with us. We do not pray in His will. We do not meet His conditions. We expect results while ignoring what He has required. We have learned to say prayers, but not to pray as we ought, and the result is frustration and spiritual weakness.

Prayer is where belief is proven. A man who does not pray does not believe as he claims. Prayerlessness is not a problem of time, but of faith. That lack of faith is revealed in how prayer is treated. It is rushed, reduced to a formality, and repeated without thought. Often it is reserved for times of trouble or performed out of habit, with no heart in it. Words are spoken without expectation, and requests are made without looking for an answer. The lips move, but faith does not. And where there is no faith, there is no real prayer. The conclusion is plain: people have not learned to pray.

Many do not pray. Many who do are inconsistent. Many do not expect answers. Prayer remains in name, but it is weak. There is no shortage of prayer in word, but there is a shortage of real prayer. And where there is little real prayer, there will be little real answer. The problem is not with God, but with prayer as it is practiced.

Backsliding often begins with backward praying. We pray for what God never told us to pray for, and neglect what He did command. The main reason our prayer life is unstable is because we are out of the will of God. If we are not right with God, nothing will be right, especially prayer.

What did he mean when he asked the Lord to teach them to pray? Chapter:
What is Prayer

We have been told for so long that prayer is simply talking to God. That sounds good, and on the surface it seems right, but it is incomplete, and if we are not careful, it becomes misleading. If prayer were nothing more than talking, then anyone talking would be praying. A man can talk endlessly and never pray. Words alone do not make prayer. Speech alone is not prayer. There are many who say prayers, but do not pray. Talking is an action of the mouth, but prayer is an action of the soul. Talking can be empty, careless, and mechanical, but prayer cannot. Talking may involve no thought, no burden, no faith, and no awareness of God, yet still be called

prayer. A man may speak words toward heaven and assume he is praying, while in reality nothing is taking place between him and God. He may be talking, but God may not be listening. The Bible makes it clear that there are times when God does not hear, when sin is regarded in the heart, when there is no sincerity, and when there is no faith. So to reduce prayer to merely talking to God is to lower it to the level of speech, when true prayer requires a man to actually approach God in reality.

There is another common statement we hear, that prayer is communion with God. Again, that sounds right, but it too can be misleading if it is left alone. Communion may come through prayer, but it does not define prayer. A man may enjoy a sense of peace, closeness, or comfort and call that prayer, when in reality he has never truly prayed. Communion speaks of fellowship, but prayer goes further than fellowship. Prayer is not merely enjoying God's presence, it is coming before Him with purpose. If we define prayer only as communion, we reduce it to a feeling or an experience, and prayer is not measured by how a man feels, but by what he is actually doing before God.

Prayer, at its core, is asking. The Bible says, "ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). Prayer is a man coming to God with requests. It is an expression of dependence upon God. It is the heart reaching out to God in faith and making petition. Prayer is not merely speaking, and it is not merely experiencing. Prayer is asking God.

Chapter 2: After This Manner Pray Ye

Matthew 6:9 says, “*After this manner therefore pray ye...*” Before the Lord gives what is commonly called the Lord’s Prayer, He gives instruction on how it is to be understood. The key word is *manner*.

The word *manner* means a pattern, a way, or a method. It speaks of form, not repetition. The Lord is not giving a prayer to be memorized and recited word for word. He is giving a model to be followed. This is not something to be repeated, but something to be understood.

This is made clear by the words themselves. He did not say, “Pray these words,” but, “*After this manner pray ye.*” That distinction matters. If the Lord intended this to be repeated, He would have said so plainly. Instead, He gives a structure, a guide, an outline of what prayer should contain.

Yet this is where many go wrong. What was meant to guide prayer has been turned into a substitute for it. Men repeat these words over and over, often without thought, without meaning, and without any real approach to God. The very thing Christ warned against, “*vain repetitions*” (Matthew 6:7), is often practiced using the very words He gave as a pattern.

This prayer is not a formula. It is not a ritual. It is not something to be recited as a duty. It is a framework that teaches us how to approach God. It shows us the order of prayer, the priorities of prayer, and the spirit in which prayer is to be made.

Chapter 3: When ye Pray

In answer to his request, Jesus said, “When ye pray” (Luke 11:2). He does not say *if* ye pray, but *when*. Prayer is not optional. It is expected. It is part of the life of anyone who would walk with God. And though He does not name the exact hour, His teaching makes the timing plain. He instructs us to pray, “Give us day by day our daily bread” (Luke 11:3). That request belongs at the beginning of the day. A man is not meant to wait until the moment of need to ask. God would have him come before the day begins. Prayer is meant to start the day, not follow it. It is not something added after everything else is done, but something that comes first.

This pattern is not new. When God gave Israel manna, it was to be gathered in the morning. “And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating” (Exodus 16:21). If they waited, it melted. If they neglected it, they went without. God taught them to begin the day dependent upon Him. The provision for the day was tied to the morning. So it is with prayer. If a man neglects God at the beginning of the day, he will go through that day lacking what he needs. “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up” (Psalm 5:3).

And this is seen in the life of Christ Himself. “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35). If the Son of God began His day in such a manner, how much more should we.

But the Lord did not only tell us *when* to pray. He also told us *how* to pray. “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do” (Matthew 6:7). Prayer is not a matter of empty words. It is not the repeating of phrases, nor the saying of the same thing over and over without thought. The heathen think they shall be heard for their much speaking. They imagine that length, or repetition, or form will move God. But God is not moved by words alone. He is not impressed with quantity. He is not persuaded by rehearsed speech.

Vain repetitions are words without substance, speech without meaning, prayer without heart. A man may say much and yet say nothing at all. Prayer is not quoting poetry. It is not to be read from a book. It is not a form to be followed, nor a script to be repeated. It is asking. It is direct. It is purposeful. It is a man going to God with something in mind and asking for it plainly.

This is why many pray and receive nothing. It is not because God has failed to hear, but because nothing has truly been asked. Words were spoken, but no request was made. Or if a request was made, it was buried under empty phrases and repeated sayings that carry no weight. God is in heaven, and thou upon earth. Therefore let thy words be few, and let them be real.

This also explains why the Lord gives a pattern for prayer but never intended it to be repeated as a form. What is often called “the Lord’s Prayer” is not something to be recited, but something to be understood. It teaches us what to ask, not what to repeat. When men turn it into a repeated form, they do the very thing the Lord warned against. They make it a vain repetition.

Having established the time and the manner, the Lord then gives instruction concerning the place of prayer: “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet” (Matthew 6:6). This is not incidental, but deliberate. It is a place that a man goes to and enters into on purpose. Prayer requires separation. There must be a place set apart where a man gets alone with God, removed from distraction, noise, and interruption.

The closet is an enclosed place. The door is shut, and the world is left outside. It is there that a man deals honestly with God, without pretense and without performance. He is not praying to be heard by others, but to be heard by God. His attention is not divided, but fixed upon the Lord. Prayer may be made anywhere, but it cannot be made well everywhere. There must be a place where a man meets with God, where nothing else has his attention, and where prayer is given its proper place.

This kind of praying cannot be rushed, and it cannot be replaced. A few hurried words will not take its place. A repeated phrase will not make up for it. When this is neglected, the whole day is affected. The mind is scattered, the heart is unprepared, and the man moves forward in his own strength. What is missed in the morning is not easily recovered later.

With so many promises concerning prayer, it is hard to understand why men do not pray as they ought. The Lord has said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). Again, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do”

(John 14:13). The promises are clear. The invitation is open. The failure is not on God's part. It is in our neglect of the time, our misuse of the manner, and our disregard for the place of prayer.