

An Unnatural Prayer

Focus on “Lord’s Prayer” or “Disciples Prayer” Matthew 6

I. 1st things 1st – On Approaching HIM

- a. Amazing thing about approaching
 - 1. We Can
 - a. That is, *the believer* is able to approach

Let me share 1st from Hebrews 10

¹⁹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus.²⁰ By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.²¹ And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house,²² let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water. - *Hebrews 10:19-22 (NLT)*

- b. This translation states to draw near “fully trusting him”
- c. Other translations say to come in “full assurance of faith”
 - i. That is faith in what He has said
 - 1. That His death would pay for our sin
 - 2. Faith that He is faithful to save the helpless – us
 - 3. Trusting in His character, His mercy and goodness
 - ii. There is no place for faith in self. Examples:
 - 1. I will be heard because I have cleaned up
 - 2. I am praying and studying now, so He is with me
 - 3. The faith must be in Him, not in self!
 - a. Who He is
 - b. What He has done at the Cross
 - i. Before talking of prayer, must fully realize:

All approach of God is done thru Jesus Christ and is on faith in His deeds and Word!

- d. In approaching, prayer of true Christian different from prayer of others
 - i. It is heard!
 - 1. Lord doesn’t listen to those who are not His (John 9:31, Isaiah 59:2, Psalm 66:18)
 - a. This includes those in idolatry (praying to other gods)
 - b. Those who embrace & defend their sin
 - c. Those who strive to merit salvation, rejecting Christ’s work

II. It is Good News that we can approach Him!

- a. We seem to forget how powerful and fearsome our God is
 - i. Remember Isaiah 6?
 - 1. Isaiah, God’s chosen spokesperson and a Holy man
 - a. Approached the Son on His Throne
 - b. The Son – who man can see and not die
 - ii. Look at Isaiah’s experience:

Isaiah 6:4-5 (ESV)

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

- b. Isaiah couldn't even stand!
 - i. Collapsed on the ground before the Son
 - ii. Same scene found in Revelation
 - 1. And in prayer, we approach the *Father!*
 - a. For sinful men like us to be allowed to approach is unthinkable
 - b. To be granted access with boldness is miracle!
- c. To us, our God has many titles:
 - a. Master – We the slaves He has purchased
 - b. Father – He has adopted us at great expense
 - c. Friend – He shares His intentions and thoughts
 - d. Creator – He made us from dust with His own hands
 - e. Sustainer – It is His oxygen we breathe
 - f. Savior – justice demands we be cast, yet He rescued
- ii. When coming to Lord in prayer
 - 1. Never forget titles of who you are approaching!
 - a. You should be afraid, and yet bold
 - b. In awe of Him and yet familiar with Him
 - c. In respect of His justice, yet humbled by His grace

Remember who it is that you are speaking to when you pray!!! The beginning and end of prayer so often trivialized and lightly considered!

III. Let's Now Look at "Lord's Prayer" – Learn how it is "Unnatural"

Matthew 6:7-13

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this: "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 this day 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 evil. *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*

- a. "Lord's prayer is a series of pegs on which to hang not our coats, but our thoughts" –R.C. Sproul

V7

"And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

- b. Notice: "when you pray" – not "if"
 - 1. Prayer is assumed
 - a. And of course it is!
 - i. When a man saved, is adopted into family of God
 - ii. Don't children of good man enjoy talking to father?
 - 1. How much more with God?
 - 2. Those saved have natural desire to pray
 - 3. "Amazing grace" of salvation makes it so!
 - ii. "Heap up empty phrases"
 - 1. Chants and repetitions like monks & eastern religions
 - 2. Referring to long, wordy prayers
 - a. Have you heard them?
 - i. Long prayers made with intention of sounding good
 - ii. Eloquence valued over sincerity
 - iii. Long-windedness thought to be of some merit
 - b. This is all pride in self, and worthless

3. Irony here – To many, Lord’s “model” prayer has become exactly that
 - a. Often taught to children as mantra for nightly recitation
 - i. Repeated daily as a religious exercise

V8

8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

- iii. God knows your needs *before* you ask
 1. To stumble over proper wording or formula
 - a. Misunderstanding of His knowledge
 - b. Misunderstanding of His heart toward His children
 2. Transfer of information not the goal of prayer
 - a. So why pray?
 - i. To unburden, cast all care upon Him– 1 Peter 5:7
 - ii. Natural thing for child to talk to father
 1. Sign of salv. - think Saul/Ananias Acts 9:11 (*DETAILS*)
 - iii. It brings Him glory that you humble & seek
 1. It is an act of worship to one who deserves it
 - iv. While He is unchanging, true prayer changes you
 1. This model has element of alignment
 - b. Notice in same sentence stating He knows you need
 - i. Also continues to assume you’ll pray anyway
 - ii. This tension between sovereign God and responsibilities of men is the same we’ve brushed into throughout exposition of John

V9

Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

- c. So “Pray Like this”
 - i. Having discussed how not to pray and the omniscience of Father
 1. Our Lord now begins to give us a template, or model
 - a. Many pray the exact words of this model – good
 - i. But nowhere see apostles/early Christians reciting
 - b. Notice wording “*Like this...*”
 - i. Or in this manner - this method or style
 - c. It is a model, or guideline
 - i. Will be discussing that as we go
- d. “Our Father”
 - i. Notice the first word “Our”
 1. Christian life presented as living together
 - a. Christian “community”
 - i. Christians prefer Christian company
 1. Told directly to assemble together
 2. Love of brothers fruit of salvation – 1st John
 - ii. No move on to the next word:
 1. “Father”
 - a. This is the “gateway”
 - i. Here we must pause consider
 1. Is He my Father?
 2. This is the go/no-go question
 - a. If He is not Father
 - i. Abandon planned prayer!

If you've not been adopted into family of God, only prayer need to utter is for forgiveness & mercy.

Cry out an acknowledgement of guilt before God.

Humbly plea Christ's payment to be counted on your behalf & transfer Lordship of life from self to Him!

iii. When calling Him Father consider how you became child of God

1. If you are His, He made you so – it wasn't your doing!

Example - Trump adoption model

2. Believer is adopted son/daughter

3. One seen by Father as having Righteousness of Christ – Rom 5:17

Moving on...

e. Our Father...*in heaven*

i. Reminder of the difference

1. Do not project your imperfect father into heavenly father

2. Reminder of:

a. Not only the difference

i. But also His location & authority associated

ii. His magnificence

f. "Hallowed be your name"

i. That is, may your name be kept Holy

1. Holy = **set apart** - kept pure - held in reverence – w/o tarnish

2. Notice this is the first request, the place of first importance

a. Not our needs or wants

b. Not our health

c. Not request for some His hand on some worthy project

3. Concern for His glory/name should also be first of our concerns

a. Priority in our prayers

b. Priority in our behavior

i. Even though we have all reflect poorly/blasphemed

4. Does not one created us...saved us...and sustains us

a. Deserve His name to be kept untarnished?

ii. This model prayer has an embedded "alignment process"

1. Following this model will align your desires w/desires of the King

a. To seek His will before our own feels unnatural!

b. But starting here at beginning

i. See that all that follows needs to be filtered thru His priorities

ii. Must ask ourselves as we pray:

1. ? If fulfilled, will this request keep His name Holy?"

2. ? If His answer is different than my wish

a. Am I prepared to accept His sovereignty & wisdom?

Here at the start, we learn that our prayers are to be about His kingdom and not our own

g. Let us now look at second request

V10

¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

- h. This line is why I call this prayer “Unnatural”
 - i. We inherited sinful nature from Adam
 - 1. Our focus is almost always on ourselves
 - a. Our hopes, desires and dreams
 - 2. Even when we pray for others (friends, loved ones)
 - a. We think of how we want to see
 - i. Rescue, intervention, miracles, provision, healing
 - b. All in line with what *we* want to see come about
 - i. Not necessarily bad
 - 1. Almost always consult own hearts first
 - ii. We do not “naturally” drop to knees with our Lord’s kingdom first/foremost
 - 1. Sometimes He allows bad things to accomplish His goals
 - a. We struggle to understand and accept such things
 - b. Sometime His goals far beyond our comprehension
 - i. Many remain unknown this side of eternity
- i. “Your kingdom come”
 - i. His kingdom is often referred to as
 - 1. The growth of His people (the church)
 - 2. The sum total of His final plan
 - a. New heaven, new Earth, reborn people
 - b. When His kingdom grows, because people brought in
 - ii. When we say we are to grow His kingdom
 - 1. What do we mean?
 - a. Only grows thru preaching of the Gospel
 - i. When He then takes people and makes them His people
 - iii. This expansion, operation and working out of His Kingdom
 - 1. Placed in position of high priority in this prayer
 - a. Second only to the purity and reputation of His name
 - 2. Seems to be more concerned about bringing His people life
 - a. Then about petty comforts
 - i. And so should you be too!
 - 3. Seems to have more focus on working out His wise and sovereign will
 - a. Then heeding our wishes that are based on
 - i. Limited information, Small in focus
 - ii. Tainted by a sinful nature
 - 4. Question:
 - a. ? Are we more concerned with job/car or w/people headed to Hell?
 - b. ? Are you & I focused on learning His will and seeing it carried out?
 - i. ? Or on speaking our will and seeing that carried out instead?
 - c. ? How are you going about learning His will in greater detail?
 - i. ? In His Word daily?
 - 5. This part of model prayer should stir us to think on all these things
 - a. As well as petition for the lost

**How unnatural to pray, not for what we want, but to surrender our desires to another!
And yet, after doing this, a greater peace will follow knowing our Sovereign God hears those prayer that
are according to His will!¹**

¹ 1st John 5:14

- j. “Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven”
 - i. Is God not all powerful? Will His will somehow *not* be done?
 - 1. He is all powerful, and His will will be accomplished
 - a. But look at this request:
 - i. “on Earth as it is in Heaven”
 - 1. In heaven, when His will is carried out there is
 - a. Rejoicing
 - b. Angels praising
 - c. Loud “Amens” and even trumpets
 - i. In other words, agreement & joy!
2. However, fallen sinful men usually don’t joyfully obey & celebrate His will
 - a. Our responses (both believer and non-believer) are often different
 - b. This request here we are to ask His will be carried out in same *manner*
 - i. With joy – praise – willingness
 - 1. With agreement – w/o question
3. This is another part of the “alignment process” found in this prayer
 - a. Do you know and celebrate His will?
 - b. Do your requests align with His will?
 - c. Have you taken His will and used it to replace your own?
 - d. If not confident His will agrees w/yours:
 - i. How do you expect to be answered
 - ii. How dare we close w/line used so carelessly
 - 1. “In Jesus name we pray...”?
 - a. If we have no inclination what that might be?
 - i. ...Have given His will no thought?
4. Another thing to consider here:
 - a. If His will brings us no joy, what does that say of us?
 - i. Quite possibly some degree of rebellion, idolatry (or both)
 - b. This should cause reflection and adjustment as we pray
 - i. His will first and foremost
 - ii. His will *always* over your own
 - 1. This brings humility, does it not?
 - 2. Kneeling is a position of humility
 - a. But do not be humble in position only!
 - b. Never forget He is the Master, you the slave
- k. On this subject of God’s will
 - i. Sometimes, even experts in Word
 - 1. Puzzled as to His will in particular circumstances
 - ii. Few experts are of higher caliber than George Mueller <*short bio*>

<Summarize> **How to Learn the Will of God**

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its' own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people generally is right here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it's usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impressions. If so, I make myself open to great delusions.
3. I seek the will of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I make myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Spirit guides us at all, He will do it according to Scriptures and never contrary to them.
4. Next, I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and His Spirit.
5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me plainly.
6. And so through prayer to God, the study of the Word and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge. If my mind is then at peace and continues in peace after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In both trivial matters, and in those that are most important issues, I have found this method always effective.

1. Let's return to our text:

vii

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| ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, |
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- i. We finally reach the first request for ourselves
 1. And so now we request a pretty wife, good job and new truck!
 - a. Not so much
 - i. Our model teaches us to pray for the basics
 1. Those things necessary to live
 2. Food, water, shelter
 - ii. In context of previous lines, could be seen as
 1. Asking for supplies in carrying out His will
 2. Requesting basics as we seek to follow/obey
 3. Things needed as we are used by Him
 - b. To pray concerning supplies needed to fill our *own* plans
 - i. Is to simply ask aid in growing our own kingdom
 - ii. To focus on own desires, begs question
 1. Why call Him Lord?
 2. we focus on our kingdom
 3. Our needs
 4. Our wants
 2. Notice too how different prayer for bread is from modern teachings
 - a. Does not take audacious faith
 - b. Jumping up and down claiming "authority" over something
 - c. Doesn't even imply have the *right* to bread – no, must ask
 3. Simple needs, this should keep us from greed and coveting
 - a. In both the prayer closet and on the street
 - b. Once again, this prayer aligns our worldview w/God's
- m. Now the prayer for forgiveness:

¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- i. This request for forgiveness tied to daily need for bread
 1. Why?
 - a. Forgiveness is indeed needed daily
 - i. You sin, and sin much, as do I
 - b. The Christian is not forgiven of all and given license to sin
 2. Notice “as we also have forgiven our debtors”
 - a. Does this mean to be forgive we must do something?
 - i. (In this case forgive someone else)
 - b. Would that not make our forgiveness merit-based?
 - i. This would mean salvation is indeed by works
 1. Not by His grace alone
 - ii. But I have heard preached this way *many* times

(If you are saying, “Wait, what about the teaching after this prayer – hold on, we’ll cover it…))

 3. Again look at the wording
 - a. “as we also have forgiven our debtors”
 - b. Forgiving others is a fruit of salvation
 - c. It is something those truly saved do because they saved
 - i. Not something you do to become saved
 1. Big difference!
 - d. On this verse, great commentator Matthew Henry:
 - i. “This is not a plea of merit, but of grace”
 4. It’s place in this prayer is daily reminder
 - a. Do not approach Father with hate/unforgiveness in heart
 - i. He has forgiven you MUCH
 - ii. Will you now approach God holding grudges?
 1. You have done worse to Him
 - a. And yet been forgiven
 5. Yet Christians do struggle with unforgiveness many times
 - a. For often wicked deeds are done towards us
 6. But those saved will forgive.
 - i. If struggling, may God grant them grace to forgive
 1. At that time while on knees before Him

On to verses 13:

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For your is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*

- n. Two important things to know here:
 - i. **Number 1** – God Himself does not tempt
 1. Although He allows temptation to approach
 - a. To test
 - b. To refine & build up our strength/endurance
 - ii. **Number 2** – The word translated here as “temptation” has fuller meaning
 1. Also means trial of any kind
 - a. It used numerous times in NT for trials or testing

2. This is a plea for mercy
 - a. A recognition of weakness in regard to
 - i. Sin and Trials
 3. Anyone who has struggled with a particular sin knows
 - a. Easier to avoid temptation , than to fight it
 - b. Better to not be in a trial, than to struggle in enduring it
 4. And so they pray to avoid trial and temptation
 - a. So they might not fall
- iii. This petition guides us as we:
1. Flee from sin
 2. Seek out a peaceful life
 3. Rely on the Lord for deliverance
 4. And walk faithfully and fruitfully before Him
- o. This next phrase is somewhat debated (not in ESV read aloud)
- i. “For your is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”
 1. Your translation may not even have it there
 - a. Most MSS don’t have it, and so many modern trans follow
 - b. Not focusing today on translations
 - i. If subject examined, no challenge to authority/accuracy of Word
 1. But it is a rabbit trail no time for today
 2. If it is indeed to be here, it is in agreement with this prayer
 - a. It is simply once again causing us to re-align ourselves
 - i. To the Lord is the kingdom
 - ii. He has all power
 - iii. He gets credit for all good that is done
 1. And this for all time
 3. It sends us on way focused once again on His priorities, not own
 - ii. And of course – that final word, “Amen”
 1. That one word of closing that means
 - a. We agree with all that has just been voiced
 - b. The previous things are our hope
 - c. It is a token of our desire to be heard.
 2. How often that word is breezed over – just a habit!
 - a. Allow me to challenge you
 - i. Before uttering that “amen”
 1. Ask yourself:
 - a. ? Do I truly believe these things are in Gods will
 - i. Or could quite possibly be, based on His character as revealed in Scripture?
 - b. ? Will I respond with agreement and submission?
 - i. Even if His will not in alignment w/yours?
 - c. ? Am I prepared to carry out His will biblically, if an action needs to be taken after HE reveals it?

3. Saying “Amen can be challenging, if we are to say it sincerely
 - a. How much more if preceded by “In Jesus name” !?
 - i. Showing we are certain that the prayer we uttered was done so as His earthly representative
 - b. “In the Name of” is to claim authority of an emissary/representative
 - i. ? Is that truly what you believe that prayer to be?
4. We take these closing words so lightly, but if we stop and think
 - i. We should really be feeling their weight each/every prayer
 1. Like I said, the beginning and ending of prayer is often trivialized and lightly considered!

IV. Closing

- a. Now knowing the inner workings of this model prayer:
 - i. Can you pray it sincerely?
 - ii. Can you model your prayers to be like it?
 - iii. Can you say “Amen” or close “In Jesus name”
 1. In confidence?
- b. Here’s a few good reasons NOT to pray Lord’s prayer
 - i. If you use it as a religious exercise
 1. Sincerity is more dear to Him than form
 - a. Remember, this is a *model* for your *daily* prayer
 - i. Not a legalistic mandate for every prayer offered
 2. God is near to the humble, needy man of contrite heart
 - a. But Jesus wasn’t all that kind to the “religious” folks
 - i. Which of those description best fits you & I come prayer time?
 - ii. Don’t use it if you can’t pass thru the “gateway”
 1. Is God your Father?
 - a. Have you repented of all sin (even favorites)?
 - b. Do you trust Christ’s death to pay for ALL your sin?
 - c. Have you accepted His title of Lord?
 - i. Bowed before His authority?
 - ii. Resolved to follow His commands?
 - iii. Acknowledged He purchased you - you are owned?
 2. Do not waste time praying to Him if He is not your Father
 - a. Unless it is crying out to Him that He make you one of His!

True prayer feels unnatural, but brings peace. Is a weighty obligation, but a thrilling privilege.

It can feel binding & restrictive beforehand, but freeing and joyful afterwards.

I challenge us all today to try to pray a little more unnatural as we go forward.