

The Best Way to Pray

Matthew 6:6, 8-9

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Prayer is a crucial part of being a priest. In Matthew 6:6, 8-9 we arrive at the first 3 petitions of the Lord's prayer, that addresses God directly. Jesus provides a unique framework for prayer.

The Best Way to Pray:

1. How? ('Pray then like this' Matthew 6:9a)

Jesus briefly reminds us on how we are to pray the Lord's Prayer rightly. The Lord's Prayer should not be prayed like a Pagan - mechanically repeating it multiple times. Nor should we pray the Lord's Prayer like a Pharisee - taking pride in how well we memorized the prayer, or how often we pray it. The Lord's Prayer in itself adds nothing to our goodness nor to our standing with God. Instead, we should be mindful of how we are praying and let the words be full of meaning coming from the heart. We are invited to reflect deeply on the Lord's Prayer to rearticulate it in the language of our hearts and to express it in light of our current circumstances and situations. It is given to us as a model of the best way to pray.

2. Who? ('Our Father in Heaven' Matthew 6:9b)

Jesus tells us who we pray to - Our Father in heaven! A wrong view of God leads to a wrong practice of prayer. The Pharisee sees God as fundamentally a Judge who deals justly with those who prove themselves righteous (approaching God this way also means that when we are not righteous, we avoid prayer out of guilt). The Pagan sees God as fundamentally a King who deals favourably with those who prove themselves loyal (approaching God this way also means that when we are not loyal, we avoid prayer out of shame). Jesus instead reveals to us that God is fundamentally our Father! God desires that we approach Him as His cherished children - even in our guilty unrighteousness and our shameful disloyalty. Our ability to seek God is built not on our performance but on our relationship with Him. Having God as our Father means:

- a) God is our protector
- b) God is committed to provide for our needs
- c) God disciplines us
- d) God seeks to please us

3. Why? ('Hallowed be Your name' Matthew 6:9c)

The first petition Jesus teaches us is '*Hallowed be your name*'. This is the petition of all petitions. This petition sets the tone for every other prayer we pray. This Petition of petitions can be understood in 3 ways. It is a:

a) Petition of purpose

We live in a world of sin, corruption, and suffering. When we pray, '*Hallowed be Your Name*', we are trusting God that He would glorify His name above all else even through all these atrocities.

b) Petition of personal submission

We bear God's name as His children and as "*Christ*"ians. Praying '*Hallowed be Your name*' is how we ask God to have His way in us and to glorify His name through us. It is a prayer of personal submission.

c) Petition of passion

When we pray '*Hallowed be Your Name*', we sincerely want to taste and see of God's glorious nature and ways in our lives and in our world today. It is our passion to see the name of our God and Savior exalted far above the heavens.

The Bible tells us that before we were children of God, we were by nature children of wrath (*Eph 2:3b*) like the rest of mankind. We were wicked, evil, and vile in our sins. There was nothing about us that drew God to us but He in His magnificent love repaid our wickedness with acceptance and our rebelliousness with a roof over our heads and a seat at His table. There is not one thing we could do to make God more attentive to our prayers. He is our Father. God has loved us even before the foundation of this world was set. Through Jesus, we now have access in one Spirit to the Father (*Eph 2:18-19*). If we ever struggle to begin our prayers with *Our Father in heaven*, let's remember that we will end our prayer not in our own name but in Jesus's name, and His name must be exalted and made holy.