

Daily Devotional, September 21, 2020 Our Daddy in Heaven

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Matthew 6:6-13 (NIV)

Everyone who ever grew up in church knows the Lord's Prayer. But unfortunately, many of these same people do not know *about* the Lord's Prayer, because they've never taken time to think about it. Did you know that the Lord's prayer is a part of the Sermon on the Mount which covers all of Matthew chapters 4 through 7 at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Here Jesus lays out all of the ground rules for how a person should live their life as a member of God's Kingdom. And although these were instructions given directly to the first disciples that Jesus had gathered, as well as the enormous crowd of people who had gathered to hear Him teach and preach, there's a lot packed into the instruction of this prayer that can encourage us today if we will only contemplate for a moment, what our Lord, has laid out for us.

First of all, prayer can be short. In fact, Jesus said that we should avoid pointless repetition. Listen, we're not going to be heard in Heaven because we repeat the same prayer over and over again. Studying prayers that people have prayed in the past can inspire us to go deeper into prayer, but prayer isn't a collection of mystic words that makes things happen through conjuring; it's an open conversation with a God who loves us and wants a relationship that includes two-way communication.

And secondly, it is not internally focused on oneself. If you look through the verses of the Lord's Prayer again; you don't see a lot of me, my, I, and mine. Instead we see our, us, we, and your. This I think, is one place that most believers can mature in when it comes to prayer because it is so simple to let prayer become that thing we do only when we need help. And don't get me wrong, God sincerely wants to help us, but God also tells us that He knows our needs before we ask them. Instead, let us pray about what God desires and be more mindful of the needs of those around us.

Third, prayer gives us time for both listening and thinking. Because we make our prayers short, we are no longer babbling like pagans at God. We instead take time to listen to what God has to say to us and to be more thoughtful to what God has said. We can also take the time to be more thoughtful about what we say to God before we say it.

Finally, and this may be the most important point, prayer isn't worried about making an impression or a big splash. We are warmly invited to call God our Daddy! Do little children address their fathers in a disrespectful manner? No. But do you honor your dad if you approach him in a rigid and detached manner? I would think no, again. We should instead approach our Daddy as children who desire and anticipate a loving embrace, a listening ear, and wise counsel. That's what any good Daddy would do!

Prayer: Daddy God, thank You for instructing us on the ways that we should think about and approach prayer. Please continue to help me and teach me as I seek you and learn to talk to You in this new way, to be more direct and thoughtful and to listen more carefully, expecting your answer and being wise in acting upon it. Most of all, thanks for being my loving Daddy! In Your son Jesus's name I pray. Amen.