

# Just Ask!

The Gospels

Matthew 6:11-15

## Introduction – Review

Most things that we do in the Christian life are easier than praying and yet, there is nothing that marks the mature Christian life as much. Prayer is the highest act of worship between the soul and God the Father.

### Two misconceptions about prayer

In our last discussion on Matthew chapter 6, we uncovered a couple of misconceptions concerning prayer. Let us review these.

1. The first misconception concerning prayer is that the more we repeat a prayer, the more likely God is to answer.

There have been some comments on this misconception, so let me clarify further. It does not mean that we are to pray the request only once. We may pray the request many times, but we are not to have the misconception that by repeating it many times, God will be more obligated to answer.

God has obligated Himself before we even pray. The Bible tells us that He knows what we need before we even approach Him. We go to Him in prayer because He gives us a burden, but we are not to think that we are obligating Him or that He had better answer because we pray a prayer fifty times or however many times.

2. The second misconception concerning prayer is that the longer we pray, the more likely it is that God will answer.

This does not mean that we are not to pray for a long time. In fact, we do not pray long enough.

I was, interestingly enough, reading in my study this past week of a custom in Scotland a hundred years ago. They would place an hourglass where the pastor prayed and the sand would sift as he prayed. When he said, “Amen,” if the sand had not all gone down, he was short-changing the congregation and had better add something to the prayer to give them

their hour’s worth. There is probably some good in that practice.

### Jesus teaches the disciples to pray

Jesus Christ, however, told His disciples, “This is the way to get the maximum attention of God,” and taught them – in less than sixty words – with a prayer. In our last discussion we looked at the first two parts of this prayer. Let us review our findings.

- This prayer begins with a relationship, as we read in Matthew 6:9,  
*. . . Our Father who is in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name.*

In other words, God is our nurturing, caring, loving, perfect Father whom we go to in intimacy and awe. We go to Him because we have a relationship with Him.

How did He become our Father? He became our Father when His Son became our Savior. If you do not know Jesus Christ as your Savior, you cannot go to God as the Father – you can pray, but it is going in the wrong direction.

Let me amplify this with an illustration. Suppose your son enters college as a freshman and is halfway through the first semester. He does what every college freshman does halfway through the semester – writes to you to ask for money! However, I receive your son’s letter at my house and it is addressed to me. I open it and it begins, “Dear Dad”. Since I know my kids cannot write yet, I immediately look at the signature at the bottom of the letter to see who is playing a joke on me. It says, “Love, Your son John, P. S. Send the money quick.”

I am probably going to throw the letter away. Why? The request is based upon a relationship that does not exist.

Let me tell something that is happening in our country today and is becoming rampant. Jesus Christ said, in fact, that it would happen more and more prior to His second coming. It is this – people are praying in the name of the Father, but it is going to the

wrong father. Satan is answering thousands of prayers of people whom he is deceiving into thinking that they have a relationship with the heavenly Father. Satan answers in order to keep their delusion alive.

The Bible talks about two spiritual fathers. One is God the Father. The other is talked about in John 8:44. Who is Jesus speaking to? He is speaking to the religious leaders of that day; the power players in the kingdom. What does He have to say to them? He says in John 8:42-44a,

*. . . If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.*

*Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.*

*You are of your father the devil . . .*

These are strong words to people who never miss church.

Does Satan really answer the prayers of people in order to deceive them into believing they really belong to God? Yes. Notice the frightening implications of Matthew 7:21-23a.

*Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.*

*Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?"*

*And then I will declare to them, . . .*

*"You never really did them."*

No. They really did them. What will Jesus say?

*. . . "I never knew you . . ."*

In other words, the source of their power did not come from God the heavenly Father, but from the king of the underworld. This implication is frightening.

The text mentions those who prophesy. In other words, some men and women had the reputation of being great Bible teachers who told God's word. The text also mentions those who cast out demons; that is, men and women who evidently had the reputation for being real power players who actually had sway over the demonic world – yet, they were really related to

the demonic world. There were also those who had undeniably performed miracles.

I turned on the television late one night last week and watched a well-known individual that I will not name because I do not want to imply that he is one of the ones that these verses are talking of. I watched as he held thousands of people in the palm of his hand, supposedly performing miracles. Let me tell what runs my blood cold – it is the fact that someone who has this kind of ministry is actually self-deceived. It is possible that someone like this, who has sway and who has supposed power and does everything in the name of Jesus, does not know Jesus.

How can we be sure we are petitioning the right Father? We can know for certain when we have received Jesus Christ as our Savior. As John 1:12 tells us,

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God...*

I John 5:12 tells us the same thing. This chapter tells us that Jesus came from God and is of God and by receiving Him, we are of God.

I John 3:1 says,

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God . . .*

So we can pray and we can know that we are addressing the right place when His Son is our Savior.

The prayer the Lord teaches the disciples begins with a relationship.

- Secondly, this prayer includes a responsibility, as we see in Matthew 6:10,  
*Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

As we previously discussed, we do not go to God with *our* choices. We do not say, "A, B, C – You pick one of these three choices, God." Instead, we go to God and say, "Your choice, God, or nothing for me."

We do not command God to do anything. It bothers me greatly to hear people say they do. We do not claim authority over God. We do not obligate God. He obligates us. He assumes authority over us. He tells us what to do. We have tried to change God into One doing the bidding of frail men, but He is a sovereign Lord and King.

## Three Requests of the Lord's Prayer

There is also a request stage of the prayer the Lord taught the disciples. We will look at this third part today.

You may wonder why I spent so much time on the first parts of this prayer. The reason is that we are entering the request stage of this prayer and it is possible to pray for bread or to pray for a need and get an answer, but the answer not come from God the Father. This would happen if He is not your Father.

When I speak to people, it is my duty to ask if they are related to God the Father. He is your Father if His Son is your Savior.

Let us look at the three requests in this prayer.

### 1. First, there is a request for provision.

Look at Matthew 6:11.

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

This is an interesting phrase. In fact, it was so startling that the early church fathers thought, "We've got to do something with this phrase. We've got to spiritualize this into meaning perhaps, the bread for communion. There is no way we are going to be talking about God, the majestic Father, whose kingdom is now, whose will is to be done, and then, in the next breath, talk about the groceries. It has to mean something other than literal bread."

However, literal bread is exactly what this verse means. In fact, the word "daily" was not discovered inside or outside the New Testament except in this one place. This is the only verse in which the little word "daily" is ever seen. As a result, it was not known what kind of nuance it had.

Finally, the archaeologists did a little digging and came up with a small papyrus fragment. The fragment happened to be a lady's shopping list of things she was going to get from the market. Beside a few items, she had this word "daily" marked.

This discovery flooded the meaning of this word. "Daily" means then, to purchase just enough for that day. It is not enough for tomorrow, it is enough for today. It is not to set someone up for the future, it is what is needed now. We go to God for this.

We do not go to God to ask for our "greeds," but for our needs.

There are two wrong perceptions of God the giver. Let me give them to you.

- The first wrong perception is that God is like a Santa Claus; like a Genie in a lamp.

With this perception, we go to God with the Hudson Belk store catalogue in front of us as we pray. We ask for all the latest fashion items.

It is not luxuries, it is necessities that we pray for.

- The second wrong perception is that going to God is like dialing "911".

In other words, this is someone who is the kind of believer who only goes to God in emergencies. The only prayers this person ever prays are, "I'm in big trouble now."

God tells us through Christ to ask not for our cake, but for our bread; for what we need right now. This is a daily process, which implies that we are praying daily.

I think God just gives us enough for the day because I do not believe that He would ever give us anything that would remove our need of Him. I do not think God would answer that kind of prayer. If He did, it would be to our detriment.

We must live with a sense of dependency on God, so we do not ask for tomorrow, but for today.

I remember reading the story of a woman who wrote with her own hand the very interesting incident that happened in her life in 1940. She and her husband had a little child and the child got sick. The doctor prescribed, as part of the child's medication, a fresh egg every day. The husband was a painter and because it was winter and the weather had turned cold, he was out of work. There were no other jobs available and this woman was an at-home mom. They knew they did not have the money to afford an egg every day.

A friend came over and this couple told her of the remedy the doctor had prescribed for their child. The friend said, "Well, why don't you just pray for an egg."

The couple felt a little silly, but knelt down and prayed for an egg. The next morning at 10 o'clock, this woman was at the kitchen window and heard cackling in the hedges. She looked out and saw a fat red hen was sitting there. It soon got up and had laid an egg. She went out and got the egg, hard boiled it, and gave it to their young child. She thought, "Isn't that phenomenal?!"

The real surprise came the next morning at the same time. The fat hen crossed the street, got in the hedges, and laid an egg. The hen continued to do this every morning for ten days.

At the end of ten days, the weather turned and the husband went back to work. Their young child had improved. This woman went to her kitchen window at 10 o'clock and there was no red hen. It never came back again.

Have you ever been with your back against the wall? If you have not, you have missed a real treat – you have missed the situation in which only God can provide your daily need.

We need to learn to pray and acknowledge the fact that what we have today is from Him. This is a request for provision.

## **2. Secondly, there is a request for cleansing.**

Look at Matthew 6:12.

*And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

Jesus expands this in Matthew 6:14-15, saying,

*For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

*But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.*

Now do not misapply this verse – be very careful. This is a prayer for disciples, not unbelievers. I cannot earn God's forgiveness. I can forgive everyone in the world, but that still will not get me into heaven. This is a prayer for forgiveness, not for salvation. It is a prayer for the sake of communion with God; that is, something that comes between understanding and applying and enjoying communion with Him.

There are deadly enemies of communion with God. Let me give them to you.

- The first enemy of communion with God is guilt. This is guilt because of sin that we have committed against God.
- The second enemy of communion with God is bitterness. This is bitterness because of sin that others have committed against us.

This verse takes care of both of these enemies:

- Guilt – Father forgive my debts.
- Bitterness – as I have forgiven others of their sins against me.

The believer has absolutely no right to expect communion with God if he refuses communion with other people. We cannot go to the throne of grace and at the same time, refuse grace to flow through us to the lives of other people. These are contradicting principles. We cannot experience fellowship with God and refuse fellowship with other people. This is the intention of this verse.

I love the words one man wrote, "As forgiveness is one of the things that Jesus does for you, forgiving others is one of the things that you do for Him."

## **3. Thirdly, there is a request for protection in this prayer.**

Look at Matthew 6:13a.

*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. . . .*

Let us face it – we seldom want to be delivered from temptation because it promises far too much fun. As someone once said, "Don't resist temptation, it might go away and never come back."

There is a lot of truth in this verse. It does not necessarily talk about what God does. God would contradict His nature to tempt us. This is really admitting our weakness. We could rephrase this verse, "God, keep me out of trouble!"

If we do not pray this often, we may be in trouble. We are never beyond the need to pray, "God I can't stand the power of the tempter."

The tempter does not come to us clanking heavy chains. He comes to us with charms, with flowers, with perfume, with the promises of success and popularity if we will only lie, if we will only sin, if we will only fudge. Then, the charms turn into chains.

I read a book, written by Gary Richmond, entitled [A View From the Zoo](#). Gary was on staff at the Los Angeles Zoo for many years. He normally worked in one area of the zoo, but told the story of a time that he helped with a surgery on a king cobra in the reptile house at the zoo. Enough men were needed to help hold the snake, so he and a number of other men were asked, or actually forced, to help. The snake could stand six feet tall, spread its cape, and kill a person.

Gary tells the story of joining four other men, one of which was the surgeon, to do the surgery on the king cobra. They went to the large, natural cage and the king cobra was out of sight. They were told to go in the cage and line up and that the snake would dart

at one of them. When the snake did this, they were to watch the lead person and do what he did.

The men went inside the cage and the king cobra came around the corner and saw them. It immediately reared up and growled. I have never heard of a snake growling, but this one growled and snarled and hissed. Gary said it stood about ten feet away and looked at each of the men – back and forth – as if choosing its prey. It was trembling with rage and excitement. It soon darted, or actually lunged at one of the men. The man was an expert and jumped out of the way and grabbed the snake. Then, all of the other men grabbed the snake. Gary said he was standing there waiting for death.

The surgeon asked him to get some towels, roll them up, and stick them in the snake's mouth. He told Gary that the venom could kill an elephant and they had to make sure they drained all the venom. Gary got the towels, wadded them up, and stuck them in the snake's mouth, as the snake was growling like a dog. The snake bit down on the towels and the venom dripped to the floor. Then, the surgeon did what he needed to do, with Gary's help, and finished.

The surgeon said, "Now comes the dangerous part. We've got to let go of this thing without getting bitten. That is far more dangerous than catching this serpent. On the count of three, we'll let go and throw and get out."

The surgeon counted and the men threw the snake and got out without incident.

The interesting application to this story is that it is just like sin. It is far easier to grab than to let go.

This prayer admits this very thing. We do not go to God and say, "Okay Lord, beef me up," and send Him on. We say, in a sense, "Lord, please keep me away from that reptile house because there is a likelihood that I may reach out and grab that habit or addiction; that lure or sin and find it very difficult to let go."

## **The Closing Doxology**

The Doxology then resounds with such majesty in Matthew 6:13b.

*. . . For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Notice the prayer begins with praise and ends with praise.

This prayer reveals the two proper rolls of men, women, and children, and of God. God is the majestic

one. God is the one worthy of praise. God is the one in control. He is the sovereign and we, as people, are the needy. We need direction; we need leading; we need forgiveness.

As we understand these two rolls and we go to Him with this kind of attitude – that He is majestic and in that majesty, He is still our loving, nurturing Father – then, when we learn to pray like this, we can be guaranteed that we will have the maximum attention of God. We need it.