



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES, INC.

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VOLUME XV

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER, 2012

ISSUE 5

Our Father

During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ made a startling claim, “I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him” (**John 8:26**). He later added, “I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your Father” (**John 8:38**).

Jesus Christ reveals that His words are not His own but the Father’s. The words that He spoke came directly from the Father. The words of Jesus are the words of the Father. He did not speak on His own initiative. He only spoke those things that the Father revealed to Him.

This means that the words of Jesus came straight from the heart of God! They are the revelation of what the Father desires. We must remember this truth as we look at the teachings of Jesus concerning prayer. When Jesus teaches us about prayer, it is a declaration of the Father’s desire concerning prayer.

Jesus teaches us that the Father wants us to come to Him in prayer! He longs to have an intimate relationship with Him. Jesus’ basic teaching about prayer is found in the Model Prayer or the Disciple’s Prayer found in **Matthew 6** and **Luke 11**. When He starts

teaching about prayer, Jesus lays the foundation with the truth that God is our Father!

Knowing God as your Father is crucial to the Christian life. In order to see this, read through **Matthew 6** and underline the many times that Jesus refers to the “Father.” Repeatedly, the Lord Jesus points believers to remember that God is their Father and the difference that this should make in the lives of others. This is especially true when it comes to prayer.

When Jesus teaches about prayer, He starts by saying that we are to pray, “After this manner therefore, pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven” (**Matthew 6:9**). In order to teach us how to pray, Jesus calls us to acknowledge and remember that God is our Father. How should knowing God as your Father make a difference in your prayer life? Why is it crucial to know that God is your Father for your prayer? We need to consider the following truths:

Prayer is approaching your Father.

The phrase “Our Father which art in heaven” provides the definition of prayer.

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What is prayer? Prayer is approaching the Father. It is spending time in fellowship with the Father. Prayer is about coming into the presence of God, speaking to Him and listening to Him.

Jesus Christ says, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (**Matthew 6:6**). This is the heart of prayer! It is about approaching and spending time with the Father. The foundation of prayer is that you are coming before the Father.

I realize this is a basic truth. You have heard this. However, it is something that every believer needs to be reminded of regularly. Prayer is coming before the Father! You are approaching the Father who sent His Son to save you. He has redeemed you and made you His child.

We cannot approach God as our Father but through Jesus Christ, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but through me" (**John 14:6**). Apart from Jesus Christ, we are separated from God. We can only approach Him as a wrathful Judge who must punish us for our sin and rebellion. Yet, through faith in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, accepted, and adopted by God as His own children, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ" (**Galatians 3:25**). When we trust in Christ, we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God the Father sees us in Christ, forgives us, and accepts us!

When God becomes our Father through Christ, He then invites us to come to Him. He is the Father who is ready and able to help us. Your Father calls on you to come to Him and find all the help you that you need, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and to find grace to help in the time of need" (**Hebrews 4:16**). Your Father loves you. He desires to bless you. He longs to have fellowship with you.

Reflect on this. Meditate on it. Let it fuel your prayer life. When you pray, you're

coming before your merciful and good Father. You're not coming to a distant God. You are not praying to a stingy God. You're not calling on an unkind tyrant. You don't have to come to Him cowering in fear and doubting if He will hear or answer you. You are approaching the Father who has redeemed you by the precious blood of His own Son Jesus Christ.

When you enter His presence, you are coming to the One who loves you and has a glorious purpose for your life! D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, "I must see God as my Father who has purchased my ultimate good in Christ, and is waiting to bless me with His own fullness in Christ Jesus . . . God is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. **Let us believe that and go to Him in simple confidence.**"

Prayer is drawing near to the Father who has saved you and loved you. It is coming with the realization that the eternal God is your merciful Father. This truth ought to comfort us and compel us to pray. Yet, it ought to convict us. How can we stay away from a Father who loves us so much? How can we neglect a Father who longs to spend time with us and answer us? You shouldn't want to stay away from your loving and merciful Father. His children love to be near Him.

Prayer is trusting your Father.

I realize that the word "Father" has a special meaning for some people. Yet, for others, it's not so special. For some, the word "Father" means nothing or fills them with fear and dread. Because of an unhealthy relationship with their earthly fathers, some believers struggle with trusting their heavenly Father. They find it difficult to relate to and depend on their heavenly Father.

Yet, the good news is that your heavenly Father is far beyond your earthly Father. He is a Father like no other father. What makes your heavenly Father so different?

- *Your heavenly Father is eternal.*

The Word of God says, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (**Psalm 90:2**). Your Father always has been and always will be. He is from eternity to eternity. He never changes. He eternally stays the same. Your Father doesn't have mood swings. Your Father doesn't have highs and lows. He doesn't love you based on your performance for the day. He is always the same, steady and faithful in His love and care for you.

- *Your heavenly Father is perfect.*

The Word of God says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (**Matthew 5:48**). Earthly fathers are subject to weakness, error, and sin. Earthly fathers make mistakes. However, God is infinitely perfect. He makes no mistakes. He has no weakness. He cannot sin. He is unchangeably perfect.

- *Your heavenly Father is wise.*

The Word of God says, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (**1 Timothy 1:17**). An earthly parent may not always know what to do for his child or how to advise his child. This is not true for your heavenly Father! Your Father is the source of wisdom. He always knows what is best for you. He knows the blessings you need. He knows the help you need. He knows the trials that you need.

- *Your Father is loving.*

The Word of God says, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (**1 John 4:16**). Your Father loves you in a way that no earthly parent can. A parent's love is nothing compared to the love the Father has for His child. Your Father's love is rich, unceasing, and unchanging. He loves you at this moment as much as He ever has or ever will. His love for you is not based on your actions or your performance. It is based on His character and

the work of Jesus Christ in your behalf. Your Father will not stop loving you!

- *Your Father is rich.*

The Word of God says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (**Ephesians 3:8**). Earthly fathers have limited resources. However, your heavenly Father has limitless resources! He has "unsearchable" riches. He can give more to His children than any earthly father can give his own children. Your Father is the Creator and Owner of all things!

- *Your Father has the power to change you.*

The Word of God says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (**Philippians 1:6**). Earthly fathers can train. They can teach. They can give advice. They can discipline. However, they don't have the ability to change the heart. Your heavenly Father can reach the heart. He can touch the heart. He can bring about genuine change in your life. God can shape and mold His children. He can create a clean heart and a right spirit in His own children!

- *Your Father will never die.*

The Word of God says, "Who only hath immortality" (**1 Timothy 6:14**). The Word of God reveals that God is immortal (**1 Timothy 1:17**). This means that God never dies. He will always exist. Earthly fathers grow old. They become weak and feeble. They also die. You only have an earthly father for a time. However, you have a heavenly Father forever. God never grows old. He never grows weak. He will never die. He will remain eternally the same in the full blaze of His glory, power, and majesty.

These truths can lead you to trust your Father. No matter what kind of relationship you have or have had with your earthly father, your heavenly Father is utterly different. Prayer is not only approaching your Father; it is growing in your trust and dependence on Him. His

glorious character can build your trust in Him. Rest in who He is and yield your heart and life to your Father!

Prayer is acknowledging the greatness of our Father.

When teaching us to pray, Jesus says, “Our Father **who art in heaven.**” Jesus wants us to acknowledge and remember that God is in heaven. In other words, He wants us to focus on the greatness of God. How do we do acknowledge the greatness of God?

Focus on the truth that your Father has sovereign power.

When Jesus says that God is in heaven, He teaches us that God reigns over all. He reigns over all with almighty power. He is the King of the universe. He has all power in heaven and earth. This means that you are praying to the Father who can answer your prayers! He has the power to do what you ask. Nothing is impossible for Him! He truly is able to do exceedingly abundant above all that you can ask or think. You can bring any burden or need to your Father. He reigns as God over all with almighty power.

Focus on the truth that your Father is gracious to you.

Reflect on the grace of God in prayer. Your Father is in heaven! He is the one true and almighty God of time and eternity. He is the holy and infinite God. We are speaking directly to God, the Creator of the universe face-to-face. Yet, this God condescends to you! He is willing to listen to you and speak to you. He allows you to approach Him – confessing your sins, bringing your petitions, unburdening your heart, thanking Him, praising Him, and resting in His presence. This is nothing but the grace of God. We who are sinful and finite have the glorious opportunity to be in relationship with God – to pray to Him. Only the grace of God – the unmerited favor of God – makes this a reality. Praise God for His gracious condescension! Let this grace of God move you to seek your Father faithfully and fervently.

Focus on the truth that God is omniscient.

The word “omniscient” means all knowing. When Jesus says that your Father is in heaven, He wants you to know that your Father knows all. Reigning from heaven, your Father sees everything and knows everything. This can comfort your heart. Your Father knows your heart. He sees the desires of your heart. He sees and knows your sincerity in seeking Him. He sees your broken heart. This should stir us to be transparent in our praying. Your Father sees all and knows all; pour your heart out to Him. This should also convict us. He sees and knows when we are not sincere. He is well aware of it when we are going through the motions. He knows when our confession of sin is insincere. This truth should stir us to be sincere. It should drive us to prepare ourselves to pray. You are coming into the presence of the One who sees and knows everything, including your heart. Don’t play games in the presence of God!

Prayer is glorifying our Father.

The foundation of the Model or Disciple’s Prayer is the fatherhood of God. Prayer is about approaching your Father. The goal of this prayer is the glory of God. Each petition is for the glory of God.

Hallowed be thy name – We are to pray for God’s name to be honored and exalted;

Thy kingdom come – We are to pray that people will surrender to Jesus Christ in true faith, advancing His kingdom and bringing glory to God;

Thy will be done in earth – We are to pray that God’s will be done in our lives that God might be glorified;

Give us this day our daily bread – We are to pray that God will provide for us for His glory;

Forgive us our debts – We are to pray for forgiveness in order to glorify God’s holiness and to pray for grace to forgive in order to magnify God’s mercy;

Lead us not into temptation – We are to pray that God will strengthen us against temptation that we might live for His glory;

Deliver us from evil – We are to pray that God would set us free from the enemy in order to glorify God through righteous living.

Prayer is about the glory of God. Too many times, we can develop a self-centered view of prayer. We believe it's all about us – our desires and needs. Yet, Jesus' teaching is that prayer is about our Father – what will glorify Him! **We will only find our hearts' desires and have our needs met when God is glorified in our praying and in our lives.** When we pray, our primary goal should be to glorify Him through our praise and petitions.

Prayer is believers joining together before our Father.

Jesus teaches us to pray “our” Father. This points to the truth that God's family is to pray with each other. All believers make up the family of God. While the individual believer is to pray, Jesus also teaches that believers must join in prayer. God desires both. By using “our,” Jesus emphasizes both the corporate and individual aspects of prayer.

God honors the prayers of individual believers. Yet, he is pleased to respond powerfully when believers join in prayer, “Again, I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven” (**Matthew 18:19**). Christ promises the Father's response when believers pray in agreement.

This should stir us to seek out opportunities to pray with other believers. This can be done in a variety of ways – the weekly prayer meeting time, small group settings, or believers committing to pray together on a weekly basis. This is the desire of our Father. There is great value in this practice. God hears and powerfully responds when people pray together. Believers learn how to pray as they pray with one another. Believers receive strength and encouragement as they pour their

hearts out together before God. God also unites and binds the hearts of believers as they meet together at the throne of grace.

I realize that praying in agreement can be done without believers being in the same place. We can and should share our prayer concerns with other believers and have them pray with us. Yet, there is no substitute for believers getting together for the purpose of prayer. This glorifies God and greatly benefits the church and individual believers.

Prayer is seeking our Father for other believers.

Jesus teaches us not only to pray **with** other believers but also **for** other believers. We are all members of God's family. God accepts and adopts everyone who believes in Jesus Christ. He loves all His people equally. He has made us brothers and sisters in His Son Jesus Christ. It is our privilege and duty to pray for each other.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to cry out to the Father for one another. The Bible says in **Acts 12:5**, “Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” This provides a powerful example of believers praying for one another. The church prayed without ceasing for Peter. Herod had determined to kill Peter. However, the church prayed and God delivered Peter (**Acts 12:1-9**).

This is one of the blessings of being a part of the family of God – brothers and sisters who will pray for you. We must be committed to praying to our Father for one another. We all share the same heavenly Father. We all are members of His family. How can we neglect our brothers and sisters in Christ? It grieves the heart of our Father when we fail to seek Him in behalf of those who are in His family.

I would challenge you to develop a plan of praying through your church. You can get a membership list or a directory. Over time, pray for the believers who make up your church. You may pray for a family a day, a member a day, or whatever plan the Spirit leads you to develop. You might start with your Sunday School class or small group. But, by faith and

God's help, stretch your faith to include the believers around you.

You may be wondering, "How can I pray for other believers?" The best way is by praying the Scripture. The following is a simple prayer plan for praying for believers. It is based **Romans 12:9-21**. You can pray this for individual believers or for the believers of your church as a whole.

I pray that _____'s love would be genuine and that he/she will abhor what is evil and will hold fast to what is good (**Romans 12:9**).

I plead that _____ will love others with brotherly affection and will outdo others in showing honour (**Romans 12:10**).

Father, I pray that _____ not be slothful in zeal, but will be fervent in spirit and serving the Lord (**Romans 12:11**).

Father I ask that _____ will rejoice in hope and will be patient in tribulation while remaining constant in prayer (**Romans 12:12**).

Father, I pray that _____ will contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality to the lost (**Romans 12:13**).

Father, I plead that _____ will bless those who persecute him/ her and will not curse them (**Romans 12:14**).

Father, I pray that _____ will rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (**Romans 12:15**).

Father, I ask that _____ will live in harmony with others, forsaking haughtiness and associating with the lowly (**Romans 12:16**).

Father, I pray that _____ will never be wise in his/her own sight (**Romans 12:16**).

Father, I ask that _____ will not repay evil for evil but will give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all (**Romans 12:17**).

Father, I plead that _____ will live peaceably with all people. I ask that _____ will never seek to avenge himself/herself but will commit any wrongs to You and Your wrath (**Romans 12:18**).

Father, I ask You to empower _____ to minister to those who wrong him/her. Help him/her to answer wrongs with love and ministry (**Romans 12:20**).

Father, I plead that _____ will not be overcome by evil, but will overcome evil with good (**Romans 12:21**).

The Search Continues Ecclesiastes 2:12-17

The book of Ecclesiastes is a record of Solomon's search for meaning. He went on a long and difficult journey to find out the meaning of life. At first, he thought that the pursuit of wisdom would give him answers (**1:1-15**). Yet, there were so many things in life that he could straighten out; so many things that just didn't add up. Human wisdom failed to give him any sense of meaning or purpose.

He then tried to find meaning by knowing the difference between right and wrong (**1:16-18**). This search also ended in failure. This only added to his sorrow and frustration.

Next, he pursued pleasure (**2:1-11**). He thought that meaning and purpose could be found through self-indulgence. He pursued everything his heart desired. Yet, even the greatest of pleasures left him empty and unsatisfied.

You would think at this point that Solomon would give up. But, he does not. With persistent purpose, he continues to find satisfaction and meaning. In **2:12-17**, Solomon continues his search.

His Focus (2:12-13)

Solomon reveals his focus as he begins a new search, "And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly" (**2:12**). If it sounds familiar, he goes back to something

that he has already considered (**1:13, 17**). The word “wisdom” refers to human thinking at its best. It refers to moral, practical advice like would you get from Ben Franklin or Dr. Phil. On the other hand, Solomon also searched out “madness” and “folly.” These are not separate but synonymous. Solomon looked for meaning and satisfaction in worldly wisdom and sinful foolishness. He wanted to compare these two ways of living to see which would offer meaning and satisfaction.

Solomon desired to make his search as comprehensive as possible, “for what can the man do that cometh after the king? Even that which hath already been done” (**2:12**). He looks ahead to the future and is wondering who will have the same questions that he has. With these people in mind, he wants to write a definitive statement about wisdom and folly. As the wisest and wealthy king, he is in a unique position to do this. He’s the ultimate test case.

In **2:13**, he reveals what he discovered, “Then I saw wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.” Until now, everything has been vanity – a striving after the wind. He admits that wisdom is a better alternative. It’s better to live a good, moral life than to live in sinful folly. Just as it’s better to be in the light than in the dark, it’s better to be good and moral than sinful and foolish! The good, moral person is not stumbling in the darkness of foolishness (**2:14a**).

The Flaw (2:14b-16)

It’s at this point that Solomon has a troubling thought, “And I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all” (**2:14b**). The one event that he speaks of is death. Death awaits us all – both the wise and fool. As we go through life, it is better to be wise than foolish. But what will happen to us in the end. We will die anyway. What’s the use?

Once we are dead, worldly wisdom will not do us any good. Whatever advantage we gain from wisdom is strictly temporary. Whether we are wise or foolish, either way we will soon be dead and who will remember us then. Death is the great equalizer! Both the

morally wise person and the fool will die. Death is no respecter of persons!

Solomon confronts his own immortality in **2:15**, “Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me: and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.” He admits that eventually that he will die. He confesses the shocking realization that each of us must face. One day our heart will stop beating, our lungs will not take oxygen in, and our days on earth will be finished. This is something each of us has to face. Solomon points out the flaw in being morally good and wise. The flaw is that the good man and the fool will both die. In the end, even if you are wise and good, you still die. No one will remember you and all that you have done will fade into obscurity (**2:16**).

The Fear (2:17)

These truths drive Solomon to hate life, “Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit” (**2:17**). Why does Solomon hate life? It is that death has the power to erase the very memory of our existence! Some people try to overcome this by earthly achievement but death still wins out in the end.

We must all die and who will remember us when we are gone? Alexander the Great found Diogenes the philosopher standing in a field looking at a pile of bones. Alexander the Great asked him what he was looking for. Diogenes responded, “I am searching for the bones of your father Philip, but I cannot distinguish them from the bones of the slaves.” Whether rich or poor, wise or foolish, powerful or weak, death will bring an end to every advantage that we have in this life. This is why Solomon says he hates life.

Do you see what life is like apart from God? Solomon is spiraling into despair. It is one thing to be disappointed with life and its frustrations. Hating life is entirely different. He hates life in general because death is coming and it will erase who we are and what we have done. Whether you are wise or foolish, you will die and your life on this earth will be erased.

Being morally good and living a wise life will mean nothing. Death brings both the wise and the foolish to an end.

Practical Applications:

- *Seek and respond to the wisdom of God's Word.*

There is value in learning. There is value in living a morally good life. Yet, apart from Christ and His Word it is all empty and meaningless. It is only as we gain spiritual wisdom from God's Word that we can truly live life and be prepared for death. We must dig into God's Word, asking Him to make us wise. The pursuit of our lives must be knowing God and growing in the wisdom that comes from the Word of God.

- *Remember and reflect on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

Solomon declares that he hated life when he saw that death erases all the achievements and accomplishments of life. Death ends one's earthly existence. However, for those who trust in Jesus Christ, the grave is not the end. This means that those who believe in Jesus will not be forgotten but remembered. The Word of God says in **Colossians 3:3**, "For ye

are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The Bible teaches us that our lives are safe with God in Christ. God so preserves us in His Son Jesus that nothing essential to who we are or what we have done will be lost forever. God will remember us when no one else will! As a child of God, look to Jesus. He will protect you and what you have done for God forever. He will protect your life forever. If you have never turned to Christ, realize that you have no hope. Death will end your earthly existence. All that you are and have done will mean nothing in the day of death. You will then enter into an eternity of hopelessness and despair in hell. Today, turn to Jesus. Cry out to God. Confess the fact that you are lost and have no hope. Trust solely in Jesus as your Savior for this life and the life to come. Then, start seeking the wisdom that comes from God's Word by reading and studying it. Rejoice and rest in the hope that your life matters now and for all eternity!



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