



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES, INC.

VOLUME III

JANUARY, 2001

ISSUE 12

THE MODEL PRAYER & YOU

Do you feel that your prayer life is inadequate? Do you long to grow in the ability to pray powerfully and effectively? The disciples of Jesus did. In fact, they asked Him to teach them how to pray, "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught His disciples" (Luke 11:1). After hearing Him pray, they saw the shallowness of their own praying. They felt their need for Him to teach them how to pray.

In response to that request, Jesus taught the disciples the Model Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). Jesus gave this prayer to the disciples as an example of how they were to pray. He intended for this prayer to be a model on which they could build their prayer lives. The Model Prayer was not meant to be a prayer said by rote (Matthew 6:7-9). Jesus was using the same manner of instruction as the rabbis of the day did. He simply provided them with an outline for prayer.

The Model Prayer is Jesus' outline for prayer. This outline covers the elements of true prayer. It reveals the areas that you must deal with in order for your praying to be powerful and pleasing to the Father. It is a comprehensive and clear outline of how you are to seek and communicate with your heavenly Father. All that the Word of God says on the subject of prayer could be aligned under these topics.

The topics presented in the Model Prayer are:

Seeking The Father's Praise-Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name;

Seeking The Father's Kingdom-Your kingdom come;

Seeking The Father's Will-Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven;

Seeking The Father's Provision-Give us this day our daily bread;

Seeking The Father's Forgiveness-And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;

Seeking The Father's Protection-And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;

Seeking The Father's Honor-For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we will emphasize using the Model Prayer as a tool for evaluating your prayer life. Since it is Jesus' outline for prayer, it is the standard for your prayer life. As this new year begins, I challenge you to examine and evaluate your prayer life. You need to make a conscious, deliberate examination of your prayer life—your strengths and your weaknesses, what you are practicing and what you are not practicing, what you need to work on and what you need to change.

In order to examine your prayer life, you can use the Model Prayer as a guide. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what you need to develop and change in your prayer life. Plead with Him to show you how you need to seek Him in the coming year.

Call on Him to reveal your strengths and weaknesses to you. You can grow and mature in prayer! You can pray with power and effectiveness! Yet, a necessary step to this is examining your prayer life and allowing the Spirit to guide you and change you.

Why Should I Evaluate My Prayer Life?

It may sound unusual even strange to you to say that you need to evaluate your prayer life. Yet, there are some legitimate reasons why you need to evaluate your prayer life. *First, the unexamined prayer life is an immature prayer life.* It is only by evaluating your strengths and weaknesses in prayer that you are going to face them and deal with them. In order to grow in your ability to communicate with God and intercede, you need to confront openly and honestly the struggles and weaknesses that you have in your prayer life. Maturity in your prayer life results when you work through your weaknesses, make changes, and build on your strengths. You can do this by periodically examining your prayer life.

Second, evaluating your prayer life will help you make sure that your praying is in line with the Father's desires. The Model Prayer reveals how you should seek your Father. This model reveals God's desire for your prayer life. In **John 17:8**, Jesus pointedly declares, "For I have given to them the words which You have given Me." The words of Jesus Christ are what the Father wanted Christ to teach. The origin of the Model Prayer is the heart of God. It is a revelation of how He wants His people to pray. When you evaluate your prayer life according to its principles, you are striving to bring your prayer life in line with what the Father desires. This will lead to power and effectiveness in prayer.

Evaluating your prayer life will aid you in building a healthy and vibrant prayer life. A healthy and vibrant prayer life is built through variety. It is establishing a balance between the different aspects of prayer. Many times we have a tendency to focus on one particular aspect of prayer over the others. This will drain power and effectiveness from your prayer life. This turns prayer into a dry, boring ritual. When you are covering the various aspects of prayer, it provides variety and gives life and power to your praying.

By evaluating your prayer life, you can make sure that you are experiencing a variety in your praying. This will move you toward a healthy and vibrant prayer life.

A final reason to evaluate your prayer life is to submit yourself to the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry. Jesus declared that the Holy Spirit would be your Teacher, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (**John 14:26**). The Holy Spirit is our internal Teacher. His teaching ministry extends to prayer. He is the One who teaches the believer how to pray. When you evaluate your prayer life, you are submitting yourself to His guidance in prayer. As you ask questions and examine your prayer life, you are inviting Him to speak to you, change you, and guide you. This is essential to growing and maturing in prayer.

In order to evaluate your prayer life, you will need to look at the various parts of the Model Prayer. From these parts, you should ask yourself some questions concerning your prayer life. The following is offered as a guide to help you evaluate your prayer life. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight into each phrase. Plead with Him to show you what you need to build on, what you need to improve, and what you need to change. You can do this in a day or you might consider doing this over a period of time. The key is to examine your prayer life according to the teaching of Jesus.

Seeking The Father's Praise

When you evaluate your prayer life, you can begin with the phrase, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." This phrase teaches us about the One to whom we are praying. Each phrase provides you with questions that you should ask yourself about your prayer life.

The words "Our Father" reveals that God is your Father. You are not praying to an unknown God. You are crying out to an idol. You are praying to the living God who is Your Father. He has chosen you. He has created you. He has sustained you. He has saved you. He has given you the privilege to enter His presence and talk to Him and listen to Him.

Throughout the Bible, God is revealed in a variety of ways. Yet, the primary New Testament teaching about God is that He is a Father to those who trust in His Son Jesus Christ, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ" (**Galatians 3:26**). Prayer is nothing more and nothing less than intimate fellowship with your heavenly Father.

The fact that God is your Father should have a tremendous impact on your prayer life. It should deliver you from hypocritical praying (**Matthew 6:5**). It should eliminate useless chatter or vain repetition of phrases (**Matthew 6:7**). It should create within you a confidence to pray because He is your Father and because He loves you (**Matthew 6:8**).

The phrase "Our Father" should cause you to ask yourself the following questions about your prayer life:

- ◆ *Am I being open and honest in my praying to God? Am I pouring out my heart or am I praying shallow prayers without much depth?*
- ◆ *Am I trusting in God to hear me and answer me because I am His child?*
- ◆ *Am I striving to know my Father? Am I focusing on Him when I pray?*

The phrase "in heaven" refers to the sovereignty and greatness of your Father. He is your loving and merciful Father. Yet, He is also the living and sovereign God, the Creator of all. He is the majestic Holy One who is holy and righteous. We can approach Him with confidence. But, that confidence must be balanced with reverence and awe.

This phrase should lead us to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

- ◆ *Am I worshipping God from my heart on a regular basis? Do I neglect praise in order to focus on other parts of prayer?*
- ◆ *Am I convinced of God's power and sovereignty to hear me and answer me? Do I doubt His power to do what I ask of Him?*

The phrase "hallowed be Your name" refers to glorifying God. The word "hallowed" means "to sanctify, to set apart". Jesus is teaching that you are to adore and exalt the name of God. The name of God represents who He is. To hallow the name of God is to glorify and honor Him for who He is.

Jesus uses this phrase to teach you that your praying should glorify God. You need to worship and adore Him for who He is. You also need to pray for those things that are going to glorify Him. Your praying has to be God-centered rather than self-centered.

Too many times our praying is focused on our needs and wants rather than on the glory of God. Our focus is on what is best for me and not on what is going to glorify God. When you make requests of God, your requests should glorify Him. Your asking should be motivated and guided first by what is going to give God the glory and praise.

This phrase should cause you to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

- ◆ *Do my prayer requests glorify God? When I ask of God, is it first and foremost motivated by the glory of God?*
- ◆ *Is my praying more self-centered or God-centered?*

In this first section of the Model Prayer, Jesus teaches that you are to worship God, trust Him as your powerful Father, and ask for those things that are going to glorify Him. You are to seek the Father's praise by worshipping Him, trusting Him and His power, and glorifying His name.

Seeking The Father's Kingdom

The second phrase of the Model Prayer is "Your kingdom come". Jesus is teaching that you are to pray for the coming of the kingdom. What does Jesus mean when He refers to the "kingdom"? Jesus' passion was the kingdom. It was the major theme of His preaching. When He began His public ministry, He began by proclaiming this message, "From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (**Matthew 4:17**). The word "kingdom" appears forty-nine times in Matthew, sixteen in Mark, and thirty-eight in Luke. This is 103 times! Preaching the kingdom was His consuming passion, "But He said to them, I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (**Luke 4:43**).

The kingdom is the reign and rule of God in the hearts of those who surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. A person enters the kingdom of God when

Seeking The Father's Will

he or she repents of sin and turns to Jesus Christ in faith. The kingdom advances as more and more people surrender to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance. The kingdom grows as people commit their lives to Jesus Christ through hearing and believing the gospel.

When Jesus says that you are to pray for the kingdom to come, He is teaching you to pray for the salvation of sinners through preaching and witnessing. You are to pray that people would surrender their lives to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance. It is to plead with Him for the spread of the gospel across the world. It is to call on the Lord of the harvest to raise up laborers so that people will hear and believe the gospel.

You should pray for the conversion of the people around you. It is important to intercede for the lost in your area. Yet, Jesus' teaching to pray for the kingdom to come should cause you to pray for the spread of the gospel around the world. You should be pleading with Him for the conversion of the nations. This is a call to pray for missionaries and their labors.

The indifference of believers in praying for missionaries, the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of the nations amazes me. When I write or preach on this subject, there is little interest in these topics. It is easy to develop self-centeredness in prayer—to pray only for those around me and that which concerns me. Jesus' command to pray for the coming of the kingdom is a call to forsake self-centered praying and to plead for the nations of the world. The Model Prayer should stir you to pray that people everywhere would come to Jesus in faith and repentance. It should motivate you to get involved and get in on God's global purpose.

This phrase should move you to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

- ◆ *Do I pray for the salvation of lost people? Do I plead to God that others would commit their life to the Lord Jesus Christ?*
- ◆ *Am I praying for the spread of the gospel around the world? Am I pleading for missionaries? Am I laboring to get involved in God's global purposes?*
- ◆ *Am I looking forward to and praying for the final triumph of the kingdom of God? Am I crying out on a regular basis, "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus"?*

The next phase in the Model Prayer is "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus is teaching that you are to plead for obedience to the will of God. This should affect your praying in two ways.

First, you are to pray for your personal obedience to God's will. God's will for your life is good, acceptable, and perfect (**Romans 12:1-2**). It is to be the great desire of your life, your daily pursuit. You are to plead that His purpose for your life will be done. You should plead that He will pour out His grace and power on you so that you can do His will. You are to call on Him to remove any obstacles to that obedience. You are to ask that your obedience to His will should mirror that in heaven.

Yet, you are also to pray for the obedience of others. You are to plead that others will obey God's will as it is in heaven. It is actually praying for God's will to be done in this world. This may apply to individuals or situations. The purpose of prayer is not getting our will done but getting God's will done on earth. It is through the prayers of His people that God accomplishes His will on this earth. Through your praying, God works out His purposes. This should make you diligent to pray for other individuals and situations in your city, state, nation, and world.

When Jesus says to pray "Your will be done," He is teaching that you are to pray for God's will in homes, schools, governments, and institutions. It is pleading for everything to bring glory to God and to carry out His will. God's will is not confined to "spiritual" matters. It has to do with all of life. Therefore, your praying has to cover institutions and situations. You can make a difference in the schools, the government, the churches, the economy, and the military.

This phrase of the Model prayer should cause you to ask the following questions about your prayer life:

- ◆ *When I ask for God's will to be done in my life, is this truly the desire of my heart or is it an empty ritual in my prayer life? (The reason that you need to ask yourself this question is to see how bold you are in your praying. There has to be a balance between boldness and submission to the will of God. Sometimes when we pray,*