

## INTRODUCTION

Matthew 6:9-13 is the well-known “The Lord’s Prayer.” It is part of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5 to 7. A parallel passage and shorter version of the prayer is found in Luke 11. In that passage one of Jesus’ disciples asked Him to teach them to pray just as John the Baptist taught his disciples. At that time it was common for a Jewish rabbi to utter a prayer for his students to imitate after. Therefore, Jesus’ disciples were expecting the same thing from their Master. In Matthew 6 Jesus mentioned three acts of piety the Jews of His days saw as important – giving to the poor, prayer and fasting. Jesus structured His arguments the same way as He explained all three activities: “When you do such and such thing, don’t do it in the open to let everyone see it, but do it in secret so that your Heavenly Father will reward you.” In the preceding context to the Lord’s Prayer Jesus pointed out the wrong motive some people had when they prayed, that they showed off how spiritual they were by praying in the synagogue or at street corner. While there is nothing wrong to pray in public what Jesus reprovved was that those people prayed in a way to make sure that other people saw it. Then Jesus told the disciples that some people prayed with a wrong motion by babbling with repeated words. Jesus said that was unnecessary because our Father knows our needs. If those are the wrong ways, then what is the right way to pray? Through the Lord’s Prayer Jesus tells us how to pray in a way that God pleases.

## EXPLANATION

### 1. 為上帝的管治而頌讚 Praise God for His Control

In this prayer, first of all, Jesus taught us to praise God the Father for His control over everything. In **verse 9** He addressed God as “Our Father in heaven.” Jesus used the pronoun “our” to include Himself. The Father is His Father and also the Father of all the believers. To the Jews, father is an authoritative figure at home. God is the creator, provider, sustainer, deliverer and judge. God is so holy and righteous that the Jewish people feel distant from Him. While this is Biblically correct, Jesus told us that our Heavenly Father also has a close relationship with His children. It is so close that Paul introduced a nickname for Him in **Romans 8:15** - For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The term “Abba” can be understood as “daddy.” I once shared with my wife that people can call me different names. Some may use my legal name, others may simply call me Vincent, and those who recognize my role in the church would use Pastor Choi. However, only our two sons at home can address me as their daddy. The title carries superiority, leadership, as well as love and care. I wonder whether or not you are consciously aware to whom you deliver your prayer when you pray. You may use “God” or “Lord” so casually and habitually that you do not need to think about it. Next time when you pray, you may consider begin with “Father.” Imagine that you are like a little child being held in the arms of a loving father. In doing so, your prayer would not be like a shopping list or a report to a supervisor anymore. Rather, it would become a sweet conversation between a Father and His beloved child.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus told His disciples to begin their prayer by acknowledging God as their Heavenly Father. He is powerful and full of love. At the closing of the prayer Jesus asked the disciples to praise the Father for His control over the creation. The second half of **verse 13** reads: ...for Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen. In the Chinese Union Version this adoration is part of the prayer. However, in NIV and many English Bible translations this section is put in a footnote. It is because some Bible scholars argued that this clause was a later addition to the Bible manuscript. Regardless, when people recite the Lord's Prayer or write songs about it more than likely it is included as part of the prayer. Offering praise to God is a proper ending to a prayer like the doxology churches sing at the conclusion of a worship service. The three-fold adoration of God's kingdom, power and glory is a recognition that God controls over the universe, our world affairs and our lives. Though we will still face difficulties in life we have full trust that God is still in control. Paul ends his second letter to Timothy in **4:18** by affirming both facts: The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Paul was about to be martyred, but that did not shaken his faith. While we are living in this earthly kingdom we understand that it is part of God's Kingdom. While the hardship in life may overpower us and our spiritual enemy, Satan, keeps attacking us we understand that our Heavenly Father has mighty power controlling over everything.

## 2. 為我們的關注而祈求 Pray to God for Our Concerns

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus told us to give praise to God for His control. After that, Jesus encouraged us to pray for our concerns. Jesus told us that there are three areas of concern we should pray for.

### A. 永恆的需要 Eternal Needs

First, we should pray for the eternal needs. Let look at **the second half of verse 9 and verse 10**: ...hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We are to pray for God's name, Kingdom and will. God is full of power and glory. He does not need us to pray that more power and glory be added to Him. Therefore, the focus of such prayer is that we would constantly be reminded of His power and glory. By praying "hallowed be your name" we are asking that people would treat God's name with reverence. In the Bible a person's name reflects his character. The same is true for God. When we mention God's name it should remind us of His power and glory. For example, **Psalms 29:2** says: Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness. God cares about His reputation. Needless to say, nowadays people misuse the name of God in their daily speech. When people make fun with our earthly father's name we would feel irritated. Shouldn't we feel more grief when people trivialize our Heavenly Father's name? Brothers and sisters before we expect others to honor God's name we should show Him our respect first.

Next Jesus told us to pray that God's Kingdom will come. God's Kingdom was inaugurated when Jesus came into our world. When people challenged Jesus about the source of His power to drive out demons our Lord said in **Luke 11:20** - But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. God's Kingdom will fully be realized when Jesus comes back in the future. He will demolish Satan and his power forever. The question is do we

pray that God's Kingdom may come sooner than later? When things are going well in our lives we hope that Jesus will delay His plan. When we get a promotion at work, move into a new house or just get married we want more time to enjoy a good life. However, we hear a terrorist bombing, have a severe illness or have conflict with our spouse we want Jesus to come back tomorrow and usher us into heaven. No matter what our circumstance is we should still pray that God's Kingdom will come quickly. If that is our hope then such prayer would affect our value system. The way we live, invest our money and spend our time should reflect the same value.

Jesus told us to pray that God's name be hallowed and God's Kingdom to come. Thirdly, He told us to pray that God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's will is unhindered in heaven. **Psalm 103:19-20** read: 19 The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. 20 Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Jesus was teaching us that we should pray that God's will can proceed on earth the same way. When Jesus came into the world He established a perfect example of submission to the Father. He said in **John 6:38** that: For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. Therefore, when we pray that God's will be done it means that God's will be done in our life first. We need to examine our hearts whether or not we are willing to live an obedient life to God's will. Do we love God's Word so much so that we not only read it but also live by it?

#### B. 身體的需要 Physical Needs

After praying for the eternal needs Jesus encouraged us to pray for our physical needs. He said in **verse 11**: Give us today our daily bread. We can extend this "bread" to other physical needs that we have health, clothing, accommodation, etc. Notice Jesus emphasized that we should ask the Father for a daily provision of our physical needs. Jesus explained in **verse 34** of the same chapter that: Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. This discipline of looking to God for daily needs reminds the Jewish audience about God's provision of manna when their forefathers were in the wilderness. **Exodus 16:4** recorded: Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions." God clearly said that He was testing the faith of the Israelites. For six days manna fell like shower from the sky. God told them to pick what they needed for that day. Some people were greedy and the manna turned bad the next day. God told them to save a portion on Friday because there would not be any manna on the Sabbath. God preserved their stock and the food was still edible the next day. This is the kind of reliance on God that Jesus wanted us to learn. Nowadays we take pride in the "permanent" job we have. You will realize how permanent your employment really is when there is a layoff. However, there is no necessary conflict between trusting God for our daily physical needs and planning for our future. The book of Proverbs advised us to save up our resource for tomorrow. The most important thing is not to put our hope on what we have, but to fully trust God whether we have plenty or little, knowing that He is the source of all grace.

#### C. 靈裡的需要 Spiritual Needs

After presenting the eternal needs and our physical needs, Jesus also reminded us to pray for our spiritual needs. He said in **verse 12** that: Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. The word “debts” means “that which is owed,” and so it can also refer to sin. If we are honest about ourselves we understand that we often sin against others and God. Therefore, we need to keep coming back to God to ask for His forgiving grace. In Matthew 18 when Jesus taught about forgiveness He told Peter a parable of an unmerciful servant. A servant owed his master an astronomical amount of debt. The master treated the servant with mercy and waived his debt once and for all. However, this servant was unwilling to extend the grace he just received to a fellow servant who owed him an amount of money that could be paid back if more time was given. The moral of the parable is the same as the spiritual principle Jesus gave in **6:14-15** – 14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Christians can and should forgive others of their offenses because God has forgiven us first. On the contrary, if we hold back our forgiveness we fail to realize how great we sin against God and how immense His grace is.

Besides forgiveness Jesus also mentioned the spiritual need for protection against temptation. Jesus said in **verse 13**: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. In the Bible, whether it is the Old or New Testament, temptation and trial are the same word. Satan tempts us to make us fall. But God uses trial to build up our faith. Peter told us God’s purpose in our trials in his first letter **1:7** that: These have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. God allows us to encounter temptation, like what Jesus faced in the wilderness when Satan tempted Him, in order to test our faith. Therefore, this prayer can be understood as a request that God would not expose us to temptation. If we are honest about our own weakness we know that our confidence should never be in ourselves. So as much as God permits we should not want to get into a tempting situation. However, if God sees it beneficial for us to grow in our faith by overcoming temptation, then we should pray that God would “deliver us from the evil one,” so that we will not stumble in sin. In Genesis Joseph was enticed by the wife of his master but he did not commit sin. In contrast, King David was also lured by sexual temptation but he failed miserably. He allowed lust to overcome him and thus led to far-reaching consequences because of his sins. Both God and Satan know our weaknesses. Satan attacks our specific sore spots. At the same time, God is willing to protect us when we call on Him.

## CONCLUSION

The Lord’s Prayer tells us how to pray in a way that God pleases. Jesus told us to put God’s priorities over our own agenda. Prayer is not about getting what we want, but it is a means for us to discern God’s heart. It is not about changing Him to meet our selfish appetite, but changing us to imitate after God’s characters. Through prayer we humbly acknowledge that we have a Heavenly Father who is full of power and glory. He loves us and knows our deepest needs. He is also able to provide for all of our needs. He desires for us to cherish His presence and pursue an obedient life. He enjoys His children to give Him praise and honor He alone deserves. In closing let us recite the Lord’s Prayer together.