

THE FIRST 15

Friday, January 17, 2025

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Today is Friday, January 17, and we begin the year of 2025 with a study on the Practice of Prayer. This week we explore what it means to talk to God and how Jesus taught us to pray with the words of The Lord's Prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

At the dawn of a new day and the beginning of a new year, I seek God's presence - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I find a quiet space amid a busy day. I pause and become still, calm my thoughts, silence my mind, and breathe deeply and slowly. Lord Jesus, as the disciples once asked you to teach them to pray, I also ask you to teach me to pray. Instruct me in Your school of prayer and strengthen this practice in my life. Teach me to talk, speak, listen and respond. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Matthew 6:9-13 (ASV)

REFLECTION

Jesus' teaching on prayer is powerful and perfectly clear. The theme of the Lord's Prayer builds on itself as the words of each phrase are spoken. We begin by focusing on God, praying for His kingdom to come on earth and for His will to be done. Then we ask for bread, the sustenance of life, knowing that we are dependent on God for life itself. Then we come to the prayer for pardon.

There are different translations used for what we are asking pardon for - debts, trespasses, sins and wrongs. Perhaps you are more familiar with one of these words than the other. They are all helpful to understand our transgressions. We are indebted to God for our very existence and we are responsible to love our neighbor. When we fail to do so we are in *debt* for our shortcomings. When we *trespass* we go where we don't belong. We cross over a boundary, violate God's will and act against another person. When we *sin* we have done something morally deficient and broken God's law. When we fail to do what is right, we have done what is *wrong*.

Whatever word you prefer to use, the truth is that none of us can pay our debt, undo our trespasses, cancel our sin, or right our wrongs. That is God's work. Jesus suffered on the cross and shed His blood to cover our sins. We can be forgiven because of the work of Christ on the cross. God is the one who forgives us and Jesus teaches us to pray for God's forgiveness. When we truly receive God's forgiveness, we find we have a forgiving spirit. That is why Jesus ties these two concepts together, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Each day we have an opportunity in prayer to reflect on our debts, trespasses, sins and wrongdoing. We can confess them to God and ask for forgiveness. Spend some time today and ask yourself some questions. Have I confessed my sins to God? Have I accepted God's forgiveness? Have I realized what Christ accomplished for me on the cross? Are there people who I have trespassed against? Should I go to them and ask for their forgiveness? Are there people who have trespassed against me who I have yet to forgive?

Prayer Prompts:

- Ask God for His forgiveness and pray He fills you with a forgiving spirit.
- Pray God leads you to fully accept forgiveness through Christ and be set free from guilt, shame or regret.
- Pray for the ability to forgive someone who trespassed against you and be set free from anger, resentment or unforgiveness.

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13 KJ21)

Resources utilized: The Workbook of Living Prayer, Maxie Dunnam, Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN, 1994, p. 63-88.