

Lesson 12

Prayer

Icebreaker:

As a child did you say any prayers and if so can you remember them?

Introduction:

In the previous lesson one of the issues we covered was prayer. Jesus told His disciples how to pray in contrast to the hypocrites and Gentiles. In the midst of the discourse on prayer He gives his disciples what has become known as the “Our Father” or the “Lord’s Prayer”. It conveyed concepts that were contrary to the way Gentiles prayed and Jesus specifically focused on one particular aspect of it.

Reading The Scripture:

The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 6:9-15

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible,
authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: “Follow Me: A Message from God”, a Journey with Jesus)

Pray, then, in this way: '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 also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.' For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Group Discussion:

Do you think by saying the Lord’s Prayer over and over that we are guilty of using meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do? Why or why not?

The Command:

Pray then in this way.

The Lesson:

Jesus is teaching about prayer. He wants His disciples to understand the spiritual principles behind the words they are saying. Prayer isn’t meant to be rote or meaningless repetition. In addition to being an effectual prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, also provides a good outline for approaching God. It contains an address, praise and petitions.

“*Our Father who art in heaven*” is the address. Using the words “Our Father” indicates that family is involved. It recognizes that each disciple has the relationship of a child and that he has brothers and sisters. Love, for his brothers and sisters is shown in the fact that he is incorporating them into his prayer. The address is directed to the Father in heaven and therefore cannot be confused with the disciple’s human fathers since some of them are still living on earth. It recognizes that God is their creator (Father) and that honor and obedience is due Him.

“*Hallowed be thy name*” is the praise. The word hallowed means purified or holy. By saying this, the disciples are declaring that the name of God is pure, free from any uncleanness. Being His

children, they should recognize they bear His name. With this comes the responsibility to live up to that name.

The first petition is *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* The disciples recognize that God’s will is not being done on earth and are asking Him to bless the earth by extending His complete rule over it. (A more in depth examination of the Kingdom of God will be taught in lesson # 18)

Jesus continues teaching on prayer. He instructs the disciples to petition God for three more things: food for the body, forgiveness for the soul and guidance for the spirit. *“Give us this day our daily bread”* is the first of these petitions. By using the words “this day” Jesus is indicating that the Lord’s Prayer should be prayed daily as long as the disciple has life. This petition recognizes that God is the provider for the body.

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” is the next petition. The words debts and debtor used here can be translated other ways. Other words that could be used for debt might include: side slip, lapse, miss the mark, transgress, trespass, deviate, fall, fault, offence, or sin. The idea behind the word debt is something that caused harm. A debtor is the one who causes the harm; hence he becomes indebted to the one he harms.

This petition is the pivotal point in Jesus’ instructions on prayer. After drawing the prayer itself to a close He refocuses the disciples attention to this point. From the wording that is used in the prayer, the disciple is telling God that he has already forgiven everyone’s debts against him. So, if he hasn’t forgiven them he is lying to God. The seriousness of lying to God is demonstrated in the deaths of two disciples, Ananias and Sapphira in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 5, and verses 1-11.

Some may read the translation as *“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”*. In doing so the disciple is still trapped by his own words. In one case it could be read, God forgive us when we forgive our debtors. God will, when the disciple does! In the second case it could be understood as, God forgive us like we forgive others. In this variation God will forgive in like manner as the disciple. Therefore, if the disciple does not forgive, then in like manner neither will God.

It doesn’t matter how an individual reads the Scripture; the point is the same. If the disciple doesn’t forgive others, than God won’t forgive him. How can God do anything else, since the whole gospel of Jesus Christ is based on forgiveness and reconciliation? God is always willing to forgive, but are we?

Another issue arises from this particular petition and that comes from its placement within the prayer. It falls before the third petition, which reads, *“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”* God cannot deliver the disciple from evil because he won’t forgive and God will not forgive him until he does. The lack of forgiveness in the Church is the primary reason that it is suffering from evil in its midst. The last petition also recognizes that God is capable of keeping the disciples from evil and delivering them from it once they become involved.

Some translations of the Bible contain two additional statements. *“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen”* In the first statement the disciples acknowledge that the one to whom they are praying is God, totally sovereign, living forever and capable of fulfilling their petitions.

God, who is in charge of His kingdom, provides daily food, His power forgives sins and His glory does not lead men into temptation but delivers them from evil. By substituting the word love for God in the previous sentence it would read, Love provides daily food, forgives sins, and doesn't lead men into temptation but delivers them from evil. Does this give you some idea about a disciple's purpose in the Kingdom of God?

The prayer ends with the statement, "Amen." It means that the thing is sure or the truth.

Group Discussion:

Name one person you have not forgiven and tell the group why.

The Point Of The Lesson:

Practice the Lord's Prayer daily.

Application:

Write the names of everyone you have not forgiven on a piece of paper. Forgive each one and then burn the piece of paper. Distribute the ashes to the wind so they are carried as far as the east is from the west. Then pray the Lord's Prayer with the understanding of your words you are saying.