

CHRIST TEACHES HOW TO PRAY

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Instructions: The format of these ministudies is similar to that of the Bible On-Line Study Course. Look up and *read in your Bible* the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions further explain the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

Jesus Christ knew how to keep in contact with His Father in heaven. Consequently, His life was filled with love, faith and power from God. His frequent and fervent prayers made possible His victory over sin and death.

Christ's disciples were aware that their Teacher knew how to draw close to the eternal God and call upon His help in every pressing situation. So they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luk 11:1). His instructions are preserved for us today in Luke 11 and Matthew 6.

Let's learn how to structure our prayers, following our Savior's inspired guide to effective prayer.

1. Did Jesus begin by telling His disciples to repeat His example prayer over and over again, or were they to pray in a similar way – "After this manner"? Matt 6:9. Didn't He tell them not to repeat the same prayer every time? Verse 7.

Notice that Jesus Himself did not call this the "Lord's Prayer" as men have done, or in any way encourage His disciples to memorize this particular prayer and repeat it over and over. He had just forbidden them to do that!

Jesus was simply outlining the correct approach to God in prayer and the basic things for which we should pray. Pray thus, not pray this, was Jesus' plain instruction.

2. How did Jesus begin His example of a complete prayer? Matt 6:9.

Jesus came to reveal the Father to mankind (John 1:18). And He always addressed the Father in His prayers. This Father-child relationship is open to all of us. Such a private and intimate relationship should be as real as the physical relationships we are to have with our own fathers or children of the flesh.

3. Where does Jesus say the Father resides? Matt 6:9.

Christ said that our Father is in heaven. When you address the Father in your private prayers, realize that you have a personal audience with the Supreme Ruler of the universe! Most people would treasure a private audience with one of this world's rulers. Think how infinitely greater is our privilege of coming daily to the very throne room of the universe to talk with the Ruler over all!

4. Are we to "hallow" the Father's name when we pray to Him? Matt 6:9, last four words.

As we begin our prayers, we should not only address and think of God as our Father, but also praise and venerate His name, His office, His character and His beneficence.

God's name and all that it stands for is to be held in absolute reverence. Our deep respect and awe for our heavenly Father should be total. Addressing God in this attitude of praise, worship and adoration (see Ps 18:1-2, 104:33) focuses our attention on the greatness of the Being to whom we are praying.

5. How did Jesus continue His sample prayer? Matt 6:10, first sentence.

This section of Jesus' prayer outline is perhaps the most overlooked and misunderstood of all. Praying "Thy Kingdom come" is asking that God's literal government be set up on this earth through the return of Jesus Christ as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev 19:16)! It is yearning and aching for the time when real peace will be ushered in and all mankind will know the truth of God (Isa 11:9). Then there will be no more starvation and want. We will be in a prophesied time of "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:19-21) under the government of God, when the Ten Commandments will be the standard for daily life everywhere.

6. But before God's Kingdom can come, did Jesus say that the advance news of its coming must be proclaimed as a "witness unto all nations"? Matt 24:14.

Those who have their hearts in this end-time Work of God are praying daily that the broadcasting and publishing of this really good news to the world by God's Church today will expand in ever-increasing power and authority.

7. What did Jesus say in the second part of Matthew 6:10?

In this section of your prayers you should ask God to help you understand and surrender to His will. Ask God to help you study and understand the foundation of all knowledge, the Holy Bible, in which He reveals His will for mankind.

Also ask for God's help, inspiration and guidance in expressing His love, joy, warmth and affection to all your fellowmen. Ask Him to help you be long-suffering and gentle. Ask for meekness and humility and for the power of self-control over your temper, weaknesses and lusts.

Ask for the living faith of Jesus Christ to trust God totally – to know that His way and His law are right – and that He stands behind and backs up His will, His laws and His promises to those who serve Him.

8. What is the next petition of Jesus' prayer outline? Matt 6:11. Can we ask this in confidence if we are seeking first God's Kingdom and His righteousness? Verse 33, I John 3:22.

Although certainly not put first, this request is necessary. We can sincerely ask God to supply our daily needs as long as we are seeking first the spiritual things of God, such as keeping His commandments.

In your personal requests you can detail your needs and ask God to guide you to do your part. God knows of these needs even before we ask Him (Matt 6:8). However, He has not promised to automatically supply what we do not ask for.

9. Is our "daily bread" dual? Matt 4:4. Who did Jesus say is the spiritual "bread of life"? John 6:35.

Come to God through daily prayer and imbibe of Christ through daily Bible study and He will supply your daily spiritual needs as well. You have as much need of daily spiritual food as physical food – and God promises you both, if you will ask Him and strive to learn of His ways.

10. Are we also to ask forgiveness of our sins? Matt 6:12 ("debts" should be translated sins).

All of us sin daily in one way or another. We need to sincerely recognize and repent of our daily sins, and then ask God to forgive us. Remember to ask that "our," not my, sins be forgiven. Learn to be concerned for other spirit-begotten Christians and have godly love and compassion for them as well.

11. Should we also be forgiving toward others? Verses 12, 14-15.

Remember that you may ask God's forgiveness only if you first forgive others. If you cannot first rid yourself of feelings of bitterness, resentment or hatred towards others, then ask God to clean you up and replace the spirit of hate with His spirit of love so that your prayers won't be hindered.

12. What is the last request of Jesus' example prayer? Matt 6:13, first part. But doesn't the Bible elsewhere state that God does not tempt anyone? Jas 1:13. Is it rather the devil and his demons who are stalking us, watching for a chance to tempt and even destroy us when we are off our guard? I Pet 5:8.

Jesus' statement in Matthew 6:13 is more correctly rendered from the original Greek: "Bring us not into sore trial, but deliver us from the evil one." God tempts no man, but He does permit us to fall into trials and troubles of our own or Satan the devil's devising, if we are not keeping close to God and seeking His guidance and help every day.

We should pray earnestly that God would not permit us to be brought into any "sore" or severe trial or temptation, and that He would give us the spiritual help to master any wrong desires and to go His will daily.

13. Before closing our prayers, in whose name should we acknowledge that we are praying?
John 16:23.

As God's children we can rightfully ask the Father for things "in Jesus' name" when we know it is His will – that His authority stands behind our requests.

14. How did Jesus say we ought to close our prayers to the Father? Matt 6:13, last part.

As Jesus' inspired outline of prayer begins with praise and adoration of God, so does it close. This reminds us, again, to whom we are praying and of the character and office of the true God who rules over the nations of men.

Finally, as Jesus shows by this example prayer, we are to affirm that what we have prayed is so, and that we really mean it by concluding with "Amen." Amen simply means "be it so."