

# Disciple's Prayer Life



"...one of His disciples said to Him,  
'Lord, teach us to pray'..."  
Luke 11:1

ENTERING INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES

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**TITLE: DISCIPLE'S PRAYER LIFE**

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## PREFACE

Welcome to the discipleship / leadership series. These little booklets were designed to give basic information concerning various topics about our Christian faith in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of this series is to stimulate thought and to foster a clearer understanding of discipleship and servant leadership. These booklets can be used as a discussion tool for personal study, family devotion, youth meetings or in cell groups. Our hope is that this information will stir the readers and encourage them to go deeper into personal research and study.

Our desire is that these booklets will be a blessing to the reader and a tool that can be shared with others as a gift of encouragement.

Please feel free to mail or e-mail us for more copies or to just write to us with any feedback concerning the content of these studies. We hope you enjoy this offering of knowledge and experience. We pray that Christ will draw you into an ever deeper personal relationship with Himself as you study.

Your servants in Christ,

Rev. Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

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**And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples".**

**Luke 11:1**

## INTRODUCTION

If we were to travel back in time we'd see that the early disciples understood the importance of prayer. They recognized prayer as the tool for communicating with God and listen to Him when seeking wisdom and faith. The disciples grasped the power of prayer – that *prayer changes things* for themselves, the people around them and the events that they faced. The Hebraic Jewish background was full of different ways to pray and many kinds of prayer. Today there is still a special place in Jerusalem called the “Wailing Wall” where the devoted go to pray.

In Jesus' time, people would go to the temple or to the local synagogue to pray at least three times a day. Christ would often pray to the Father. In doing so He showed the disciples the importance of praying to God and seeking His will. Jesus also expected His followers to be a people of prayer. The location we gather together to hear God's word and worship should be known as a “House of Prayer” (Matthew 21: 13).

Jesus' teaching on prayer came out of specific questions the disciples asked. Due to the numerous conversations Jesus gave on prayer, they became confused and did not understand how to pray (Luke 11: 1). In answering them, Jesus taught what had become

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known as the Lord's Prayer, recognized by millions around the world.

In this booklet we hope to give you insight concerning what Jesus was trying to teach the disciples about prayer. He taught them examples of the kinds of things to pray for.

As we begin, let us define two words that are important to this lesson. We need to understand these if we hope to grow in our prayer life with Christ.

**Prayer:** a supplication or expression addressed to God; an earnest request or wish. *Synonyms:* **communication**, devotion, invocation, litany, supplication, appeal, petition, plea, request.

**Communication:** the act or action of imparting or transmitting and receiving; access between persons or place; interchange of thoughts or opinions. *Synonyms:* transmission, conveyance, disclosure, broadcast, connection, dialogue, talk, conversation.

From the two definitions above, we learn that prayer is simply communicating with God as we would talk with a friend. True, formal types of prayer do work, but the best prayers flow out from a heart of love and relationship with Christ Jesus.

The friendships we have should be devoted and connected to God as a branch is connected to a tree (John 15:4) – the branches will produce fruit and when planted that fruit will grow up and resemble the tree that it came from. Relationships with each other will result in strength, growth and maturity.

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Below we see the context of Jesus' instructions on prayer.

*And when you **pray**, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to **pray** standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you **pray**, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, **pray** to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you **pray**, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*

*In this manner, therefore, **pray**:*

***Our Father in heaven,***

***Hallowed be Your name.***

***Your kingdom come.***

***Your 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 do not lead us into temptation,***

***But deliver us from the evil one.***

***For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.***

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*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

**Matthew 6: 5-15 (NKJV)**

After the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes, Jesus instructed the people on relationships and other subjects concerning prayer. Let us look at four different circumstances that Christ gave.

First, He shares with them the idea of going the second mile (Matthew 5:41). In Jesus' time the Jews were under Roman occupation and a soldier could make a Jew carry their pack for one mile. This was very degrading for the Jew as it meant they had to carry something that belonged to a Gentile (who, by the Law, was considered unclean). Jesus wanted them to understand that in changing their attitude and carrying the burden a second mile (not by force but out of love), they would gain a friend.

Second, He instructed the disciples to love their enemies. Israel was surrounded by people who desired to take their land and resources and even kill them. Christ taught the Israelites to love the people who wronged them. The Bible indicates that God is judge and in due time He will make all things straight (Matthew 5:43).

Third, Jesus made it clear that the poor would always be among us. As the Church became established, the disciples set up the position of deacons to oversee the ministry of the poor and needy (Acts 6:1-6). At times it can be difficult to know how to

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assist them and recognize a real need. Perhaps the person is trying to abuse the kindness. Regardless, our role is to help the poor and needy and not judge the outcome.

Finally, there are the religious hypocrites. These people act and talk with spiritual authority, but their lives do not reflect their speech. They put weights and burdens on others that they themselves did not keep or follow. Jesus warned that hypocrites will always be present. They make long sounding prayers, but these prayers are not heard by God. We are told not to follow their example (Matthew 6:5-8) and to watch out for their deceptive ways.

All four of these teachings go against the way man normally thinks. Christ showed that to be able to show love in these situations comes only through prayer. After praying they would be able to go the second mile, love their enemies, love the poor and needy and even love the religious hypocrites.

Jesus also tells the disciples that prayer is a special gift between God and themselves. Things they prayed in secret God would bless openly. They could come before the Lord in prayer at any place. He counsels them not to be using vain repetitions with their prayers, praying the same way with the same words. When one does this, prayer loses its meaning and no longer comes from the love or depth of the giver's heart. It is not the volume of speech that God hears, but words that are true and genuinely coming from the heart.

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Christ taught that the disciples should find a place such as a “prayer closet” away from the things of the world. Jesus would often withdraw to a solitary location. He went up to the Mount of Olives, a place that overlooked the city of Jerusalem. It was there that He poured out His heart to God – alone or with the disciples that were close to Him.

As mentioned, the Lord’s Prayer came from the questions, “Lord, how then shall we pray? How do we know if our words are reaching the Father in Heaven? What should we say?” This prayer is still used by the Church around the world to this very day.

The Lord’s Prayer has at least seven key parts which are important for us to know and use in our prayer life each day. They are:

## *Our Father:*

Our prayer should always start out by focusing on the Father. By saying ‘Our Father’ our prayer indicates a personal relationship with Him. We are to respect and honour His name. Jesus continually had the Father in mind. We see through the Gospels many teachings concerning the Father. When asked how we could know the Father, Jesus responded by saying that if we get to know Him (Jesus), we would know the Father. In John 14 we are told of the abiding relationship that we are to have with the Father. We learn that it was the Father who sent the Son and that the Father would also send the Holy Spirit to teach and empower us.

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We need to spend more time meditating on God's kingdom and not the kingdom of this world. In the book of Matthew we read about the "Kingly Messiah" as well as the "Kingdom of God" that is coming to earth through Christ. We need to remember that we belong to a new kingdom (the Kingdom of Christ) and that we are Christ's ambassadors passing through here on earth, proclaiming a message of reconciliation.

## *Our Father's Will:*

We are to pray that His will be done. God has a plan for our lives and has already mapped what we are to fulfill here on earth. It is important that we get in step with that plan. The biggest battleground that we face is our will. Is it my will or His? Do I have faith that His will is the right way for my life?

Salvation means dying to our will and living for Him. The reason we struggle so greatly is because we do not understand what it means to have Christ as Lord and Savior. Because of this, our will fights us on all fronts. Once we begin to understand we see that our will needs to be put to death. We are now a new creation with the heart of God in us and are His servants and stewards. Paul tells us that we are to die daily. If we do not, our will tries to take over, resulting in world centeredness instead of God centeredness (1 Corinthians 15:31).