**DISCIPLESHIP LESSON #4**

**Prayer**

Have you ever wondered why we are to pray? If God knows everything and has everything going according to His perfect plan, then why should we pray? We cannot change His mind, can we? An English preacher of the 1600's said this: *"So that in prayer, faith and fervency are so far from being useless, that they as much prevail for the thing desired by qualifying ourselves for it, as if indeed they moved the mind of God to a real change: even as he that is in a boat, and by his hook layeth hold of the bank, doth as truly by his labor get nearer the bank, as if he drew the bank to him."* (Baxter, 482). He intends for us to see that by our prayer we seem to bring God to us when we really are bringing ourselves to God. That is what prayer does. It does not change God but rather changes us to be used by God. In this lesson, we want to look at some general directions for prayer. These directions are there to give us a view of the bigger picture of what it means to talk to God. Let us begin.

1. What is prayer? - Prayer is when we believe so much in God that we can seriously express or act out our desires which are in agreement with God, through Jesus our Mediator (one who brings two opposing people together by working from the middle), by the help of the Holy Spirit, so that we may receive from God what we ask. The Bible says this about prayer: (Heb 11:6: And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.) What two things do you see in this verse that tell you what you must believe to pray? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

This is similar to asking in the will of God. If we do not ask for God's will to be done, how can we expect Him to answer any prayer? Adding the phrase "Thy will be done," will not insure God's answer. Rather, it is praying in the will of God that makes the difference.

2. Know the God to whom you pray - You must know Him as your Creator, Redeemer, Regenerator, Owner, Ruler, and Father. Read the Bible to find out His goodness, His promises, and His terms that will either give His mercies or deny them. There is no use in praying to a God you do not know. You might ask for the wrong things or ask in a wrong manner. (Rom. 10:13-14: for "WHO-EVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." 14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?) Prayer is based upon a belief in God.

3. Know yourself before you pray - This is necessary because we are capable of doing things against God if we do not keep a close watch upon ourselves. Being humble before God is necessary for we read in Scripture: (James 4:6: But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.") What do you think "opposed to the proud" means? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Another verse that says what God thinks about our pride is (Prov. 16:5: Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.) Can you think of how God would punish the proud? Write your answer here.

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We are to know ourselves well. Know what sin is, and what God's wrath is. Remember hell and judgment and how you may have committed sin against God by doing what was wrong or not doing what was right. Know what mercy and grace are and how you stand in need of both. When you remember these things then you can pray. You will pray with a proper view of yourself. When men pray without knowing themselves, they cannot see their hidden sins and how those sins offend God. They cannot see within themselves to see what they lack. They cannot see forward, to see danger that is before them. No wonder many prayers are dull and without life. Men who pray this way are unfit to pray as a sleeping man is to work.

4. Do not be a hypocrite when you pray - Do not let your lips say something against your heart. Let the heart be the spring of all you say. (Prov. 12:22: Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal faithfully are His delight.) God hates a liar because He cannot lie. He expects His children to act like Him and always tell the truth. God is in Heaven and we are on the earth. Therefore let our words be few and truthful. Do not pray against sin if secretly you love it. It is useless to ask God for something when you are not willing to work for it. Why pray for a good harvest when you will not get out of bed? What good would it do to pray for protection from fire if you play with fire? God has given us sense to know what to stay away from and for those things we are unsure about, we have His Word to tell us whether or not they are good or bad. (Ps. 66:18: If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me☺ (KJV). If we hide evil in our hearts, our prayers do no good whatsoever.

5. Always pray in agreement with God's will - It is true that we can pray in a wrong manner or for a selfish desire. God is not required to answer "yes" to prayers that are not according to His will. His mercy often keeps Him from granting desires that are against His will. Paul writes these words in (Rom. 10:1-2: Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.) What was the problem with the Jews in this verse? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

It is possible to have great zeal or desire for the things of God but to miss knowing His will because of praying in a wrong manner or against His will. Often you may hear a prayer ending "...in Jesus' name." This is not necessarily praying according to God's will. It is good to direct prayer in Jesus' name but praying according to God's will is knowing what He wants and praying accordingly. The best model for prayer is what is called "The Lord's Prayer," or "The Model Prayer." It is found in Matthew 6:9-13. We want to examine this prayer and see how we can better pray. This is not to say if we follow this example we will have more prayers answered but Jesus taught His disciples to pray using this prayer and we can benefit from it. Turn to this passage in your Bible and get ready to study. There are three parts to this prayer and we will examine each one in detail. Let us begin with the first.

**I. THE ADDRESS OF THE PRAYER - "OUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN..."**

 To whom is the prayer made? Our Heavenly Father. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

How is God related to us or us to Him? He is our Father by creation and by regeneration. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Is He Father to all mankind? By creation\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We know God is Creator. Does this mean He is Father to us all? The answer to this question lies in what you understand about God. He is not Redeemer of all mankind or the Regenerator of all mankind. Therefore, only those who are Christians may call Him Father. If He is your Redeemer (one who buys off the slave auction) and Regenerator (one who makes another alive), what does that imply? It implies at least three things. God is your Owner, your Ruler, and your Benefactor (one who takes care of another). We must recognize Him as the God of the universe. Where is our Father? \_In Heaven. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

This implies several things. The present tense verb "is" tells us God exists. He has a vantage point of being able to see everything at once. Therefore, we can pray, believing He will see, understand, and answer. We are to look to Heaven because it is where God is and one day we will be. Who are the people praying? Followers of Jesus Christ. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If God is Father to all believers, what does this say about us? We are dependent upon Him for our every need, we are sinners in need of forgiveness, and we are His people and are related to Him. If God is your Father, how should you act toward Him? As an obedient child. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Toward others? Treat them as brothers. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. There is a lot contained in the word "our." We are to act like God's sons and daughters. We should love one another and to some extent ourselves. First of all, however, we are to love God with all our being. Let us go on to the next part.

**II. THE PRAYER - "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 ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS. AND DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL."** In this part we see two things. One, we see the desire of our prayer. We are to hallow, or make holy, the name of God. This is similar to the third commandment which states in Ex. 20:7: "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. (NASU). Notice the repeated pronoun "Your." Hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, all these show the desire of our prayer for the One to whom it is directed. All these have to do with the person of God. This is the high end of the prayer. The low end follows. Where is all this to be done? On earth as it is in Heaven. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The world will be subject to God's will and we should pray for that end. We see a progression in this part. We are to make God our ultimate end, and we are to desire His interests first and in this order: 1. His glory, 2. His Kingdom, 3. Obed-ience to His laws. "In earth" has to do with unbelievers and believers, the church and the world. We are to obey His commands and when we do, we will impact the world in a positive manner. When we do this, we make earth a place where God's will is done as it is in Heaven.

The second part of the middle section has to do with the execution of the prayer. How are these requests to come about? First, by God providing our physical needs; second, by God forgiving us our sins; and third, by God delivering us from the power of the evil one, that is, Satan. Baxter says, Christ and a state of grace are finally in the first petition, formally in the second, and expressly in the third. This simply means that the three different sections of the model prayer show the New Testament teaching of what is in the Old Testament.

**III. THE CONCLUSION - "FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN."**

Here we see What we praise, Whom we praise, and the duration of our praise. First, we see What we praise and that is the universal reign, "For Yours is the kingdom..." We owe God our highest allegiance and praise. We also praise God for His perfection's "...and the power." He has all power and is all sufficient for the needs of His children. We praise God for His great Excellency and blessedness "...and the glory." He is the ultimate end of all things. In the word "Your," we see Whom we are to praise. God is the only One who is worthy of all our praise. The duration of our praise is forever and ever.

One can see from this brief explanation of the model prayer that there is much to be learned about prayer. The model prayer begins with God and ends with God. He is the highest attainable goal for all creation. You may have some questions about prayer. We will look at some common questions about prayer and you may have some more. Let us begin with this question.

1. *Is the Lord's Prayer a model for us to imitate in general or a prayer to be repeated?*

It is a model for us to imitate in form not in vain repetition. We are not to quote the model prayer when we pray. We are to pray extemporaneously (off the top of our heads) as much as is possible and not to just repeat the model prayer. We are to use the form of the model prayer. That cannot be improved upon.

2. *If the Lord's Prayer be perfect, what need is there to use other words?*

It is only a perfect summary and contains general ideas about prayer. Our desires may be different than what can be worded in the model prayer. We are to pray from our hearts and not try to imitate other's prayers. We must confess our sins and we are to be specific when we do so. The blanket prayer is similar to this: "God forgive me of all my sins." There is no repentance in this kind of prayer. We must be specific in naming those sins which the Holy Spirit brings to our minds.

3. *Is it okay to pray in a set form of words like a written prayer?*

It is okay to pray a written prayer but we are not to let other's prayers become a substitute for our own. Just like so many other parts of the Christian life, we are to give, love, work, pray and sing from the heart and not from a set form. It is not a sin to write out prayers. Many great saints of the past have done so and their prayers are an inspiration to all who read them.

4. *Are we to pray as we feel reason would guide us or are we to wait for the Holy Spirit to move us to prayer?*

The prophets and writers of Scripture were inspired by God to preach and write God's own words. This kind of experience is past and is no longer available to anyone. The other kind of experience is that by which the Spirit of God guides, rebukes, encourages, and helps the believer. Reason and the working of the Holy Spirit are not to be separated but are to complement each other. If reason tells you to pray and you do not know why, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. If he does not, do not pray. The Spirit will not move you to pray if it is not in agreement with His purposes. However, if the Spirit moves you to pray and reason tells you "No," ask Him to change your reasoning. He will do so. As Baxter says, "God's Spirit is more likely to help you in duty, than in the neglect of it."

5. *Is it idolatry to pray to a departed saint or an angel?*

It is sin to pray to someone other than God. He is everywhere at the same time and no one else can boast that claim. God is also able to meet our every need and no saint or angel can do that.

6. *It is a sin when one refuses to pray in public?*

No, it is not. Praying in public takes maturity and that does not come but with time. It is good to learn to pray in public but that is up to the individual.

These are some common questions that may have come to your mind. However, there is much to be studied yet involving prayer. Many of the Psalms are prayers and there is a great difference in some of the Psalms. Some are prayers of deliverance, confession of sin, desperation, and some are imprecatory prayers. This simply means they are prayers to God to destroy an enemy or enemies. For the remainder of the time together, let us examine one of the most famous prayers in the book of Psalms. Turn in your Bible to Psalm 51. This psalm was written after King David had sinned against the Lord and committed adultery with Bathsheba. Read the psalm through several times and answer the following questions.

1. In verses 1-4, give the 4 different words that are used to describe dis-obedience toward God. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. In the same verses, give the 5 different words that describe God's mercy. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. What 4 things does David desire from God? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. How did sin affect David? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5. How does sin affect you? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

6. Even though David had sinned against Bathsheba and her husband, to Whom was David's sin ultimately directed? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

7. Explain why you think David felt God was justified in punishing Him. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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8. In verses 5-9, does David try to justify himself? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Verse 5 has been interpreted in several different ways. Some say that David was born of a prostitute or rape. That explanation does not fit with Scripture. Others say that David is referring to him being conceived a sinner. In other words, David inherited his sin nature from Adam just like all the rest of us. This doctrine is called "Original Sin." We are guilty because of Adam's sin and we inherited a sin nature from Adam that is anti-God. Everything we do from the time we can think for ourselves is sinful because we have a sinful human nature. If sin were blue, everything we do would have a blue tint to it. This is what David is saying.

9. Have you ever confessed your sin to God like David did? Explain your answer.

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10. In verses 10-13, why do you think David prayed for God not to remove His Holy Spirit? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Are we to pray this way today? For help with this question turn to John 14:16. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

11. Why do you think David prayed "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation," rather than "Restore to me Your salvation?" \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

12. David had faith that God's forgiveness would be a witness to others of the grace of God. Do you think the people you come in contact with every day would feel that way about your faith? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

13. Using this prayer as a guide, ask God to help you see your sin as He sees it.

Prayer is a gift given to us from God. It is our means of communicating with the Ruler of the universe. After working your way through this lesson, you will never pray the same way again. May your times of prayer be special and precious. May you become a man or woman of prayer. If you want to be like Him, learn to pray like He prayed.

OTHER RESOURCES ON PRAYER

Richard Baxter, The Christian Directory

John MacArthur, Jr., Jesus Pattern Of Prayer

John Owen, Communion With God

Jeremiah Burroughs, Gospel Worship

Memory verse: 1 Cor 10:13: No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. NASU.