

# HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

## MATTHEW 6:9-13

This, then, is how you should 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 today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven  
our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one."

## LUKE 11:2-4

He said to them,  
When you pray, say:  
"Father, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come.  
Give us each day our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive  
everyone who sins against us.  
And lead us not into temptation."

## JESUS' PRAYER EXAMPLE

Jesus gave us a prayer example to teach us HOW to pray. He did not intend for us to merely repeat it, but to use it as a pattern or guide for our own prayers. Jesus referred to this pattern on various occasions. He sometimes used different wording. But in each instance, several common themes were present. They are as follows:

- 1) **A longing for God to be central ("hallowed") in all of life.** He is worthy of this, because he is the true God, and not a man-made false god. As God's children, we want him to be exalted and revered.
- 2) **A desire for God's kingdom and his will to influence all aspects of life.** Those who belong to God (his children) want God's desires to be put ahead of anything else - even ahead of their own desires. They want what their Father in heaven wants; and they want it to be done everywhere on earth.
- 3) **Expressing concerns about physical needs (including the needs of others).** As we pray this, we entrust all our needs to God, knowing that he understands our true needs better than we do - not just for the present, but for eternity. God's answers will always be perfect and complete, even if he would for some reason say "No" to some of our requests.
- 4) **Prayer about our spiritual needs.** We are a needy people; we are debtors to God because of our sins. He has offered us his forgiveness; but he requires us to be like him, and to also forgive others. A forgiving spirit within us is proof that we are truly his children.
- 5) **Prayer for protection through the trials of life.** We cannot make it through trials on our own; we need God's help. We should try to avoid entering temptation, but when it comes (and it will), we must rely on God to bring us through it safely.

Some translations end this model prayer with a closing similar to this: "Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." This reminds us of the first part of the prayer, which expresses a desire for God to have first place in everything. It is also an expression of worship and praise - something you may wish to include throughout your prayer!

## HAVING THE RIGHT PRIORITIES

Many people emphasize their immediate physical needs, when they pray. Yet this is not the primary emphasis in Scripture. The glory of God and the *spiritual* well-being of people is always considered more important! You may wish to look at a few examples - 1) Jesus' prayer in John 17; and 2) Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:15-19; 3:16-21; 6:18-20; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12; 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 and elsewhere. The apostle John's prayer, in 3 John 2, illustrates this quite well. John prays for his friend's health and circumstances, but he adds: "even as your soul is getting along well." To John, one's soul is more important than one's health and circumstances. He doesn't ignore them. He simply has the proper priorities.