

Prayer and Our Values

The way we pray is often a good indicator of what we value most. Many people claim to love God and neighbor, but when they pray, their focus is centered around their own personal needs and desires, and sometimes the needs and desires of their favorite friends. Rarely is there any longing for the glory and goodness of God to be seen across the earth, a desire for personal purity, and a willingness to "sacrifice" one's own desires for the good of God's kingdom.

What emphasis should we have when we pray? Look at what Jesus tells us, in the prayer he taught his disciples:

Matthew 6:9-13

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| "Pray, then, in this way: | This is Jesus speaking. He does not tell us to simply repeat this prayer, like a trained parrot. Rather, he wants us to take this prayer to heart and let it change the way we pray. |
| 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. | Is our prayer characterized by a desire for God to be central ("hallowed") in all things? Do we acknowledge - joyfully - who he is, and desire others to do the same? |
| 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. | Do we desire to obey <i>God's</i> will more than our own? Do we want God to be honored in all that we do - and in all that others do, as well? Do we want him to rule over our lives... and <i>all</i> the earth? |
| 'Give us this day our daily bread. | Are we content to trust him to take care of our (and others') physical needs? (Or do we demand that he do things <i>our</i> way?) Do we trust him when he doesn't answer the way we want? |
| 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. | Do we treat others the way we want God to treat us? (He requires us to do so.) Do we really understand the extent of God's forgiveness toward us? (The sins that others have committed against us are nothing, compared to the sins we have committed against God.) |
| 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. | Do we pray that we (and others) might not enter into trials and temptation that go beyond our ability to endure? (And do we make any effort to avoid the temptations, when they come?) When trials do come our way, do we pray for protection as we go <i>through</i> them? (Or do we demand that God get us <i>out of</i> them, so that we can "have a nice day"?) |
| '[For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.]' " | (This ending, found in some translations, directs our attention back to God and who he is.) Does worship, praise and adoration of God characterize our prayer - not just when we end it, but throughout our prayer? |