

"Lord, Teach Us To Pray"

Luke 11:2

One of the most important covenant responsibilities toward one another in the church is to pray for each other. It is also the greatest privilege we have. Yet, the almost universal experience of Christians is that we often struggle in our prayer life. Don Whitney has identified the issue when we often do not feel like praying is because we "tend to say the same old things about the same old things"(Whitney 11). In other words, we know we *ought* to pray, and we know *why* to pray – yet where we struggle is knowing *what* to pray.

To this end, Jesus taught His disciples (and us) how to pray in **Matthew 6:9-13**. This prayer is known as the **Lord's Prayer**, or sometimes called the **Model Prayer** or **Disciple's Prayer**. It is the most well-known, quoted, and memorized passages in all of Scripture. The reason is because it is often quoted in a somewhat poetic way as opposed being used for teaching or as a model.

So, the purpose of this article is to provide a way (not the *only* way) to apply the Lord's teaching for our prayer life. This will help us to know what to pray for any prayer need, whether ours or one brought to us.¹ To do so, we will provide an example of a typical prayer need one may have.

The Lord's prayer includes **A Posture** for prayer, followed by **6 Petitions**. Jesus says, "**Our Father, who is in heaven...**" The first address, "**Our Father**," assumes a relationship with God. One must pray for intimacy and communion with God. However, by adding, "**in heaven**," we recognize the authority God has over us. Therefore, we come to God in prayer with a **humble confidence (Heb 4:14-16)**. Doing so, we bring our petitions and prayer before Him. Jesus said, "Pray in this way..." Therefore, any prayer need may be applied.

Prayer Need Example:

"I am having a difficult time with a coworker."

1. First Petition – "*Hallowed be Your Name.*" God's Holiness.

We pray that God's name would be treated with the utmost holiness. God's holiness is ALWAYS our first priority in every circumstance!

You might pray: "*My father, please help me to not act or do anything toward or with my coworker that would bring reproach or shame to Your character, or question Your grace toward me.*"

2. Second Petition – "*Your Kingdom Come...*" Priorities.

Here, we may pray in two ways:

- a. Prayer for Kingdom priorities (as opposed to my own)
- b. Secondly for Kingdom expansion (evangelism)

You may pray: "*Father, somehow allow this conflict to be a way in which I can display Your grace and compassion toward them and do good for them. And Lord, I pray that doing so will allow me a way to share your gospel with them.*"

¹ I am assuming that prayer is *speaking* to God, as opposed to *listening, contemplating*, or any other *mystical* method. Prayer is spoken of in Scripture as "*pouring out* our hearts to God in praise, petition, confession of sin, and thanksgiving" (*New City Catechism*, Question 38). Each of these descriptions includes our petitions to Him. God speaks to us in Scripture.

3. **Third Petition** – “*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...*” – **Wisdom**

Here, we pray for God to teach us His will – for guidance in **specific and concrete ways** God would have us interact with our co-worker based upon Scriptural principles.

We may pray: “*Teach me wisdom from Your Word for how I might appropriately navigate this conflict and help me to follow it, no matter how difficult.*”

4. **Fourth Petition** – “*Give us this day our daily bread...*” **Physical Provision.**

Here, we pray not only for the physical needs and provision needed for life, but by extension the proper use of them.

We may pray: “*Father, help me to use the thing You’ve given me to be helpful and do good for this coworker, that they may see Your goodness and kindness through me.*”

5. **Fifth Petition** – “*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...*” **Forgiveness/ Responsibility.**

Pray for the forgiveness of your sins, and for your obedience to forgive those who have sinned against you. Remember, praying for forgiveness may mean taking steps toward reconciliation!

We may pray: “*Father, I have sinned against my coworker by _____*” Please forgive me and help me to have Your forgiveness toward them.”

6. **Sixth Petition** – “*And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.*” **Spiritual Provision.**

Finally, pray that your heart will be guarded and protected against the desire to sin.

You might pray: “*Lord, guard my heart and help me not to sin against my coworker when they are being difficult to me. I have no excuse to sin. Help me to not only resist the temptation to sin toward them but respond in a way that is pleasing and glorifying to You.*”

Each petition may be prayed for our own requests or to intercede for another. Regardless, the point is that we can consider each petition of the Lord’s Prayer to pray for the specific situation for which pray. When we approach God to pray in this way, it will require some extra thought to think about how to pray using that specific petition, but this is a *good thing!* Every petition may not necessarily apply to every request but thinking through them will help to know what and how to pray.

Some Helpful Resources for Prayer

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (Book 3, Chapt 20).

(I know Calvin is controversial, but his chapter on prayer is THE classic. No other has ever come close to the thoroughness and devotional qualities of this chapter. Take your time with it!)

Eastman, Dick. *The Hour That Changes the World: A Practical Plan for Personal Prayer*. Chosen Books, 2002

Halloran, Kevin P. *When Prayer is a Struggle: A Practical Guide for Overcoming Obstacles in Prayer*. Presbyterian & Reformed, 2021.

Miller, Paul. *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*. NavPress, 2009. (a modern classic)

Tautges, Paul. *Pray About Everything: Cultivating God Dependency*. Shepherd Press, 2017.

Whitney, Donald S. *Praying the Bible*. Crossway, 2015.