

# All That Jesus Taught Bible Study - Part 22

by Zac Poonen

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*Jesus teaches us how to pray by prioritizing God's needs over personal needs, recognizing our helplessness and dependence on God, and acknowledging God's sovereignty and power.*

**Duration:** 24:58

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:9-10, Matthew 6:12-13, Luke 11:9, Luke 18:1

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Gods Kingdom"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus on prayer, emphasizing the importance of addressing God as our Father and prioritizing His kingdom, name, and will in our prayers. It highlights the significance of forgiveness in our relationship with God and others, as well as the need to acknowledge our dependence on God's power and seek His kingdom above all else. The sermon concludes with a focus on persistence in prayer and trusting in God's provision for our needs.

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## Transcript

We turn once again to Matthew 28 and verse 20 where Jesus commanded us to teach people in every nation all that he has commanded, to teach the disciples who have responded to his word all that he has commanded. And this is what we've been looking at in these past days and weeks. So we want to now look at Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9 onwards.

Having taught us in the first four verses, verses 5 to 8, how not to pray, not as the hypocrites, not with meaningless repetitions, and not with length of prayer, but believing that your father knows what you need. And then he tells us how to pray. He first tells us how not to pray and then he tells us how to pray.

And I notice as I've observed Christians that very few people have actually paid attention to these simple statements of Jesus, which even a child can understand. He's taught us how not to pray and many people haven't taken that seriously. And he's taught us how to pray, even that many people haven't taken seriously.

Jesus said when you pray, pray like this. Our father who art in heaven. He wasn't giving us a prayer to blindly repeat, though there's no harm in repeating it if you mean every sentence.

But he was teaching us a pattern for our prayer which should characterize all of our prayers. The first thing he said is that when you talk to God, call him your father. Now nobody in the Old Testament could ever

dare to look up to God and say father.

I don't know whether you realize that. Old Testament prayer was always oh God, Lord Almighty, etc. etc.

because he was the CEO of the universe and they were just like little employees in the factory. And you can't talk to the CEO any way you like. But in the New Covenant, we are God's children.

It's like the child of the CEO walking into his dad's office and saying daddy. So we need to understand the privilege of being a child of God. It's fundamentally different.

And yet if you were to look at your prayer, it's quite likely it's true of most Christians. They don't call God father. They call him oh God.

Now there's nothing wrong in that. He is God and he is our God and it's right to address him as God. But if you only address him as God and not as father, there's something wrong.

In the Old Testament, he had a name Jehovah or Yahweh. Nobody knows the exact pronunciation of it because the Hebrew alphabet didn't have any vowels in it. So nobody knows whether it's Jehovah or Yahweh.

Some people say Jehovah, some people say Yahweh. But as far as I'm concerned, it's an absolutely unimportant discussion because I don't call God Jehovah and I don't call God Yahweh. I call him daddy.

He's my father because Jesus taught us to say, pray saying our father. The Holy Spirit comes into our hearts. We read in Romans 8 and cries out Abba, father.

Yet if you look at some of your song, other songs people sing, guide me O thou great Jehovah. Are you speaking to your father? He is Jehovah but we need to learn to address him as father. If my little, if my children came up to me and said Mr. Poonen, I'd think something wrong with them.

Why are they calling me Mr. Poonen? They call me daddy and I come to God. I don't call him Jehovah even though that's his name or Yahweh. I say father because he's my father.

I've become his child. That reality of having become a child of God has not hit many Christians and that's because they have not opened themselves up to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit fills a person that one of the first things he does is make him cry out Abba, father, daddy. Has that happened to you? That's very, very important.

It's not something that somebody trains you to say. It's something that inwardly, automatically you know. That inward reality comes when the Holy Spirit comes into a person's heart at the time he's born again and if he's filled with the Spirit, he really knows God as his father.

It's one of the most important things in the Christian life to know God as a father and to call him father. You can call him Lord. You can call him God.

It's true and it's right and it's right to pray like that. All I say is the predominant way in which you should be praying is our father. Not only our father but Jesus said pray saying our father who art in heaven.

So it's not like some earthly father who may be powerless to help us in certain situations. My earthly father may love me very much but he may be helpless to help me in a difficult situation. But my father in heaven

is not helpless.

He runs the universe. He's more powerful than the Prime Minister of India. Think of the Prime Minister of India with your father.

If you had a problem, all you had to do was call your dad and tell him what the problem was. Well, your father in heaven is more mighty, almighty, more powerful than anyone in this world. Why don't you go to him with your problems? So Jesus was trying to lay a basis for faith in that very first sentence.

Our father who art in heaven makes it clear to my heart before I start praying that the one I'm talking to is my heavenly father, my father who loves me intensely. And this father is in heaven and so he's almighty. These two truths, one who loves me intensely and one who's all-powerful are the basis for my faith.

He can solve any problem. He can do anything and he loves me intensely. That's the greatest basis for faith.

So in that very first sentence, Jesus was laying a basis for faith so that when we pray to God, whatever we pray for, faith is the basis on which we pray. And then in the remaining six requests that follow after that, notice if you notice carefully, the first three requests concern God. Now when we go to God in prayer, you ask yourself, when you kneel down to pray, what is your first request? You'll find it's almost always something for yourself or your family.

You know, Lord meet this need or heal my backache or give me a job or take care of my children, provide a job for them, provide a marriage partner for them. There's nothing wrong with these requests. We can certainly pray for all of these things.

God wants us to pray for every little thing, a small thing, even if you have misplaced your keys. You can ask God where it is. Lord, please help me to find my keys.

I seem to have lost them somewhere. You can ask God for every little thing and every big thing. But what do you give priority to? Jesus said, when you pray, let your priority be God and his needs.

That's the meaning of seek God's kingdom first. He says that towards the end of this chapter, in chapter six, verse 33 of Matthew, seek God's kingdom first and his righteousness and these other earthly needs of yours will be added to you. You can ask for them, but put God's kingdom first.

That's God's way. And so he says, your first three requests must be God, my father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Nevermind what people say about my name.

That's unimportant. My reputation, fit for the trash can. Forget it.

Are you concerned about your name and your reputation more than God's name? Then you're not praying the way Jesus taught you to pray. Supposing somebody scandalized you or scandalized your daughter. Does that disturb you more than the name of Jesus is being dishonored in the land? Look at the way the name of Jesus is being dishonored in our country.

By the way, Christians live and behave by the way they fight with each other and do so many wrong things. If that doesn't bother us, I wonder whether we really have a relationship with God as our father. If you're more concerned about our name and our family name and our children, et cetera, what people are saying about them, then we need to reorient our thinking and get it more centered in God.

And so Jesus taught the first three requests were hallowed be thy name, father, thy kingdom come and thy will be done. Notice everything has got to do with God. Now man is basically self-centered.

What we have inherited from Adam is a self-centered life which makes us think of ourselves primarily and very often ourselves only. Is I me and my family? That's all that concerns most people and even if they get converted, it's still I me and my family. And even when they receive Christ, they only think of how Christ can now bless I me and my family.

Now that's not Christianity. Jesus came to deliver us from this self-centered life which is the root cause of all our misery and unhappiness. The reason why most Christians cannot rejoice all the time is because they are centered in themselves.

When something good happens to them, they rejoice. When something does not happen the way they wanted, you didn't get the promotion that you expected, you lose your joy. Why is that? God is still on the throne.

Your sins are still forgiven. The devil's still being defeated. Why can't you rejoice? Because something you wanted you didn't get.

Jesus has come to deliver us from this self-centered life which is the root cause of all our problems. And here in prayer he's teaching us to be free from self-centeredness. Can we ask for food? Of course we can.

He taught us to pray in verse 11. Give us this day our daily bread. And daily bread includes food, clothing, shelter, children's education because they need to get educated and get a job so that they can earn their daily bread.

There's nothing wrong in asking for these things. Forgive us our sins. That's also a good request.

Deliver us from evil. Good request. But all these three requests concerning us come after seeking God's name, God's kingdom, and God's glory.

It's changing our priorities. So the right way to pray is to pray with God's kingdom, his name, and his will primary in our thinking. In other words, I must change my whole way of life where I'm thinking now in terms of God's name and God's kingdom, God's glory.

That is the truly spiritual Christian. So I say anybody can repeat this prayer. Even a parrot can repeat this prayer.

You can play it into a tape recorder and play it and you can repeat it that way. But if you really meaningfully pray it, only a spiritual person can pray this prayer. Because only a spiritual person can say, my primary concern in life is that God's name should be hallowed in this country, in the church, me and my family.

God's name should be hallowed. God's kingdom should come soon. God's rule should be established in the church.

God's will should be done in my life, my family, everywhere. That is the mark of a spiritual man. I want to say to you, my dear friends, don't consider yourself spiritual until these three are your uppermost desires in your heart.

Everything else is meaningless if the center of your life is still around yourself. Many people when they're converted, their life has been self-centered all along. They just added Jesus also has come into their orbit to serve them, to forgive their sins, to answer their prayers, to bless them, make them prosperous, heal their sicknesses.

This is not Christianity. This is a self-centered life with just religion added onto it. When Christ really comes in, we turn from, we repent of that self-centered life.

God becomes the center. And then in the three requests concerning ourselves at the end of that prayer, it is material things are there, give us this day our daily bread, but link it with thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I'm saying, my father, I want to do your will on earth in my life exactly like the angels do it in heaven, which is instant obedience, waiting upon you, obeying you instantly.

And in order to do your will, I need help. So give me my daily bread. Link those two together.

Why are you praying for daily bread? Is it in order to do God's will or in order for you to do your own will? Is it in order to sin or in order to please God? Give me this day our daily bread. Give us this day our daily bread. Health and strength to live for God.

The other thing I want you to notice here is in this entire prayer, the word me, my is missing. Isn't that interesting? In our prayers, you'll find me, my are very frequently there. But in this prayer, the Lord taught us to pray the words me and my are completely absent.

He says, give us, means it's not just me Lord, I think of my brother too. He needs daily bread as well. Forgive us, don't just forgive me, forgive my brother too.

Deliver us so the truly spiritual man is a man whose life is centered in God. And when it comes down to self, he thinks not only of himself, but the people around him, the others who are also part of that family of God, because God is the father of a large family. And I think of others as well.

So it's Christ first and others and me together, not just me by myself. That is the way a spiritual person prays, not just for his own needs. He's concerned about his children naturally, but he's also concerned about somebody else's children.

He doesn't look down on them. It's not humanly possible to be burdened as much for other people's children as for our own. We must be realistic here, but we must have some concern for them.

Give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our sins as we have forgiven others. That's an important request. It's the one request that Jesus picked up and repeated at the end.

He said in verse 14, if you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly father will also forgive you. It's very important to understand this condition that Jesus himself laid down. But if you do not forgive men, then your father will not forgive your transgressions.

Now, is this true or not? Does God withhold forgiveness when you don't forgive somebody else for what that person did against you? Absolutely. He will not forgive you if you don't forgive other people. Please remember that.

It's a fundamental principle in God's dealings with man, that he treats us like we treat other people. If you're merciful to others, God is merciful to you. You forgive others, God forgives you.

We saw that in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 7. Blessed are the merciful, they will obtain mercy. And here we can say, blessed are those who forgive others, they will be forgiven. And those who do not forgive others will not be forgiven.

Jesus once told a story in this connection to illustrate it clearly in Matthew 18, verse 21 to 35. It's a very important parable that we need to understand. There was a king who had many slaves and they all owed him a lot of money.

And one man owed him 10,000 talents. That's a huge amount of money. Let's assume it's something like a thousand, a billion, a thousand million rupees.

It's such a huge debt that we can never pay. And the king was merciful and forgave him. Okay, you owe me a thousand million rupees.

You're forgiven. Entire debt. You can go free.

You don't have to go to jail. That man went out and found another person who owed him a hundred rupees. How much was he forgiven? 1,000 million rupees.

How much did this other slave owe him? A hundred rupees. And he catches him by the throat and says a hundred rupees is not a small amount of money. It's not like one rupee or something.

You got to pay me. And if you don't pay me, I'll take you to court and have you locked up. And he did that.

And when other, the other slaves saw that, they went and reported it to the king. The king called the slave and said, hey, you wicked slave, Matthew 18, 32. You just asked me to forgive your debt and I forgave you.

Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you? And he was moved with anger. And what did he do? He handed him over to the torturers so that he would pay back, until he paid back everything he owed him. In other words, that forgiven debt was put back upon his head.

How do you account for that? Does God, who forgives us, again, unforgive us? That means put back on our head the sins that we were already forgiven? According to this verse, yes. The Bible never says that God has forgiven us, forgotten about our sins. He says, I will not remember your sins anymore, meaning that I will not hold your sins against you.

But there's no verse which says that God completely forgets. I myself can't forget the sins I committed. How can God forget all about it? No.

He knows, but he doesn't hold it against us. And there is a parable that teaches that God can put it back upon us if we don't forgive somebody else. And so we see here, if you forgive others, God forgives you.

And if you do not, God will not forgive you. And then the last request is, do not lead us into temptation. What does that mean? God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability.

But it's good for us to pray that. It's good for us to recognize that some temptations are way beyond our ability to cope with. We know that God will not allow us to be tested beyond our ability, but we need to pray, Lord, don't lead me into temptation that is too strong for me, but deliver me from evil.

And there I'm expressing a humble position saying, I do not know how to overcome this temptation. I don't have the ability to overcome this temptation. So Lord, my father, please don't lead me into something too strong for me.

I'm expressing my inability there. I'm expressing my helplessness. That's a good attitude to have towards temptation.

We are not to think that we are strong enough to overcome temptation. That's the reason many people don't have victory over sin. The reason most Christians are defeated by sin is they have too much self-confidence.

They think they have the ability. They think a little more good resolutions, gritting your teeth, and we'll overcome. No, you won't.

We have to acknowledge, Lord, don't lead me into temptation too strong for me. And when I face any temptation, you deliver me from evil because I cannot overcome evil on my own. If only we would recognize that evil is far too strong for us.

Even this matter of forgiving others. If you find it difficult to forgive somebody, and that can happen sometimes, somebody has done such terrible harm to you or to your family, and you find it very, very difficult to forgive that person for what evil that person has done. Maybe some permanent damage has been done to you or your family members by something that some person did.

How are you going to forgive him? You can ask God for grace. Lord, please help me. Deliver me from this evil of an unforgiving spirit.

I don't have the ability to forgive this person, but I ask you to help me to forgive him. Prayer is an expression of our weakness and our helpless dependence upon God. And faith is the confidence that God will help me because he's my father who's in heaven.

He sent his son to die to free me from all my sins. How much more, Romans 8 32 says, if he gave his son to free you from all your sins, how much more he will give you everything that you need along with him. And then the prayer concludes with in Matthew 6 and verse 13, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever.

Amen. So this is very important that we conclude our prayer like this and say, Lord, at the end of it all, when you've answered my prayer, when you've done everything that I asked you for, I want to acknowledge, first of all, I want to acknowledge that the kingdom is yours. It is your kingdom that I seek.

And the power is yours. I don't have power to be able to live this life. I don't have power to overcome sin.

I don't have power. The power is yours. And when I do overcome sin, the glory will also be yours.

And then the prayer concludes with amen. Amen means it will be so. Jesus placed a great importance on prayer.

One of the things he said in Luke chapter 18 and verse 1 was, men should always pray and not give up. Luke chapter 18 and verse 1, he said, men are always to pray and not lose heart, not get discouraged. The only two parables he gave on prayer spoke on persistence.

One was the widow who went to a judge in Luke 18 verse 1 to 8, keeping on asking until she got justice against her enemy. And that is a prayer for overcoming Satan and the lusts in our flesh. And the other parable is in Luke chapter 11 and verses 5 to 13, where Jesus was speaking about asking God for bread, for strength and gifts to help another person who's in need, who comes to us.

And there again, this emphasis on persistence, the person keeps on knocking until he gets that bread. So in prayer, we see the total teaching of Jesus is never give up. God is your father.

He will meet your need. He'll overcome the enemy for you and he'll give you all that you need to bless others. So we need to go to God in prayer, in faith, believing that he will give us what we ask for, for his glory.

Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly father, as we consider this very important passage on how you taught us to pray, help it to become a reality in our lives.

We humbly ask in Jesus name. Amen.

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