

# (Basics) 55. Praying Putting God First

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of faith and prioritizing God's glory in prayer, teaching that true communication with God begins with recognizing His love and power.*

**Duration:** 12:25

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:45, Matthew 6:9-12, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Godly Priorities"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of putting God first in our lives and prayers. Jesus taught us to seek God's kingdom and glory before our own needs. By starting our prayers with 'Our Father, who art in heaven,' we acknowledge two important facts about God: He is our loving Father and He is in heaven. The preacher also highlights the need to change our self-centered thinking and renew our minds to align with God's perspective.

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## Transcript

There was no one who lived on earth who prayed and communicated with God and God heard him every time like Jesus Christ when he was on earth as a man. And so if there's anyone who can teach us how to pray and communicate with God, it's Jesus. Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9, we were considering how we should not pray.

First, Jesus cleared the ground of all the rubbish. You know, just like you go to an empty plot of ground, there's a lot of rubbish and you've got to clear it all out to dig out all the ground before you lay a foundation. In the same way, Jesus cleared out all the garbage by first telling people not to pray seeking man's honor and not to pray thinking that God will hear you if you keep on repeating with many words.

And then he said, now that we have cleared those two things and if you have any doubt that God doesn't know your need, get all that out of your mind. Then he said, when you pray, begin like this, our Father who art in heaven. Now, that is the way Jesus taught us to begin our prayer for this reason.

Throughout the New Testament, one of the most important requirements for answered prayer that's mentioned is faith. In fact, the Bible says in James chapter 1 that when you ask God for wisdom, he's talking about wisdom there, but the principle applies for any prayer. When you pray, he says in James 1.6, let him ask in faith, without any doubting, because the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed, and that man will not receive anything from the Lord.

So we see here that faith is such an important requirement when we pray and ask God for something. That even if you have a need and you have a burden and you have a great longing for something and you're desperately requiring it, yet if you don't have faith, the Bible says in James 1.7, you will receive nothing, absolutely nothing from the Lord. And yet many people don't understand the importance of this.

They think, well, I prayed, I suppose God heard. The question is, did you pray with faith? Do you believe that God will hear? Oh, you're not sure whether you heard or not. You're like the atheist who wonders whether there is a God up there.

Listening to us at all, the Bible says, he who comes to God must believe that God exists. In Hebrews 11.6, that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. This is faith.

First of all, you must believe that up there, there is a God who can hear you. And secondly, that that God rewards every single person who seeks Him diligently, whoever he is. So, in order to encourage and strengthen our faith, Jesus told us to begin our prayer by saying, Our Father who art in heaven.

Because in those two statements, Our Father who art in heaven, we have two facts concerning God which will strengthen our faith. One is that He is our Father. He is not the managing director of a big company, whose door we are waiting outside, hoping to get an entrance.

He is not some great religious leader with whom we are trying to get an audience, and for which there is a big waiting list. No. He is a loving father.

A child can go and see his father and talk to his father anytime. And so can you. That's what Jesus taught.

Our Father, one who loves us, cares for us, is interested in us, wants to help us in every possible way. That truth must be established in your mind when you pray, that you are talking to a father. As we considered in our last study, it's not a question of just repeating these words.

Every time we pray, but being conscious and aware of the reality of them when we do pray. That we are praying to a father. Our father.

And secondly, we are praying to one who lives in heaven. It's to a God who rules in heaven, who has got authority over the whole universe, to whom we are praying. So it's not only somebody who loves us, but also somebody who has got such fantastic power that he runs the universe.

He is in heaven. Now, because we know he loves us, our faith is strengthened. And because we know he is almighty and has all power, again our faith is strengthened.

There are two things we need to know. One is that God loves us perfectly and the other is that God is almighty. And both these things come forth in that first sentence in this prayer.

Our father, who loves us, who is in heaven and therefore sovereignly in control of everything that happens. So if we don't begin here, we will not have faith. So when you begin to talk to God or you are going to ask him something or say something, it's good to pause and ask yourself, to whom are you talking? And once you are sure you are talking to one who loves you intensely and one who has got power to do everything in this universe.

Once you have seen the greatness of God, the greatness of his power and the greatness of his love, then we are ready to pray. Otherwise our prayer will be useless because it will be without faith. If you talk to

God as though he were a stranger or something like that, you could pray long prayers, nothing will happen.

My guess is that lots and lots of prayers prayed by Christians never get answered. Probably 90% of them or more because there is no faith. Now when it comes to earthly things, you may imagine that you got some answers to God from God in prayer.

But Jesus said in Matthew 5 that God is such a good God that he makes the sun to rise on the good person and the evil person equally. He makes the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous equally. So those material blessings are for everybody.

Even if they don't pray, they get it. The atheist gets rain on his farm without praying about it. So I am not talking about these general blessings that everybody gets.

But specific things, when we ask God for it, you can have it. If you ask in faith, our father who is in heaven, one who loves me perfectly, one who has got almighty power. And the first request in this prayer in Matthew 6 is, Hallowed be thy name.

There are six requests in this prayer. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven others.

And don't lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil. The first three concern God. And the next three concern our needs and the needs of our fellow believers.

So we see here, before we come to our needs, Jesus taught us to pray concerning God's kingdom and His glory and His name. Thereby, He was teaching us the importance of putting God first in our lives. Even though our needs may be desperate and very great, Jesus still taught us to put it secondary.

Because when you seek the kingdom of God first, all the other things will be added to you. So, if we don't seek God's kingdom first, and seek those other things, we may get some of them, but they won't be a help or a blessing. That's the thing.

So, Jesus taught us to be centered in God, in our life and also in our prayers. The trouble with the entire race of man, ever since Adam's days, we are centered in ourselves. One result of sin coming into Adam's race is, we are centered in ourselves.

We think always of what we can get out of it. How is this going to benefit me and my family? And we live, every businessman in the world lives by that principle, what profit can I get out of it? How will this benefit me? And the vast majority of Christians live by that principle too. How is this going to benefit me? And Jesus has come to save us from sin.

He has come to save us from that warped, crooked, perverted idea of Christianity, where you have a religious outward impression you give to others of being spiritual and all that, but in your private life you are seeking your own gain, just as much as the most worldly businessman in the world. That's hypocrisy. And so we need to change our way of thinking.

The Bible calls it the renewing of our mind, in Romans 12 and verse 2. And the renewing of our mind is something, which leads us to look at everything from God's point of view first, and not our selfish,

self-centered viewpoint. So looking at it from God's viewpoint, we say first of all, we want to pray Lord concerning your name. Your name is dishonored in the world.

We don't want it to be dishonored. We want your kingdom to come in the world. The world is being ruled by the devil right now.

We want you to come in and rule in your kingdom. And we want your will to be done. Lord, the world is full of people who are doing their own will.

I'm doing my own will too. But Lord, have mercy on us, and help us to do your will on earth exactly like it is done in heaven. Heaven is done joyfully, cheerfully by the angels.

And I want to do it exactly like that in my life. So a concern for God's name, for His kingdom, and His will should be primary. Then we have learned to pray correctly.

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