

## How Not to Pray (6:7-8)

6:7 “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. 6:8 So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”

### Do Not Mistake Prayer for Pagan Magic

- Magic is action done in the physical realm to control or manipulate the spiritual realm.
- Biblical prayer is calling upon the Lord to fulfill His promises and His will as He has revealed it to us in Scripture.

### The Father Who Knows All We Need (6:8)

- Jesus will repeat this later in the chapter: “...your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” (6:32).
- So, why pray if He already knows? Because He commands us to.
  1. Prayer orients our hearts and minds toward humble reliance on God the Father in all things.
  2. Prayer to an all-knowing Father is prayer done in peaceful assurance.

**Discipleship Key: We do not pray to manipulate an all-knowing God, but to come to Him humbly as needy children relying on the Father.**

## Learning to Pray from the Master (6:9a)

6:9a “Pray, then, in this way...”

### Learning, Being Teachable, and Growing in Prayer

- Jesus will repeat this prayer to His disciples in Luke 11:1-4 in response to their request, “Lord, teach us to pray.”
- For Jesus to be our High Priest doesn’t just mean that He prays for us in heaven (though He does –

Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1). It also means that He teaches us how to approach God in prayer.

- Are we teachable in the area of prayer? Do we take our cues concerning prayer from what God has revealed in Scripture? Are we continual learners, seeking to grow in our prayer lives?

### How Should We Use This Model Prayer?

- Remember that Jesus has already condemned “meaningless repetition” (6:7). While there is nothing wrong with praying the Scripture, we don’t want to get into a practice of reciting this prayer thoughtlessly, or reciting it because we think something will automatically happen just because we recite it.
- Martin Luther (1483-1546) wrote a simple method-book to his barber, Peter, on how to pray.<sup>1</sup> Luther wrote that he would use Psalms, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer as an outline for prayer. By doing this he would pray even when he didn’t feel like it or when he didn’t know what to pray.

**Discipleship Key: God commands us to pray, but also teaches us the right way to pray in His Word.**

## The First Petition (6:9b)

6:9b “Our Father Who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”

### God the Father in the Old Testament

- The Old Testament does bear witness to God being Father to His covenant people.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> First written in 1535 under the title *A Simple Way to Pray*.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4; 31:9; Malachi 1:6; 2:10. Paternal language is sometimes used where the exact title “Father” is not found (Exodus 4:22-23; Deuteronomy 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; Psalm 103:13; Jeremiah 3:22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Malachi 3:17).

- Despite this, the understanding of God as Father is not fully revealed by the Holy Spirit in Scripture until the New Testament, where He is referred to as “Father” about 245 times!

### **Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost**

#### **Praying in the Son**

- No one has God as Father apart from faith in Jesus Christ: “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23).  
READ Matthew 11:27//Luke 10:22; John 1:18; 8:19; 14:8-11; 2 John 9.<sup>3</sup>
- While they are one God, we do not confuse the Persons. The Father did not come to earth and die on the cross. The Son did not love the world so much that He sent Himself – He was sent by the Father.

#### **Praying by the Spirit of Adoption**

- To be able to even truly pray the first two words of the model prayer requires the indwelling and help of God the Holy Spirit.

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He is Father to His chosen king in the Davidic covenant (Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Psalm 89:26). He is “father to the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5).

<sup>3</sup> This does not mean that the eternal Personal distinctions between the Father and Son are dissolved, but that the Father and Son enjoy a perfect unity of being as God. The theological term for this is perichoresis (from the Greek περιχώρησις), which, despite sounding obtuse, is actually very poetic: it describes an eternal dance between the three Persons of the one true God, in which they are perfectly and inseparably unified. The three Persons are each fully God (the shamrock illustration doesn’t work because they aren’t each 1/3 God). All three are Personally distinct from one another. All three are One. See also John 10:38; 14:10,11; 17:21.

- He is the “*Spirit of adoption*,” Who unites us to the Son so that we are sons and daughters in Christ. Paul writes, “*you have received a Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’*” (Romans 8:15; see also Galatians 4:6).
- He is the One Who helps us to pray when we don’t know how (Romans 8:26).

#### **Praying to the Father**

- Don’t overlook the second-person plural pronoun “*Our*.” To be held in a relationship with God as Father in the Son by the Spirit is to be part of an eternal, heavenly, Spiritual family.

#### **Who Is in Heaven**

- Heaven reminds us that God is not like us in a very radical way. He is separate from this material realm and from time. He is untouched by sin and the brokenness of creation due to sin. He is above all in authority and power.

#### **Magnify the Holiness of Your Name!**

- The first petition isn’t a call on God to make His name holy – His name is already holy.<sup>4</sup> Instead, it is a prayer that God would cause people to reverence His name (and therefore Him) more. That starts with us.
- What name? He has been revealed to us as Father through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a prayer that the Gospel that proclaims this truth be kept pure among us and in our proclamation.

Eccl. 5:1-3

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**Discipleship Key: God as our Father in Christ is a Gospel reality, and our first concern in prayer is that this truth is treasured and revered as holy among us.**

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 30:4; 97:12; 99:3; 103:1; 111:9; Luke 1:49.