

When You Pray

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon explores the significance of prayer, emphasizing our relationship with God and the structure of the Lord's Prayer as a model for our communication with Him.

Duration: 33:30

Scripture: Psalm 143:1-7, Matthew 5:7, Matthew 6:9, Matthew 6:11-13, Matthew 7:2

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of prayer and the kingdom of God. He begins by sharing a parable from Matthew 18, where Jesus illustrates the concept of forgiveness and mercy. The preacher emphasizes that prayer is a key that opens heaven's doors and connects us with God. He then delves into the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6, highlighting the priority of seeking God's kingdom and His will on earth. The sermon concludes with a call to pray for the restoration of the world and for mankind to live in obedience to God's will.

Transcript

And turn to Psalm 143. I'll read the first, the outnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation as you read the even-numbered verses as we go through Psalm 143.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications. In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness. And enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul, and hath smitten my life down to the ground. He hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me, my heart within me is desolate.

I remember the days of old. I meditate on all thy works. I muse on the work of thy hands.

I stretch forth my hands unto thee. My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land. Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth.

Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning, for thee do I trust. Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee.

Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies. I flee unto thee to hide me. Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.

Thy spirit is good. Lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake.

For thy righteousness' sake, bring my soul out of trouble. And of thy mercy, cut off my enemies and destroy all them that afflict my soul, for I am thy servant. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of prayer. And because we are your servants, we can come to you and we can, Lord, lay out our needs, our petitions before you with that confidence, Lord, that you are able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we could ever ask or even think. Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of prayer.

Teach us, Lord, to pray. In Jesus' name, Amen. You may be seated.

Tonight, we'll be looking at Matthew chapter 6 as we go through the Bible, presently in the Sermon on the Mount and presently slowed down to one chapter a week. When we complete the Sermon on the Mount, we'll pick up our pace again and start taking two, three, four chapters a week. But we want to just really go thoroughly through the Sermon on the Mount because it is such an important part of the Scriptures where Jesus lays out what it is to be a part of the kingdom of God.

This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the sixth chapter, the ninth verse. As Jesus said to his disciples, after this manner, therefore, pray. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. As we read through the sixth chapter in verses six through eight, three times Jesus said, and when you pray, he is making an assumption that as a child of God, you will be praying.

And certainly prayer is that key that opens heaven's doors for us to receive from God. Prayer is that link that connects you with God. And surely as children of God, it is our privilege to spend time in communion and in fellowship with him through prayer.

He gave to them the model prayer. It's a prayer that is not necessarily to be repeated by rote, but it gives to you sort of an outline for prayer, the form that prayer should take. And thus, we would like to look this morning at what is commonly called the Lord's prayer, which is the model for our prayers, as it teaches us the things that we should pray for, and more or less the order of prayer, our father, which art in heaven.

This is the address that we are putting on our prayer. I do believe that the address of the prayer is probably one of the most important parts of a prayer. When you pray, who do you address your prayer to? I've heard people address their prayers to the eternal force that brought the universe into existence.

I've heard them pray and address the prayer to the spirit of life that fills every molecule in our universe. But these are rather ambiguous and impersonal. Paul, when he was in Athens, said to the philosophers, as I was going through your city, I saw many altars to your different gods.

There was an altar I saw, and it was inscribed to the unknown God. And there are many people that when they pray, it's sort of to an unknown God. They really don't know God, and thus they don't have a right

relationship with God.

Many times we address our prayers to friends. I have prayers that are addressed to me every week. People who are asking me for help financially, or to help give them directions for their lives.

I often sympathize with their petitions, but I'm really unable to answer their prayers. They are beyond my ability to help. It's interesting to note how prayers in the Bibles have been addressed.

The disciples in Acts chapter 4 address their prayer, O Lord, that again is relationship. He was their Lord. You are God.

You created the heavens and the earth. That's a great address. It helps put our problems in perspective.

So oftentimes, when we come to God, we're so desperate. Our needs seem to be so great. We're overwhelmed by them.

But when I address my prayer, O Lord, you are God. You created the heavens and the earth, everything that is in them. Suddenly, my need gets a true perspective, because I'm asking the God who created this universe to help me with this simple little problem that I'm facing.

And when I see my problem in the light of God's ability, then my problem really dwindles to almost nothing. And I think that's a great address to put on prayer. I begin to think of the greatness of God, the one that I'm asking for help.

And I realize it's nothing for God to help with many or with few. As Asa prayed in the Old Testament, he was facing a huge army that was invading his land. And he addressed his prayer, Lord, it is nothing for you to help, whether with many or with those that have no power.

Help us, O God, for in your name, we're going to go out against this enemy. Don't let man prevail against you. Daniel prayed, O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps his promises and has mercy toward them that love him and to those that keep his commandments.

And so addressing God, our Father, that implies relationship. Prayer is the privilege of the children of God. In verse eight, Jesus said, Your father knows what you need before you ever ask him.

In verse 32, Jesus said, Your father knows that you need these things. It's a comfort for me when I pray to realize that God knows all about me. He knows every need I have.

He knows me completely, forwards and backwards, so that when I'm presenting my petition to God, it's not something that is new to him or taking him by surprise, but he already knows the need that I have. That's a comfort and should be a comfort to every one of us. God's overruling care for us.

Back in the early days of Calvary Chapel, we had a dear old saint who is now with the Lord and has been for many years. But she used to, when she prayed, say, And Father dear. And I thought, Oh, I love that.

That's so intimate. That's so beautiful. Father dear.

And uh, that's the kind of an intimacy and a relationship that he wants to have with you, where you can feel that closeness, where you can address him as father dear. Only our children have the right to come to the father and expect to receive their petitions. And so with our heavenly father, it is a privilege for the

children and our father defines the relationship.

He is my father. I am his child. And as his child, we have that privilege of coming with our needs.

I had an uncle who was a real reprobate. He was foul mouthed and just a, well, just a true reprobate. Every time I attempted to witness to him, he would brush me off.

He would say, Oh, Charles, I pray every night, you know, I'm all right. And I, I can imagine him praying, now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul.

But, you know, thinking that this is all I need, you know, I pray. Well, David said, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord doesn't even hear me when I pray. If I'm not his child, he is under no obligation to even listen to my prayer.

Our father, which art in heaven. The prayer then turns immediately to communion and to worship. Hallowed be thy name.

The wonderful name of God. The Bible tells us that God honors his name even above his word. We are told in Psalm 100 to enter his gates with thanksgiving, into his courts with praise.

Be thankful unto him and bless his name. I believe that worship is a very important part of prayer. We think too often of prayer as only a petition.

Only where I come and I make my needs known to God. Or I'm asking him to take care of my needs or to help me with a problem or a situation. And we spend so little time just communing with God.

But I believe that communing is one of the most important parts of prayer. Where, as with thee my God, I commune as friend with friend. The pure delight of just communing with God.

And thus the model prayer opens up as far as after the address of communion with him. Hallowed be thy name. True prayer usually begins with communion, worship.

It moves into intercession. And from there to petition. And finally it ends again in communion, in worship, in the acknowledgement of all that he is.

Thy kingdom come. Now moving from communion into intercession. Praying that the kingdom of God might come.

That his will would be done here in earth even as it is in heaven. Note that the things of God, his kingdom, come before our petitions. Jesus said, if you will seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all of these other things, the mundane things of earth, will be added unto you.

The priorities, the kingdom of God first, and our primary concern for his kingdom to be done and his will to be done here on earth even as it is in heaven. We're living in a world that is out of sync with God. Worse, we're living in a world that is in full rebellion against God.

And that rebellion is growing every day. The rebellion against God is what has produced the violence, the suffering, the wars, the pain, the anxieties, the fears, and the atrocities that we hear about and read about in our newspapers and see on TV. Look at the world today.

You do not see the world that God created. You do not see the world that God intended when he created this world. But you see a world that is suffering the ravages of man's rebellion against God.

A world that is marred by sin. We're praying, Lord, restore the world as you created it. Help man, Lord, to live in obedience to your will.

Restore paradise to earth. You do not see man living as God intended man to live. You see man at war with God.

And as long as man is at war with God, he cannot have peace within himself. The psalmist said that the wicked, or Isaiah actually said, the wicked are like the stormy sea. It cannot rest.

It tosses up the mire and dirt. If you're at war with God inside, there is a war that is going on. You can't have rest.

You can't have peace. There's a storm that is raging within. If you can't have peace in your own mind, you can't have peace with others.

This strife and contention in our world is the result of this inner warfare that is going on within me. Looking at this corrupt world in which we live today gives real urgency to that petition thy kingdom come, thy will be done here on earth, even as it is in heaven. What is it that creates such hell on earth today? It's because God's will is despised and rejected by man.

They said of Jesus, we will not have this man to reign over us. And basically that's what the world is saying today. We will not have this man to rule over us.

We won't listen to what he tells us as to how we should live. We won't follow him. What makes heaven paradise? Because God's will is being done in heaven.

And where God's will is being done, that's paradise. Living together in love, living together in peace, living together in joy. That's how God intended man to live.

But man is in rebellion against God. Oh Lord, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. The prayer then moved to petition, to my own personal needs.

Now I have heard people say very sanctimoniously, well I don't like to bring my own needs to God. Well, goody, goody. You don't impress me at all.

I'm glad I can bring my needs to God and Jesus did put the personal petition in. How can I be of benefit to others unless I have first been benefited by him? I can only give out what he has given in. Sort of like the fellow told me, it's like measles.

You can't give them unless you got them. And so the blessings you can't really give until you have received. And thus I believe that personal petition is important, is necessary, and is not wrong because Jesus included personal petition in this model prayer.

Give us this day, our daily bread. Now in that petition itself it would seem to indicate that Jesus expected us to pray every day. Otherwise we could pray, give us this day our weekly bread, or give us this day our monthly bread, or as some give us this day our yearly bread.

But the Lord wants us to call upon him each day. He wants to be in daily communion with us. Give us this day our daily bread.

And then he said, forgive us our trespasses, even as we forgive those who trespass against us. Jesus taught that we set the standards by which we will be judged. I will be judged by the same standard that I judge others.

Jesus said in the seventh chapter here, verse two, for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged. The measure you use in giving out will be the measure that is used in giving back to you. Jesus said, blessed are the merciful, back in the Beatitudes, for they shall obtain mercy.

That's the reason why I seek to be as merciful as possible, because I need all of the mercy I can get. At the end of the prayer, Jesus paused to emphasize one of the petitions, this one, forgive us our debts or our trespasses, even as we forgive those who trespass against us. And after he had finished the prayer, he gave just a little note.

He said, for if you do not forgive men their trespasses against you, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses. In other words, Jesus is saying that my receiving forgiveness is in the measure that I am willing to forgive others their trespasses against me. Now, I know that this brings up a theological argument, but if you want to argue about this, your argument really isn't with me.

I'm only telling you what Jesus said. You'll have to take your argument to him. But in the 18th chapter of Matthew, Jesus more or less illustrated this very point once again in a very graphic way.

Beginning with verse 23, Jesus said, therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who took an accounting of his servants. And when he added things up, one was brought to him that owed him a million dollars. But inasmuch as he had nothing to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold and his wife and his children and everything that he had so that the payment might be made.

The servant fell down and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion and forgave his debt. But that same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him four hundred dollars.

And he laid his hands on him and took him by the throat and said, pay me what you owe me. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, give me a little time and I will pay you. But he would not, but had him cast into the debtor's prison until the debt was paid.

Now when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sad and sorry, and they came and told their Lord what was done. Then the Lord called him and he said to him, you wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt that you owed me because you desired me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had pity on you? And his Lord was angry and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was owed unto him.

And then Jesus said, so likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts do not forgive everyone his brother their trespasses. Forgiveness is not an option. It is a necessity if I desire forgiveness.

As I was studying this over, it really spoke to my heart this week. I began to examine, is there anyone Lord that I am holding out against? Is there any unforgiveness in my heart toward a wrong that has been done

to me? Lord, forgive me even as I forgive others. Then that interesting petition, lead us not into temptation.

Interesting because on the surface we can't understand it. Because we know that God doesn't tempt any man to do something evil. James wrote, let man say when he is tempted, let him not say when he is tempted that God tempted me.

For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt any man. Then what did Jesus mean when he said, lead us not into temptation? I think it would be better translated, don't let me be tempted. In the book of Job, we read that God has a sort of hedge around his children.

Satan was complaining to God about Job, that hedge that was around him. Satan said, I can't get to him. Take down the hedge, let me at him, and he'll curse you to your face.

I believe that we're praying, Lord, keep the hedge up. Don't let Satan get to me. Don't let Satan lay temptation before me.

It would surely fit in the context because the next petition is, keep me from the evil one. Don't let me be tempted, Lord, keep me from the evil one. As David prayed in Psalm 19, deliver me from presumptuous sins.

Don't let them have dominion over me. Or as in Psalm 91, when he prayed, surely he will deliver, he declared, surely he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler, from the traps of the enemy. And so it is that prayer, Lord, keep me safe.

Keep the hedge up around me. Don't let me be tempted. Then the prayer goes into the final exclamation, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.

Worship, acknowledgement, Lord, yours is the kingdom. You have the power forever. Amen.

The prayer begins and ends with acknowledgement and praise. The hope for the coming kingdom, expressed at the beginning, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. The prayer closes with the acknowledgement that the kingdom belongs to him.

Thine is the kingdom, the power, the glory forever. Amen. Let's pray.

Father, we're so grateful for this wonderful privilege of prayer, that we can look to you as a heavenly father, that through Jesus Christ, we've been adopted into the family, and we can know you as one who loves and cares for us and for every need that we have. We thank you, Lord, that we have this privilege of calling upon you. And as we look at the world in which we live, and we see the chaos, we see the wars, we see the suffering, we see the pain, we see the threats, Lord, of nation against nation, and we see the uncertainty of the world in which we live.

Lord, we pray thy kingdom come. May your will be done here on earth, even as it is in heaven. Restore, Lord, the garden of Eden, the paradise in which you once placed man.

Come, Lord, rule over us, reign over us. May your kingdom come. Thank you, Lord, for the privilege of being your children, for inviting us to become a part of the family of God, and may we do so, Lord.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Shall we stand? Our father, that's where it starts. But can you pray that? Do you know him as your heavenly father? Do you have that relationship with him? Relationship is all important

for prayer.

It may be that today you can't really say, Father, in your reference to God, but maybe you'd like to. The pastors are down here at the front, they're here to pray for you, to help you to develop a relationship with God, so that you can go this day from this service, and if a situation arises, you can say, Father, instead of Almighty God, creator of this vast universe in which we live, you can know him on a very personal, intimate level. That's how he wants to know you.

That's how he wants you to relate to him, Father dear. And so they're here to pray for you, to help you to develop a relationship with God, in order that this wonderful privilege of communing with him, and of bringing your needs before him, can be yours. Something that you can enjoy, that full delight of a single hour spent with him, as you kneel in prayer, and you commune as friend with friend.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/12/SID12984.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chuck-smith/when-you-pray/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net