

The Articles of Worship

Doug Hamilton

II) Prayer Through the Heart of God

The first two lessons of the series we covered the spiritual reasons why God has singing in worship and why we don't have the musical instrument. Now we will focus on prayer and what it offers concerning our worship. What would worship be without prayer? Prayer in the first generation of the church played an important role for worship to God.

- In Acts 1:14 it was prayer that the pre-church continually participated leading up to the day of Pentecost.
- In Acts 2:42 the church was *continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*
- In Acts 3:1 Peter and John were going up to the temple to participate in the "*hour of prayer*".
- In Acts 4:31 the Christians were praying in one accord and received great confidence as a result.
- In Acts 6:4 the apostles were devoted to "*prayer*" and "*the ministry of the word*".
- In Acts 12:5 the church fervently offered prayer to God on behalf of an incarcerated Peter.
- 1 Corinthians 11:4 confirms the first generation of assembled saints prayed together.
- James 5:14 confirms the elders responsibility to pray for the hurting in the congregation.

Prayer was not only to be an important part of the lives of the assembly in the first-century, but also the twenty-first century. We therefore shall not focus so much on the history of the church and prayer, but rather the importance and the meaning of prayer in the assembly.

In Luke 11:1, some of the disciples came to Jesus, requesting, "*Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.*" Apparently John the Baptist taught his disciples a specific way of pray and the disciples of Jesus also wanted instruction. The response of Jesus is what we refer to as the *Lord's Prayer*. It is located within the greatest sermon ever spoken, the Sermon on the Mount. There are many places in the Bible which deal with prayer, however none compare to what Jesus taught in Matthew 6:5-15. Over the next two lessons we will examine the three items taught from the lips of Jesus: A) The Problems of prayer, B) the Pattern of prayer and C) Precaution of prayer.

1. The Problems of Prayer (Matthew 6:5-8)

1. Praying to Impress Men (6:5-6)

"And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶ "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.

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In first-century Jerusalem, Tuesday and Friday were market days. All the rural folk would come in with their produce to be sold to the city slickers. It was quite a site for impressionable country peasants, for the crowds were large and the commerce was hectic. The Jewish leadership in Jerusalem had set times in the day for prayer. Whenever and wherever the horns blew the signal, they would have to stop and have a moment of prayer.

Some of the Pharisees, in an attempt to show off to the crowd, would make sure they were at the busiest areas of town when the horn would blow. They wanted to be *seen of men* by offering their rehearsed, fancy prayers for all the common folk to hear. Jesus said to not be like hypocrites because they are praying to be seen of men. The Greek word for “hypocrites” referred to an actor, having many masks to play many parts in a skit. You never really were able to see the real person behind the mask.

We can be hypocrites when we pray, attempting to fool people. Jesus was not condemning public prayer in worship, but rather the intention of the prayer being offered. He wants our prayer in our public life to be focused on Him.

A young boy was praying one evening before bed. He said “God, bless Mom and Dad; bless Grandpa and Grandma and PLEASE GIVE ME A LATEST VIDEO GAME SYSTEM!” His mother said “You don’t have to yell, God can hear you.” The young boy replied “I know that, but Grandma is in the other room and I want her to get me the Nintendo.”

What is the solution to the problem of praying to men? The answer is closet time. The reason people pray to men rather than God in their corporate prayer is because it may be the only prayer offered all week by the individual. One on one prayer to God is the basis of public prayer.

2. Praying to Impress God (7-8)

"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. ⁸ "Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.

The second problem Jesus addresses is to not to be as the heathen who use vain repetitions. The Pharisees had remarkable memorization skills. To be a Pharisee, they had to memorize word for word the first five books of the Old Testament, much of Pharisaic law and a number of prayers. It was these long-winded, eloquent prayers for which Jesus referred. They were not from the heart, but from the mouth. It was to the hypocritical Pharisees that Jesus said later in *Matthew 15:8*, “*This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.*”

“Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.” If you’re a 3 year old, this is impressive. However, if you have been a Christian for a decade and you’re still saying these

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memorized formulas, it's not true praying. How many times have you heard this pattern to the prayer then used for an actual prayer?

In regards to the heathen, they would offer up prayers of repetition to their heathen gods. In 1 Kings 18:29, we find the Baal prophets of Jezebel vainly prayed to him for hours. They attempted to gain the attention of Baal. If they could just chant magical words often enough and long enough, then they could submit petition to Baal.

Our Father isn't like that. Corporate prayer in worship is not an informational service nor is it something which impresses God. The solution to this problem is knowing that He knows what we need before asking.

"Why do I need to ask God if He already knows my needs?" We don't pray to Him so He will know our needs, we pray so that WE KNOW that He knows our needs. The words "I didn't know that" are not found in the mouth of God. That's comforting to know, because sometimes we don't even know what our needs are prior to the prayer.

Do we pray to impress man? Do we pray to impress God? If we do, our corporate prayers are not going to be heard of God. When a man publicly prays on behalf of the congregation, it should be that of a direct, meaningful, reverent and heartfelt nature. Our corporate prayer is culmination of our prayers throughout the week.

2. The Pattern of Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13, Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. ¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.'

These are the five most memorized verses by the secular world concerning the Bible. It is spoken before the big game, uttered at funerals and even have chanted before bedtime as a prayer quickie. This is not to be a recitation, but the structure for which we offer our prayers unto God. The pattern is divided into four primary parts: The Prioritizing, the Program, the Provisions and the Purpose.

1. The Prioritizing: *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.*

- a. We are to prioritize His Person.
 - i. Paternity: He is our Father. We share the same Father, making us kindred spirits of the brotherhood.
 - ii. Protection: He is our Protector. Like any good father, our Father in heaven is our Protector against the evils of this world.
 - iii. Punishment: He is our Disciplinarian. He is the One who keeps us in line when we are going astray.
 - iv. Perspective: He is heavenly. He sees things from the perspective of heaven, not from a worldly point of view.

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b. We are to prioritize His Name.

The Greek word for “Hallowed” is *hagiazō* and means to sanctify, make holy, set apart, exalt. In the pattern of prayer we are to exalt the name of God. Well, what is the name of God that we are to exalt? Many of us do not hallow God’s name because we don’t know His names. What is the name of God? Before answering that question, let us ask what is in a name?

There are two types of names, those that mean something and those that don’t. Some people have the nick-name Red because they have red hair or a red complexion. If someone has the name Fats, he is likely overweight. One time I met a person named Slim and consequently, he was a bit on the slim side. These types of names are associated with a characteristic of the individual. My name is like that. “Doug” means tall, good looking, smart and humble.

Many of the names we have in our culture do not mean anything. Biblical names are not like those names. In the Bible, names meant something. Time and time again, you will find that the name of the individual reflected a characteristic of the individual.

Back to the first question about hallowing God’s name. What is the name of God? It depends on the need. In the Biblical times, God had many names.

ELOHIM--the Almighty God who keeps His promises.
EL--authority, strength and majesty.
EL-ELYON--the most high God.
EL-ROI--the God who sees thee.
EL SHADDAI--the Lord who supplies, nourishes, and satisfies
ADONAI--"Master," or "Lord."
JEHOVAH--means self existent one
JEHOVAH-JIREH--the Lord will provide
JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU--the Lord is righteousness
JEHOVAH-KADDESH--the Lord who who sanctifies
JEHOVAH-SHALOM--the Lord is peace
JEHOVAH-ROHI--the Lord is my Shepherd
JEHOVAH--SHAMMAH--the Lord Is there
JEHOVAH-NISSI--the Lord is my banner
JEHOVAH-ROPHE--the Lord heals
JEHOVAH-KANNA--the Lord is jealous
JEHOVAH-SABAOTH--the Lord of hosts

I am not saying that we need to know these Hebrew and Greek names of God to hallow Him. We do need to know His Persona in whatever language we speak. What are the qualities of God to you? How do you describe the awesomeness of His qualities? There must be this aspect to our prayers.

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King David was hallowing God's name in 1 Chronicles 29:10-11. Doesn't this sound like the Lord's Prayer? *"Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven and in earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all"*. Is it any wonder that David is called the "man after God's own heart"?

In Closing:

God wants all His servants to be people after God's own heart. This is impossible to do without prayer, both personally and among the assembly. The prayer we offer in worship should be filled with the hallowing of God's name. We are the sanctified children of God. We have a direct line to the Creator of the universe. We are special individually, but when coming together, particularly in prayer, there is superior strength. Let us prayer together in such a way when meeting here on the first day of the week.

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Part Two on Corporate Prayer

In review from the last lesson, we could see that Jesus sought to teach His people to pray. The text of Matthew 6:5-15 covers three primary sections, the Problems of Prayer, the Pattern of Prayer and Precaution of Prayer. The problems as revealed as praying to impress men and praying to impress God. Our Father wants nothing to do with these types of prayers. In the pattern of prayer we covered the first of four sub points, the Prioritizing. Our prayers to God should begin with setting apart His holy persona and His Holy name. He is our Father and His name alone is high.

In this lesson we will continue discussing the remaining of Jesus' teaching on prayer. In the pattern of prayer, there is the Prioritizing, the Program, the Provision and the Purpose. Let us cover the remaining three and then discuss the Precaution of Prayer.

2. The Program: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

What is the program of God concerning our prayers? Thy kingdom and Thy will is the program of God.

a. Thy Kingdom

At the time of the sermon, the kingdom of God had not yet been set up. A brief overview of the kingdom from the first century will reveal something wonderful.

- i. Matthew 3:2, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
- ii. Matthew 4:17, From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
- iii. Matthew 10:7, "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"
- iv. Acts 1:3, Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for forty days concerning the kingdom.
- v. Acts 1:6, And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"
- vi. Acts 2 The church is established.
- vii. After that, the kingdom is referred to as something not at hand, but already set up. Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31; Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 4:11; 1Thes 2:12; II Th 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 1:8; 12:28; James 2:5; 2 Pet 1:11 are just some of the verses that drive this point home.

It appears the New Testament writers and Christians of the first-century were under the idea that the church was the kingdom that Jesus set up. John mentioned in Revelation 1:6, "*and He has made us {to be} a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him {be} the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*" We are the kingdom!

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b. Thy Will

What is the result when we address the kingdom in prayer? There are only two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the enemy. There are only two rulers of the kingdoms, God and Satan. We can only serve one master. If we do not align ourselves with the kingdom of God and do it with the same intensity as it is done in heaven, we have defaulted to the kingdom of the enemy. *“Man cannot serve two masters, for he will love one and hate the other”*.

3. The Provision: 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.

If the pattern of prayer has been followed, then we have spent time recognizing God as our Father; we have hallowed His name; we have recognized and appreciated His kingdom; and we have meditated on His will. Now we can move onto our needs. Our provisions or needs are divided into three sections, physical, spiritual and emotional needs.

a) Physical Needs: Give us this day our daily bread

- i. Daily bread is the call to God for the meeting of our physical needs. Notice the words “us” and “our” plural and not “me” and “my” singular. You see the same pattern in the spiritual and emotional needs as well. The words “us” and “our” seems to signify a call for God to meet the needs of not the individual, but the group in which the individual is located, henceforth covering the individual.

Personal prayer is not focused strictly on “me” and “my”, but rather personally focusing on the needs of the members of the Church. If you’re praying for the needs of the Body and you are a member of the Body, then you’re covered by the prayer. There’s nothing wrong with praying for individual needs, but if you find yourself praying “me, myself and I” and not praying for the needs of the church, is it any wonder that your prayer comes back “Return to Sender”? Love your neighbor as you love yourself and you will see those needs met.

- ii. “*Daily*” tells us what increments for which we are to pray for these needs. This is one that can be kind of difficult to understand because we live in a country where we have been abundantly blessed. Many of us have a couple of months of daily bread in the bank and in the deep freeze. If we don’t get our daily portion, we have it in reserve. Things have not always been that way nor are they guaranteed to stay that way. In these cases we are thank God.

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- b) Spiritual Needs: “And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”
- i. Man’s greatest spiritual need is forgiveness. Without it, we might as well stop praying. Without forgiveness, we are contaminated with sin and God will not have fellowship with us.
 - ii. There are two types of forgiveness, initial and perpetual. The initial forgiveness is the forgiveness we received when we were baptized into the Body of Christ. There is a need for the perpetual or an applied continuance of forgiveness. The forgiveness this refers to is perpetual. We are to deal with our own forgiveness as tied to our attitude toward our fellow man. There is a contingency on this forgiveness called being forgiving of others. If we are not forgiving, we do not get forgiven.
- c) Emotional Needs: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”
- i. This is an emotional need because after one gets forgiveness, he needs the emotional stability of knowing there is divine protection to guard against re-occurrence.
 - ii. The Greek word for temptation is *piramos*: meaning to try or test, however within the translation there is a dual meaning. In James chapter 1, we find an example of both. James 1:2-3 says to “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptation. For the trying of your faith worketh patience.” This is the first meaning. When God tempts you, it is to pass the test and show the world what we’re made of. It’s God saying, “Look what kind of children I raise.”
 - iii. The second form of temptation comes in verse 13. “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.” There is a second individual called Satan, who wants to blacken the eye of Christ through our sin. The church is full of battered Christians who have been in the losing side of spiritual war. They have been unable to recognize the “*way to escape*” the temptation that God has provided as described in 1 Corinthians 10:13. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” is our request to God not to give us anything we can’t handle today.
4. The Purpose: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen”
- At the close of the Pattern of Prayer, we find the Purpose of the whole thing. The word “*For*” is the first word of the phrase that connects whatever was proceeding before to what is following after. In other words, the purpose or reason we are to say Our Father, the reason we are to locate Him in heaven, the reason we are to hallow His name, the reason we are to align with His Kingdom, the reason we are to only do His will, the reason we are to seek daily bread, the reason we are to seek to be forgiving, the reason we are to seek divine protection is for “*THINE*”. “*Thine?*” That’s where we started isn’t it? Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be “*THY*” name.

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Prayer starts with God and ends with God. “Well what about me?” There’s a place for us in the prayer, as long as we tied into His program, get the drift. It’s all for His kingdom, and His power, and His glory, forever. The reason for our very existence is to glorify Him. 1 Corinthians 10:31 “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all for the glory of God*”.

C. The Precaution of Prayer

Mathew 6:14-15 “*For if ye forgive men of their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you*”

I don’t need to spend a whole lot of time on the precaution. It’s quite simple. Many of our prayers will never be answered because we hold a grudge against another member. God just isn’t going to acknowledge a prayer until we forgive each other. It was important enough for Jesus to single it out. He knows us all too well, doesn’t He?