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Matthew 6:9-10
The Model Prayer (Part 1)

Experts have long chronicled the countless ways that men and women are different. It is, as many counselors have suggested, as if they are from two different worlds. Some differences are more prevalent whereas others are less so. Consider, for example, how men are more likely to ignore instructions. Men tend to look at a picture and assume they can do it without any help. Although a source of much humor, Christians are guilty of doing the same thing especially when it comes to prayer. Like the Disciples who asked Jesus to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1), we too often ask the same. Fortunately, Jesus offers a model prayer for us to follow. Commonly called "The Lord's Prayer," it is instructions on how to pray. Will we follow it?

Although Jesus's model prayer is often used in a ritual-like way, that is not its intention. Jesus had previously criticized ritual prayers (see vs. 7) and thus we err when we do the same. Likewise, the Model Prayer is not Jesus's personal prayer considering his request for forgiveness in verse 12. The Prayer, however, serves as instructions on how we can structure and do the same. Its focus is not on the self but rather on God and the community. Notice that Jesus prays to "our father" and for "our bread" and "our trespasses" as opposed to "my father," "my bread," and "my trespasses." This is the sort of prayer we would expect to find among the poor in spirit, the meek, and the pure in heart. Its desire is God's glory, our holiness, and the good of others.

The first component of prayer is **Adoration**. The greatest flaw of our approach to prayer is our approach to prayer. We often treat prayer as a cosmic ATM machine whereby we make our request and wait to hear back from God. But notice, prayer becomes a means to an end. It's about our wants rather than his glory. This is the sort of behavior Jesus has been warning against since vs. 1. A proper motivation for charity, for example, ought to be God's glory. So too, a proper motivation for prayer ought to be God's glory. We can either approach prayer as a means to get *from* God or to simply get God. A relationship built solely on fulfilling personal needs is not much of a relationship. Jesus rightly demonstrates that the focus of our prayers ought to be the essence, person, and work of our Creator-Redeemer.

Adoration begins with a focus on GOD'S POSITION. We take the language of the fatherhood of God for granted because of what Jesus taught us. In the Old Testament, the fatherhood of God is not a central theme. When God is referred to as "father," it is usually by way of analogy and not by way of direct address (see, for example, Psalm 103:13). Jesus changes all of that. Not only did he refer to God as his father but taught his disciples to do the same.

Father helpfully speaks of both Transcendence and Immanence. Transcendence speaks of God as being outside our full experience, perception, or grasp. He is above and beyond us. He is powerful,

mighty, holy, and great. He is up there. We may think of him as sovereign, providential, and holy. Immanence describes how God is with us. He directs us to his knowability, intimacy, and care. The God we worship and pray to is both Transcendent and Immanent and this is where we ought to begin. Notice that Jesus wants us to orientate our prayers away from the self and toward the divine. We are seeking his attention, asking for his presence, approaching him. We are not entitled to such a privilege. Rather, we ought to be in awe of it.

Secondly, Jesus directs us to GOD'S ESSENCE. To *hallow* something is to sanctify it, or to make it holy (see, for example, John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11). The bizarre part of this petition is that God's name would be hallowed. But isn't it already? The Seraphim are, right now, declaring "holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty." Isn't God, in his very essence already hallowed, holy, and sanctified? We glorify God by recognizing his holiness in our ongoing effort to become holy. This is the language of reverence.

Finally, Jesus directs us to GOD'S MISSION. The request for God's Kingdom to come and his will to be done does not mean God fails in accomplishing all that he wills. Rather, it is a prayer that God's Kingdom would expand by the triumph of the gospel. It draws us away from the kingdoms of men and onto the Kingdom of God. Our priority should not be what we are building for ourselves, but what God is building.

Once we grasp the centrality of adoration in our prayers, we will naturally turn to **Thanksgiving**. Although many have pointed out the absence of any clear reference to gratitude in the Model Prayer, one should consider how naturally worship feeds thanksgiving. When we contemplate the person and work of Christ, how can we respond with anything other than thanksgiving.

Adoration ought to be central to our prayers. Failure to do so robs of the awesome privilege of approaching the very throne of God. Do not lose that perspective. Related to Adoration is Thanksgiving and Scripture clearly demands we express gratitude in our prayer life (see, 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; John 11:41). Adoration fuels gratitude.

When our prayers are only supplication, they become inwardly focused. Re-examine your prayers. Are they only "me, me, me?" If so, then practice both Adoration and Thanksgiving. Self-oriented prayers fuel entitlement and insecurity. You'll attach God's fatherly love with getting what you want. That is not a healthy relationship. Adoration and Thanksgiving fuel love and intimacy with our Maker. Don't simply seek things from God, seek God. You already have enough in him.

A 4-year-old was trying to learn the Lord's Prayer primarily by listening at church each Sunday. On one Sunday he could be heard above all the others, praying, "Our Father who art in Heaven, I know you know my name." But do we know his? Let our prayers be an opportunity of praise and intimacy.