

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM LORD'S DAY 45 (ON PRAYER)

116 Q. A. Why do Christians need to pray?

Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. (Ps. 50:14-15; 116:12-19; 1 Thess. 5:16-18)

And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking God for them. (Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13)

117 Q. A. What is the kind of prayer that pleases God and that he listens to?

First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, revealed to us in his Word, asking for everything God has commanded us to ask for. (Ps. 145:18-20; John 4:22-24; Rom. 8:26-27; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15)

Second, we must fully recognize our need and misery, so that we humble ourselves in God's majestic presence. (2 Chron. 7:14; Ps. 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Isa. 66:2; Rev. 4)

Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. That is what God promised us in his Word. (Dan. 9:17-19; Matt. 7:8; John 14:13-14; 16:23; Rom. 10:13; James 1:6)

118 Q. A. What did God command us to pray for?

Everything we need, spiritually and physically,¹ as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us. (James 1:17; Matt. 6:33)

119 Q. A. What is this prayer?

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen. (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4)

*Earlier and better manuscripts of Matthew 6 omit the words "For the kingdom and . . . Amen."



DAY 1:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. Amen

The Lord's Prayer is mentioned twice in the gospels (Matthew 6 and Luke 11). Each situation is different. This means that it is not something Jesus randomly mentioned, but something fundamental that He deliberately repeated because the Lord's Prayer was so important. Over the course of the next six weeks, we will be looking at each of the different phrases in depth each week.

For now pray through the Lord's Prayer slowly a few times, which phrase (s) sticks out for you?

DAY 2:

In Luke 11, Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer when the disciples asked him how to teach them how to pray. In his book *The Prayer of the Lord*, R.C. Sproul says. "Why did they ask Him this question? My guess is that they saw the link between Jesus' extraordinary prayer life and His power, His teaching, His character, His whole person. They must have noticed that

after ministering to large crowds of people, Jesus often would withdraw by Himself. He must have felt drained from that ministry. During such times, Jesus would not simply withdraw for a half hour or so. Rather, He would go apart for long periods, and when He did so, He usually spent much of the time in intense seasons of prayer.” The disciples saw the impact that the prayer had on his life. They wanted to learn how they could experience this too.

Why do you think prayer is important? What are the things that hinder your prayer life? What do you hope to learn about prayer through this sermon series?

DAY 3:

On Sunday, our passage listed two different dangers we need to be aware of when we pray. Take a minute to read through the additional reading from *Expectant* by Ryan Pelton to the right.

Of the two “dangers” mentioned, which one resonates with you? Why is it easy to want to be perceived as spiritual and put together especially through prayer? Ask God to examine your heart. Confess any sin that he reveals to you.

DAY 4:

In our midweek study, we will not only explore modern authors, we hope to gain insight from older documents. In particular, we will explore what the Heidelberg Catechism teaches on the topic of the Lord’s Prayer. This document was written in 1563 and is a very personal and theological confession of faith. Read through the Q&A on back.

What question and answer struck you the most? Why?

Expectant: Rediscovering the Power of the Lord's Prayer by Ryan Pelton

Danger #1 Approaching God like hypocrites (Matt. 6: 5). When Jesus is asked by his disciples how they should pray he begins with a warning. A warning that is less about the technique of praying. It is more about how people approach God. He tells his first disciples to not pray like hypocrites. The word for hypocrite is the idea of someone wearing a mask in a play. We put on an external facade that is disconnected from an internal reality. Putting on a mask to play a part in a play or movie is not wrong in and of itself. The problem with wearing a mask is when we put it on to pretend we are something that we are not. The challenge in prayer is the insatiable desire to be perceived as spiritual. We have seen spiritual leaders that pray with verbose words, laced with spiritual jargon, only to find that their life is a sham. The warning Jesus gives, is not about praying in public. The warning is the desire to be “seen” in public. To draw attention away from God and put it on ourselves. Jesus tells us that instead of the reward and blessing of God, we get pats on the back (v. 5). Instead of getting God Himself, the delight of God, and knowing God, we get the praise of men. This is a sad tradeoff.

So how are we to pray? Jesus tells us to go into a quiet place, shut the door, and talk to God. God will reward you with Himself. God will honor you for this kind of praying. Does this mean we should never pray in public? Of course not. Our faith in Christ is personal, but not private. But, we must check our heart and motivations when we pray.

Danger #2 Approaching God like Gentiles (pagans) (Matt. 6: 7-8). To pray like the Gentiles was to pray with many words, to pray as a mantra or incantation, thinking that by their many words, God would be more pleased. Gentiles (or pagans) in Rome would call out to many gods and goddesses. Gods to meet their particular needs, whether that be fertility, financial, or agricultural. You have heard people pray in this manner. They ramble, repeating themselves, and pray long drawn out prayers. They love to hear themselves. This kind of praying is more in line with New Age teaching that by vain repetition they can change their situation. To pray in this manner, is to take the focus off of God and to put it on ourselves. Praying in a mantra or incantation like manner is to see God as a dispenser of religious goods. Not a God we are to enjoy, submit to, and call Father. Jesus warns us that the amount of words and babbling does not make our prayers more effective. Why? Because God already knows what we need before we even utter a word (v. 8). God is sovereign and all knowing. He knows your past, present, and future. He knows your deepest desires, hopes, and wants, even the sinful ones. More time with God listening and enjoying God for who he is. God wants to meet with us. To talk with us. We are his children. We have a perfect daddy to enjoy. We have been adopted into a new family. If God already knows what we need before we even ask, maybe we can shorten up our petitions. And as a result, enjoy God more.