

MATTHEW 6

PRAYER



Matthew 6

Prayer

PREFACE

God's Word contains the answers to all of life's problems and needs. As we apply God's Word to our daily lives, the Holy Spirit strengthens us, our faith grows, and our lives are transformed.

But for many the bible is a complex book, too huge to tackle.

By selecting important chapters of the Bible (20 from the Old Testament, 20 from the New Testament) and focusing on them, I hope to encourage you to get into God's Word. To help accomplish this, I have prepared a visual memory aid for each key chapter. The aids are purposely *weird* in order to increase retention. Each aid has three elements:

1. The *book* of the Bible
2. The *chapter*
3. The *theme* of the chapter

By studying the memory aid several times and focusing on it, you will recall the image and consequently the book, chapter and theme.

Remembering these key chapters will enrich your daily life. It will also help you to relate God's Word to others. As you write greeting cards or speak with people, you will be able to apply God's Word directly to their problems or needs.

At times, you will be unable to speak directly to a person. Send them a Key Chapter booklet! They are designed for sharing!

Each Key Chapter booklet is presented in the same format:

1. *Background* for the chapter
2. *Key verses* of the chapter
3. *Thoughts* on the theme of the chapter

Bible classes and small study groups will find the third section helpful for discussions. The *thoughts* will provide a variety of applications upon which to reflect.

God will not let his Word return void (Isaiah 55:11)!

He will bless you abundantly as you meditate on his Word (Psalm 119:48)!

He will enable you to be a blessing to others as you spread his Word (Genesis 12: 2-3)!

Soli Deo Gloria,
Paul R. Schroeder

Explanation of the Memory Aid

1. The BOOK of the Bible:
The mat = **Matthew**
2. The CHAPTER:
The *number* of people = **CHAPTER 6**
3. The THEME:
The people looking up to heaven in *prayer*= **PRAYER**

MATTHEW 6: BACKGROUND

Prayer is a great gift of God! Through prayer, we are in direct communication with God. He has promised to hear and answer us. What an enormous privilege.

When calling on the phone, we usually hang up if there is not answer. Some people pray that way. If God doesn't answer immediately, they give up. How unfortunate. When believers pray they are ready to wait patiently on God's timing as well as his will. Efforts to make God "perform" according to our will and timing should not be part of our prayers.

Christ has made it possible for us to approach God in prayer. He enables us to do so through the forgiveness of sins accomplished on the cross. He knows our sin, but he chooses to pronounce us holy—his children. We sinner/saints thereby approach our holy God believing in his Son. So it is that all prayer must be in the name of Jesus. Only through him do we have access to the Father (John 14: 13-14).

Any person hoping to be greatly used by God must of necessity engage in constant and fervent prayer.

But how are we to pray? Both the Old and New Testament are filled with the prayers of God's people. We can learn from them. Better yet, Jesus gives us an answer. The disciples had asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. The sample prayer he gave them is recorded in Matthew 6—the Lord's Prayer.

KEY VERSES OF MATTHEW 6

Verse 6

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The opening verses of Matthew 6 warn us about doing spiritual things (giving, praying, and later in the chapter, fasting) for our own personal glory or reward. The warnings are necessary because of our self-centered, sinful nature.

Motives are crucial! We are to be doing these actions so that God will receive the glory. Pray, give, and fast for God's glory.

Verse 9

This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name, Our relationship with God is like a child's relationship with a loving father. We bear his name. We keep it holy by holy living, according to his Word.

Verse 10

***Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.***

We ask:

- That God's kingdom of grace (his church) will expand and grow;
- That God's kingdom of power will rule here on earth as perfectly as it rules in heaven;
- That the Lord will return soon.

“Your will be done,” these are certainly the most difficult words in the prayer. We yield our preferences and priorities to the will of God. This requires humility. Difficult? Yes! Worth it? Absolutely! Our loving God knows the future. As a loving God, he will do only that which is for our eternal good. Indeed, “Your will be done.”

Verse 11

Give us today our daily bread.

God graciously supplies our physical and spiritual needs. “Food” reminds us of necessities, not luxuries. Receive it all with thanksgiving.

Verse 12

***Forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors.***

This verse is often misunderstood. It does not mean that we *earn* our forgiveness from God by forgiving others. God's Word rejects such an interpretation. We cannot earn or deserve God's forgiveness through anything we do. As God in his mercy forgives, we will be moved to also forgive. (See Romans 5: 8-10; 8: 5-8; Galatians 2: 20-21.)

James makes this same connection of faith and good works in his epistle. (See Key Chapter booklet *James 2: Works*). Faith shows itself by forgiving others. If we are unwilling to forgive others, how can we claim that the forgiveness of Christ is in us?

When we have difficulty forgiving others, or ourselves, it demonstrates the need to refocus on Christ's forgiveness of us. His forgiveness will flow through us to others. (See Mark 11: 25-26).

Matthew 6: 14-15 helps clarify: If Christ's forgiveness is in us, it will show by our willingness to forgive others. By forgiving others, our faith is shown to be alive and well.

Faith is a relationship with God. Without faith, we are not right with God and not enabled to forgive others. With it, we are right with God and enabled to forgive as we have been forgiven.

Verse 13

***And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.***

God doesn't tempt (James 1: 13); rather, we ask God to keep us safe from the temptation of Satan, which would lead us to doubt God and away from faith.

God does at times test us to strengthen our faith and draw us closer to him (Hebrews 12:6).

A simple test to determine whether an event in your life is being used by God or Satan (since any event can be used by either) is to ask, "Which way am I moving in my spiritual life, toward God or away from him?"

Discipline from God (Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12: 5-11; Revelation 3:19, 1 Corinthians 11: 32) aims to be corrective in nature and is always given in love. (See Romans 5: 3-5).

Satan is not content to harm. He intends to destroy! As a lion, he does not merely wish to bite you—he intends to devour you (1 Peter 5:8).

The ultimate goal of Satan is our eternal separation from God. Human power and strength cannot resist him since he is a spirit (Ephesians 6:12). We must have the armor of God to be victorious (See Key Chapters booklet *Ephesians 6: Armor*). It is this protection and victory that we pray for in Matthew 6: 13.

Verses 21, 24

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

You have to make a commitment. God will not share his place in your heart. He wants your whole heart, soul, and mind.

Beware of money. In a materialistic society, money can easily become a false god.

Verses 33

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

God wants first place in our lives. He will bless.

Verses 34

Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

This verse summarizes the previous nine verses. The useless and silly nature of worry is revealed. It is pointed out that pagans have such concerns. As God's people, we are invited to trust Him to guide us and provide for us. (See Psalm 37: 4-5; Romans 10: 11; Matthew 7: 11).

THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

Day 1

The eye illustrates a point in Matthew 6: 22-23. When healthy, it sees clearly and plainly. When sick, it sees unclearly and dimly, causing confusion. We must fix our eyes on Christ; then our healthy eyes will see life clearly.

* * *

Prayers of faith and an obedient heart go together (1 John 3: 21-24).

* * *

To worry is to live as if you were a spiritual orphan.

* * *

Martin Luther felt fasting was a good outward preparation for Christian living—a form of self-discipline.

* * *

The more possessions a person has the greater the danger of idolatry, because the need to protect and care for possessions can become a form of slavery.

* * *

Heavenly treasures are not subject to any type of decay, rest, or theft. The faithful will not lose their inheritance. (See 1 Peter 1: 3-5).

* * *

Prayer is personal communion with God. Prayer is worship.

* * *

Aren't we to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28)? Aren't we to pray for their conversion? Of course! But what if they refuse conversion? What if their heart is hardened? What if they are leading others to hell with a different gospel? We pray God's judgment upon them to prevent them from leading others away from God (Galatians 1: 8-9; 2 Timothy 4: 14-15).

* * *

The Lord's Prayer is brief. There is no repetition. The attention God gives your prayers is not determined by the weight of the words.

* * *

God's answer to your prayer may be yes, no, or later.

* * *

Day 2

There is no prayer to God without faith in Christ.

* * *

To resist Satan you must have the armor of God. (See Key Chapter booklet *Ephesians 6: Armor*).

* * *

Words come easy. God looks at the heart.

* * *

Worry is a disease that can produce many ills, not the least of which is fear. The burden and weight of worry is a form of mental and spiritual suicide (Matthew 6: 25-34). But God calls you to "Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

* * *

Pray:

- In the spirit (Romans 8:26);
- In faith (James 1: 6-7; Mark 11: 24);
- According to God's will (1 John 5: 14; Matthew 26: 39)
- In the name of Jesus (John 14: 13; 16: 23).

* * *

Matthew 6: 24 calls for choosing between God and money. In this decision, there is no compromise.

* * *

One goal of prayer is to continue to seek the will of God (Colossians 3: 1-2).

* * *

A prayerful heart pours out thanks to God (Colossians 4: 2). Effective prayer time involves a large portion devoted to praising God. (See also Luke 17: 11-19; 1 Thessalonians 5: 18).

* * *

The Lord's Prayer is found twice in Scripture: Luke 11 and Matthew 6.

* * *

If God knows our needs ahead of time, why pray? If your wife knows you love her, why tell her? It's the same type of question. God's omniscience is not to be a deterrent. We pray, not because we have to, but because we wish to respond to his command and promise. We desire to speak to God as our friend. God not only knows our needs, he desires to fulfill them (Mark 11: 24).

* * *

The Holy Spirit prays for us. By his power we cry, "Abba Father" (Romans 8: 15-17, 26-27). We may pray boldly as God's children.

* * *

Day 3

Matthew 7:7: Knock and the door will be opened to you.

This does not happen for unbelievers since they have no spiritual ability to come to God (Romans 5: 8-10; Galatians 2: 20-21). These words remind weak Christians who feel their prayers are not being answered to be persistent. If the door appears closed, be faithful, be patient, God will answer.

* * *

The evidence of faith will be seen in actions (fruit). (See also Matthew 7: 16-20). God looks for obedience (Matthew 7: 2-23).

* * *

Prayer submits to the will of God. (See 1 John 5: 14-15).

* * *

The sacredness of his name is of major importance to God. Not only does he refer to it in the Lord's Prayer, he also issued a command on the subject.

* * *

There is a thin line between persistence and patience. God wants us to wait upon him. That waiting is to be active rather than passive, trusting rather than hopeless despair.

* * *

God is available at all times to his people. Our God never sleeps (Psalm 121:4).

* * *

Here's a helpful reminder: ACTS of prayer:

A = Adoration (Psalm 34:1)

C = Confession (Psalm 51)

T = Thanksgiving (1 Thessalonians 5: 17-18)

S = Supplication (Ephesians 6: 18)

* * *

Christ intercedes for us before the throne of his Father (Romans 8: 34). We have a High Priest.

* * *

Day 4

Some things that hinder prayer include:

- Willful sin (Psalm 66:18; John 9: 31);
- Pride (Luke 18: 11-14; Matthew 5: 5-6)
- Asking for selfish passions (James 4: 3);
- Lack of faith (Hebrews 11: 6; James 1: 6-7);
- Not treating your spouse properly (1 Peter 3: 7).
-

* * *

Here is a list of the negative side of worry contained in Matthew 6:

- It not only is needless, it is useless. Worry can't change a thing (v. 27).
- It causes you to forget your worth in God's eyes (vv. 26, 28-30).
- Worldly people observe that you are not different from them (v. 32).
- Worry replaces trust in God. Anxiety can preoccupy your mind and prevent you from putting God first (v. 33).

* * *

A sample of a persistent prayer that was blessed can be found in Matthew 15: 21-18.

* * *

Wait upon the Lord, God's timing is often no our timing.

* * *

Luther felt the Lord's Prayer was often martyred by thoughtless repetition.

* * *

1 Thessalonians 5:17: Pray continually.

Our relationship to God in prayer is never ending.

* * *

We are reminded to pray for others, even our enemies. (See Matthew 5: 44; Colossians 1: 3; 1 Thessalonians 5: 25).

* * *

Watch and pray—these two go together. (See Matthew 26: 41; Mark 13: 32).

* * *

Humility is needed for prayer (Luke 18: 9-14). When the heart is full, the soul is tender.

Day 5

God promises to answer prayer. This prompts us to do the following:

- Believe (Mark 11: 22-24; 1 timothy 2:8; Matthew 21:22)
- Forgive others (Mark 11: 25-26)
- Ask in Christ's name (John 14: 13-14; John 16: 23)
- Obey the Lord's commandments (1 John 3:22; James 5:16)
- Ask according to God's will (1 John 5: 14; Matthew 8: 2; Luke 11:13; Luke 22: 42; Romans 8: 28)

* * *

Prayer connected to the will of God fosters confidence (See 1 John 5: 14-20).

* * *

We sometimes feel that God answered our prayer when the result agreed with our wishes, and conversely, feel that God didn't answer when the result was not what we wished (see Psalm 42: 9).

* * *

God loves unity among his people. He promises to be present where two or three are gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20). This does not imply that sheer numbers will force him to respond. He also promises that even the fervent prayer of one righteous person has his total attention (James 5: 16).

* * *

The will of God includes:

- The proclamation of the message of salvation (1 Timothy 2: 4);
- That we lead a godly life (1 Thessalonians 4: 3);
- That we be patient in tribulation (Matthew 16: 24; Acts 14: 22; Hebrews 12: 6, 11);
- That we oppose Satan and his works (1 John 2: 15-17; Romans 16: 20);
- That we be faithful to the end (Matthew 10: 22; Revelation 2: 10).

* * *

Amen means "Yes, yes! It is true!"

* * *