

February 1

Scriptures: Read Matthew 6

Key Verse: “This is how you should pray...” (Matthew 6:9)

Overview

Jesus teaches us how to pray and I’ve often noted how simple this prayer is and how complex most of our praying seems to be in comparison. Like the pagan, Jesus says, we sometimes think we’ll be heard for our much speaking, for our babbling, for our repetitions. They use many words, as He says in verse 7; not so with Jesus. He wants us to be short with our words and direct. So He gives a prayer lesson.

Just few observations: First of all, the focus is our Father in heaven, which is the way it must always be in prayer. Before we start asking God for things, we’ve got to take time to remind ourselves of who He is and focus on His holiness and majestic transcendence. “Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.” The focus is on Him, His name, His kingdom, and His will. As we concentrate first and foremost on Him, anything else that may follow in our prayer takes on a fresh and balanced perspective.

Sometimes our prayers are a knee-jerk reaction to a negative or urgent stimulus. And we “rush in” to tell God what He’s got to do, and what we want, and how important it is He do it now.

Well, if you’ll take time to focus in on Him, first of all, and see yourself in the context of His holiness, His plan for the kingdom and His will for your life, then some of these other urgencies become tempered and balanced. After this, you can focus on yourself. “Five us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts and we have also forgiven our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” We stress our physical and spiritual needs, our relationship needs and ultimately our eternal destiny needs. We must always remember in prayer that we are headed for an eternal kingdom – this very kingdom of heaven that Jesus makes the centre of His ministry. Thus, as we pray, we always begin with God Himself, focusing in on Him, praising Him, thanking Him, worshipping Him. And in that context, imploring Him to meet us at our point of need.

Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray, even as You taught Your disciples, that we will focus on You first and then on our own needs.