



## Daily Verse and Comment

### Matthew 6:9-13

(9) Therefore, you are to pray after this manner: 'Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name; (10) Your kingdom come; Your 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 forgive our debtors; (13) And lead us not into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'

*A Faithful Version*

When I played Little League baseball in the Columbia, South Carolina, area, it was the practice of our league to gather one team around first base and the opposing team around third base. All the players and coaches would take a knee and reach forward to grab part of a bat that someone placed upright on the base or stack their hands on top of it. Once everyone was situated, the head coach would say, "Take off your caps and bow your heads," and we would all begin to recite the Lord's Prayer in a rapid-fire monotone, hoping to beat the other team to the end. Once done, the players and coaches scrambled back to their respective dugouts, and the umpire called, "Play ball!" [God](#) had been invoked and all was well.

Did anyone at the ballpark ever stop to consider if the Lord's Prayer—which is a misnomer; it should be "The Disciples' Prayer" or "The Model Prayer"—has anything to do with baseball? The word does not appear in [Matthew 6:9-13](#) or, in fact, in the Bible. The prayer that [Jesus](#) gave His disciples to teach them to pray is about God the Father, His [holiness](#), His name, His Kingdom, His will, His power, His glory, and His eternity, as well as requests for daily providence, forgiveness, guidance, and deliverance. Nary a word about curveballs, double plays, or stealing second base.

Memorizing the so-called Lord's Prayer is a wonderful thing to do. Parents should make it their aim to teach it to their children. But unlike many in

nominal Christianity, we need to go further and teach our children that the prayer is not one to be mindlessly repeated but a guideline for our personal, private prayers to "our Father in heaven." It maps out the general attitude and subjects of prayer that we should take to heart and cut deeply into our memory.

It is a wonder that so few who frequently use [Matthew 6:9-13](#) both publicly and privately know what Jesus says—no, *commands*—in the immediately preceding verses:

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they [love](#) to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ([Matthew 6:5-8](#))

Christ plainly says that public prayers made expressly to be seen by others are hypocritical, and prayers that are repeated vainly (meaning "carelessly," "uselessly," or "thoughtlessly") are heathen! Obviously, this does not mean that He forbids public prayer; there are many examples of proper public prayer in Scripture (see, for example, [1 Kings 8:22-53](#); [Ezra 9:6-15](#); [Nehemiah 9:5-38](#); [John 17:1-26](#); etc.). Public prayer is a necessary part of opening and closing religious services. What Jesus denounces is making a show of praying to enhance one's reputation as a "religious" or "righteous" person, as well as repetitious, canned prayers and overlong, tedious prayers.

Overall, Jesus warns us against two mistakes when praying: making them about us and making them meaningless. Doing either (or both) will ruin their effectiveness and actually work at cross-purposes to spiritual growth. When we pray, we must remember it is a formal conversation with the divine Governor of the Universe. We have not entered His court for our own gratification and glory. We certainly do not want to bore Him by endlessly repeating the same five words or giving Him the expanded *War and [Peace](#)*

version of our pitiful lives. To the contrary, we are before Him to praise Him, to thank Him, to beseech Him for help both for others and ourselves, and to praise and thank Him. I repeat myself for emphasis.

What would we think of a friend who came to the front door each morning, and upon opening it to admit him, he said the exact same thing that he had said the past 532 straight mornings, droning on for half an hour without coming up for air? We might love him as a friend, but we would surely think he was a bit strange and wasting our time with his endless repetitions. We would soon tune out his robotic, one-sided conversation.

We are blessed that God is far more patient and understanding with us than we would be to such a bore. He listens to our petitions whether we are eloquent or mind-numbingly incoherent (see [Romans 8:26](#)). Yet, notice that Jesus tells the disciples—us—that the Father knows what we need before we ask Him. We are not springing anything on Him that He has not already figured out. So there is no need for us to meander, be vague, or employ some kind of rhetorical device that is "guaranteed" to convince Him that He has to intervene immediately. There is no need to try to impress Him with our knowledge, persuasiveness, or righteousness. He wants us to be ourselves and to speak with Him as family members do—with, of course, the proper reverence for who He is.

What is most important—what He is looking for—is a "poor and . . . contrite spirit, and [one] who trembles at My word" ([Isaiah 66:2](#)). If the attitude is humble, focused on God's will and His plan for us, He will hear and respond. More importantly, we will be drawing closer to Him and taking on aspects of His character that are so essential to Christian life and the [Kingdom of God](#).

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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