

Lord, Teach Us To Pray

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 March 2024

Preacher: Hoong Phak Ng

[0 : 00] Let's just commit a sermon to God. Father, we come before your word.

We thank you that you have given your word to us and you speak to us through your word. Lord, today, Lord, we just ask that, Lord, you prepare us as we listen to your word and as we hear your word preached.

Lord, be with us, help us, teach us to pray, Lord, in your gracious name. Amen. It was in 1981 and I was waiting for my application to university.

I was offered an ASEAN scholarship to study in Singapore, but it was not a course I was so keen on. Now, the deadline to accept the offer was fast approaching.

What should I do? I was still waiting for the result of my application to University of Malaya for the course I wanted. I was a very new Christian then, probably a few months.

[1 : 19] I decided I needed a sign from God what to do. So I got down on my knees and prayed to this Christian God that I had just put my faith in.

What was his will for my life? The very exact moment I got up from my knees, I heard the horn of the postman at my gate.

Guess what? The offer from University of Malaya came. If only all our prayers are answered that way.

Over the years, it is our common experience to encounter many things that concern us, that affect our lives directly or indirectly, many crossroads with decisions to make, one life crisis after another. Now, to them all, I'm sure we prayed to our Father in Heaven. At times, God answered our desperate pleas so miraculously.

[2 : 27] We rejoiced and we thanked Him. Other times, God answered our prayers not in the way we wanted, but we saw His goodness and blessings in the answers that He gave, and we thanked Him.

Still, at other times, it is as if the gates of Heaven were so tightly shut, and we are still waiting for an answer to our persistent request.

Prayer. We all have questions and uncertainties. I don't know how to pray. I don't know what to pray.

Should I bring to God issues that seem so trivial? I just heard this one. After a prayer asking for God's protection on a journey, someone in the group who was not yet a Christian commented, Why pray so long?

Why pray so long? For so many things. Poor Jesus. He's so busy already. Make Him more busy. Does God really want to hear all that?

[3 : 43] Does He have time? Millions of prayers each minute from planet Earth. Is He interested in prayers from a small fry like me?

Is He more inclined to answer the prayers of prominent people? The pastor, perhaps? Should I continue to pray for the same thing day after day that doesn't seem to get answered?

Better don't pray for patience. Afterwards, kena betested betul-betul. Questions. Uncertainties. Superstitions. Well, one day, seeing Jesus in prayer awakened a realization in a disciple. He wanted to learn to pray.

Lord, teach us to pray. Thank God for this disciple and his request. Lord, teach us to pray. Pew! What a relief.

[4 : 46] I am not the only one who is uncertain how to pray. Seems like prayer doesn't come naturally. It can be taught. It can be learned.

So, be comforted if you are uncertain. And lend Jesus your ears. In his answer, Jesus deals with the content and priorities in prayer.

And no one knows who the Father is, except the Son, and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. So Jesus chose to reveal the Father, to his disciples.

[11:51] But, he actually goes one step further. He asked them to address God, the same way he did. When you pray, say, Father.

Addressing God as Father, is a Christian privilege. The Muslims cannot do it. Father, or Abba, is the language used by Jewish children and adults, when addressing their fathers.

My son, Jeremy, never addressed me as Hong Pak, but as Dad, or Daddy. Father, Dad, is the language of affection, and intimacy.

Addressing God as Father, conveys our affection, and love for him, and expresses the confidence, and childlike trust we have, in his love, his protection, his care, his provision, his forgiveness.

It also implies, our voluntary respect, and obedience. Now, this teaching on prayer, took place, while Jesus was on his way, to Jerusalem.

[13:14] He journeys there, to die for our sins. So that, eventually, having been reconciled, to God, by Jesus' death, and resurrection, we, not only get to, call God, Father, but, we are, adopted children, in his family, through the spirit, of adoption.

God, is, our Father, in Christ. When you whisper, Father, do you sense, his sweet embrace, his love, his affection, in your spirit.

Having God, as Father, and developing, a close, and intimate relationship, with him, does not ignore, reverence. We recognize, that we are not, talking to a peer, but we are coming, before God himself.

And so, the first petition, is for our Father's name, to be hallowed, to be honoured, to be revered, as holy, that he, is honoured, and most holy.

What prayers, can we pray, that the Father's name, be hallowed? I think we have seen, examples of it, even today. The songs that we sung, the prayer that, Elder Dennis prayed.

[14:46] We can pray prayers, that exalt God, and praise him, for who he is, for what he has done. We exalt him, as creator, sovereign king, saviour, father, praising him, for the salvation, we have in Jesus.

Thanking him, for his grace, mercy, goodness, holiness. The list, is inexhaustive. Read the Psalms, and be inspired, to hallow his name.

Read the prayers, recorded in the Bible, and find words, to use, to honour his name. But not only, do we honour him, with our lips, we also honour him, with our lives.

So we pray, for our own lives. We pray, that we never, ever take his name, in vain. That our conduct, and doctrine, be truly Christian, and not bring, our father's name, to shame.

We pray, that our good works, will bring praise, to him. And Jesus, is our great example. As the cross, drew near, he prayed, father, glorify your name, knowing what it, will cause him.

[16:01] Jesus, taught us next, to pray, for the father's kingdom, to come. There are two facets, to this prayer. Every time we pray, the Lord's prayer, we are asking, for Jesus, to come back soon.

Come Lord Jesus, come and establish, the perfect, promised kingdom, the new heaven, and the new earth, where the father's name, will be truly, hallowed by everyone, everywhere, and for all time.

Even as every knee, bows at the name, of Jesus. Secondly, we pray, for the enlargement, of his kingdom, on earth now.

So, we pray for ourselves, to surrender more and more, of our lives, to his rule. We pray for mission endeavors, and evangelism, of all kinds, so that his kingdom, will go to places, and people, who still do not know him.

We pray for our own weakness, to our context. We pray for society's efforts, to restore justice, equality, ecological balance, health care, in a godly manner, so that his kingdom, might be seen, in the world.

[17:17] And because he is king, we pray for his will, to be done, on earth, as well as our lives. Jesus then, asks us to pray for ourselves.

We need, God's provision, forgiveness, and protection. Provisions, because we are dependent, forgiveness, because we are guilty, and protection, because we are weak.

We are to ask, give us this day, our daily bread. It's not just food, and drink, but it includes, all our material needs, for life.

Clothes, shelter, good health. Everything we have, ultimately comes from him. We are totally dependent, on our father, who is sovereign, over the affairs, of all men.

Your job, that enables you, to put food, on the table, a roof over your head, and clothe you, comes from him. Your health, to continue working, comes from him.

[18 : 25] We depend, on a sound economy, and a reliable, and reliable food production, to ensure, our markets, and grocers, are well stocked. And we really, are not in control.

Everything, can be taken away, by an incompetent government, social unrest, wars, climate disasters, disease, and accident, or illness.

We are dependent, on God, for our daily bread. So we ask. We are not in control. So we pray, to the one who is.

We pray, for the economy, the weather, our jobs, our health, for political stability, for peace, for the government, for a good healthcare system, and so on.

Now, these are all, legitimate prayers, that spring, from a simple, but profound, give us this day, our daily bread. And also, let us not be presumptuous.

[19 : 40] Let's thank him, daily, for all he has, already, daily provided. I thank him, for the sustenance, good health, finance, shelter, love, peace, and joy, we receive, as a family, daily.

Jesus, then, asks us, to pray, for forgiveness, of sins. Now, this prayer, is not asking, for daily justification, which has, already, been given, once for all time, when we put, our trust, in Jesus.

But, every day, we continue to sin, knowingly, or unknowingly. And in the process, we grieve, the Holy Spirit. So, we need forgiveness, to restore, our fellowship, with him.

When we confess, our sins, he is faithful, and just, to forgive us, our sins, and cleanse us, from all unrighteousness, things that you, don't remember. And the Father, expects, all who receive, his forgiveness, to be so moved, with gratitude, that they will also, forgive everyone, who have sinned, against them.

Refusing, to forgive, would mean, we don't really know, the grace, and forgiveness of God. True members, of Jesus' team, forgives. Forgiving others, may be a struggle.

[21 : 04] But thank God, the struggle itself, is evidence, of God's grace, working in your life. Is there someone, you need to forgive today? Your spouse, perhaps?

Your child? Your brother, or sister? Your parent? Friend? Pastor? Pray for our willing heart, to forgive.

And finally, we ask the Father, lead us not, into temptation. It is not, as if God, will tempt us. James is very clear, that God, doesn't tempt anyone, to sin.

So this prayer, is asking the Father, to protect us, because Jesus knows, we are weak. We ourselves, are acutely aware, of our own proclivities, and weaknesses, which will lead us, to sin.

We know ourselves. We know the things, that will trigger us. So, we ask our Father, in humility, not to allow us, to be led, into those situations, where we are likely, to deny him, to fail him, or to turn away, from him.

[22 : 20] From daily sustenance, to spiritual forgiveness, to spiritual protection, we depend on him, and we pray, and ask from him. Jesus now moves, to motivate us, to pray, and to have confidence, in our Father.

He gives two parables. The first tells us, that our Father, is not like a grouchy, reluctant friend, who does not honour friendship.

The second parable, tells us, that our Father, only gives us, gifts that are good for us. When Jesus tells us, the first parable, it is his intention, to evoke a response, in his audience, the villages of that, around him, and utter disbelief.

They are going to go, no way! No one is going to do that. This will never happen. Put yourself, in first century, Palestine.

At midnight, your friend arrives, after an unforeseen delay, and was hungry. But, you are out of bread.

[23 : 39] Now, the cultural obligation, at that time, places very high value, on hospitality. Almost like a duty. You have to be good host.

If you fail, to feed your guests, at least a respectable meal, it is a terrible embarrassment.

embarrassment. Not only to you, other people find out, it is a terrible embarrassment, to the whole village.

So, you needed bread. And, it is midnight. Okay, you put on your shameless face, and head to a close friend's house, and knock.

friend, Brian, Brian, lend me three loaves of bread. Like other families, Brian's family, including the animals, were all sleeping side by side, in the only room in the house.

Brian awakes, and peers through the cracks. Oi, gilakah? Gilakah? Midnight already, bro.

[24 : 55] All my kids are asleep. You think easy, to put them back to sleep, gilakah? Go away. I can't help you. And, the audience goes, no way.

Unbelievable. He is obliged, to give his friend the bread. How can he do that, to his friend, to the whole village? Then, Jesus gets to the punchline.

I tell you, even though he will not get up, and give you the bread, because of friendship, yet, because of your shameless audacity, he will surely get up, and give you as much as you need.

So, I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you. Jesus is saying, even though your friend inside, would not lend you bread, out of social obligation, or friendship, he will still get up, and give you as much as you need.

Why? Because you were shameless. You did not know how to be paisei. You don't know how to be embarrassed.

[26 : 12] You had a need. You knew he could help, so you ask. Midnight, midnight also don't care. You are not worried, how it made you look. Rude, insensitive, no EQ.

You did it anyway. Shameless audacity. See, you got what you wanted because you had the audacity to disturb your grouchy friend, even at midnight.

Look, your Father in Heaven is not like the reluctant friend who does not honour his friendship. God is a good Father and a true friend.

He is ready to help always. You can come to Him even for just bread. Nothing is too trivial for Him. You can come to Him at any time. Whatever is needed, come boldly and knock on His door. You are always welcome.

[27 : 19] No need to be paisei. So just ask, seek and knock. even if you think your request is embarrassing and off the charts, ask with shameless audacity.

Ask, verse 9, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. Your Father is more gracious and caring than any friend.

Ask, seek, knock. Now these verbs indicate persistence. We are to keep on asking, to keep on seeking, to keep on knocking.

In other words, continue praying. Not because we think we can twist God's arm with our persistence, we nag Him until He says, okay.

No. rather, we are persistent because we are confident that our Father is always welcoming, ready to hear and answer us, even if they are audacious.

[28 : 31] Audacious. He is gracious and generous and will give us what is good as much as we need. Because Jesus added in verse 10, for everyone who asks, receives.

The one who seeks, fine. And the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Jesus said, everyone who asks.

Everyone. Not just an elite group, pastor, elder, or some anointed celebrity speaker, or even prayer warriors.

This promise is for every member of Jesus' team. Whether Jesse the cleaner, Eric the doctor, John the electrician, Mary the homemaker, Fiona in a nursing home, James the teacher, Joash the student, everyone.

The assurance, however, the assurance that everyone who asks receives does not mean that our prayer gets answered exactly the way we want them to be.

[29 : 42] Why? Why not? Jesus shares another parable. Jesus asked of us fathers here today.

Fathers, you listen. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Anyone?

Anyone? Okay, I don't see any hands. Okay, I don't think so. If he asks for an egg, we'll give him a scorpion.

Anyone here? Put up your hands. Okay. Thank God. And fathers, if they ask to hold a live cobra or scorpion, we say, what do we say?

No, right? We say no. Oh, we who are sinful fathers, with all our shortcomings, we don't play cruel tricks on our children.

[30 : 49] We don't purposely put them in harm's way or give them things that will harm them. And so, if we are evil, if we who are evil know how to give good gifts to our children, what do you think our Heavenly Father will do?

Surely, he who is holy will give us only things that are good for us and not harm us. The equivalent parable in Matthew 7, 11 says as much.

God will give good gifts. And so, this is why not all prayers are answered exactly the way we want them to be. Because our Father is good.

Our Father is wise and all-knowing and we are not. Tim Keller wrote these words printed in your handouts.

We can be sure our prayers are answered precisely the way we would want them to be answered if we knew everything God knows.

[31 : 56] I'll read them again. We can be sure our prayers are answered precisely the way we would want them to be answered if we knew everything God knows.

God knows everything. But we, we ask for things without really having all the information, without knowing the future ramifications of our requests, without knowing His will for our lives and for the world around us.

But our Father knows. He knows everything. And so, He will answer our prayers with only what is best and good for us in accordance to His will.

and we praise the Father because this actually frees us and gives us confidence to pray.

We are assured that even if we unknowingly ask for things that will actually harm us, He will answer us with only things that are good for us.

[33 : 08] And we praise Him. that's the assurance we have. And we have confidence to pray for whatever we need. We know He will only give us good.

Jesus reaches the peak of His teaching on prayer. He says, so if you, in verse 13, so if you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

Again, arguing from a lesser to a greater how much more manner, Jesus says, look, you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children.

How much more will your Father in heaven give you His best gift, the Holy Spirit? Jesus tells us to ask our Father for the Holy Spirit, a far more precious gift than fish or eggs or daily bread and material blessings.

That is the climax of Jesus' teaching on prayer. Pray for the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit. He who is full of the Spirit tells us to pray and expect to be given the same Spirit from the Father.

[34 : 37] Now, this is not just looking forward to the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. This prayer is also for our daily walk with God. Yes, we have received the Holy Spirit at conversion, but Paul tells the Ephesian Christians to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit and in Ephesians 1 he prays that the glorious Father may give the Church the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may know Him better, their hearts will be enlightened, that they may know the hope and the power they have.

Yes, we can pray and we must pray to our Father to give us an increasing measure of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit is God with us on earth.

He makes God's presence real to us. He comforts and guides us. By Him we cry out Abba Father. He testifies with our spirits that we are children of God.

When we don't know how to pray or don't know how we ought to pray, He intercedes for us according to God's will. He gives spiritual discernment, empowerment to endure, words and wisdom when persecuted.

He gives spiritual gifts to us to serve the local church. He convicts us of sin and enables us to repent. He teaches us to walk in a manner to bring glory to God and not shame His name.

[36 : 17] He extends God's kingdom by convicting sinners of their need of Jesus and enabling them to believe. He speaks to us through the pages of His book, the Bible, making clear the salvation plan of God and the ways of God.

He will ensure that the good work started in us, that is our salvation, will be brought to completion until the coming of our Lord.

Our eternal destiny, our eternal destiny depends on Him. the Holy Spirit is truly the greatest gift. Jesus' teaching on prayer in this passage today makes the Father known to us.

He shows us that we have a loving, gracious, merciful, good, caring, giving, protective, willing, trustworthy, and affectionate Father in heaven.

Do you believe this? If you don't know God as Father, if you are not a Christian here today, or if you are not sure, I hope you will not leave without speaking to me or Pastor Brian or any of the leaders.

[37 : 40] If you were ever led to imagine that God is devious, a tyrant who takes delight in hurting us, or is out to trick us, remember these parables and think again.

And when praying the will of our Father as revealed in the Lord's Prayer, let us pray with shameless audacity, knowing that He is always ready to hear our prayers.

We pray persistently, confident that He will answer in a manner that is for our own good. We pray expectantly to receive His perfect and good gift and the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit.

May God teach us to pray. May God help us to pray. Come, I would like to close by getting us to pray together.

We will pray as disciples in Jesus' team the prayer that He taught us and we will ask for the Holy Spirit as well.

[38 : 51] Let's stand and let's pray together. Father, Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sin against us and lead us not into temptation and give us the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you.