

July 8, 2007 (a sermon by Dr. Stanley W. Reeder)

## INTRODUCING . . . “THE PRAYER OF JESUS”

*A Study of Matthew 6:5-13*

*#1 of 8 in the Series: “The Prayer of Jesus”*

### INTRODUCTION:

A man is struck down by a bus on a busy street in New York City. He lies, mortally wounded on the sidewalk as a crowd gathers. “A minister, a minister. Somebody get me a minister!” the man gasps. An elderly man steps forward and kneels beside the man.

“Are you a minister?” asks a policeman.

“No, but I did stay at the Holiday Inn Express last night!” No, that’s not really what he said. He explained, “No, I’m not a minister, I’m not even a Christian, but I have lived behind a church on First Ave for 50 years and every night I’ve listened to their services. Maybe I can repeat what I’ve heard to comfort this man.”

The policeman agrees, the elderly man leans over the injured and repeats what he has heard from the church all those years. In a solemn voice he says: B-6, I-19, N-38, G-14, O-9

Before we go too hard on our Bingo playing brothers and sisters . . . what might our neighbors think about our church?

...a house of fellowship (they love potluck dinners in that church)?

A house of singing (they are such a talented bunch)?

A house of activities (there is something for the whole family)?

A house of preaching?

Jesus’ desire, above all things, was that His Father’s house be known as a “House of Prayer” (Matthew 21:13). We desperately need to be, above all things, a “House of Prayer.”

Because we pray, God works through us in ways that He wouldn’t otherwise. Certain things will never get done unless we pray. There are elements of our mission that we will never be able to fulfill - - unless we pray. This realization brought the disciples to a point of desperation so they asked: But *how* do we pray?

Paul Yonggi Cho is pastor of the largest church in the history of civilization; the million member Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea. On one occasion he was asked, “How does one become more effective in prayer?” His response was this:

*I believe when a person sincerely prays the Lord’s Prayer each day, that person has covered the basic ways to worship God, and the basic ways to grow and protect his or her spiritual life. Like seed within fruit, the Lord’s Prayer contains every requirement for which a Christian may pray each day.*

Why such a fuss about the Lord's Prayer?

Sherlock Holmes and Matthew Watson were on a camping and hiking trip. They had gone to bed and were lying there looking up at the sky. Holmes said, "Watson, look up. What do you see?"

"Well, I see thousands of stars."

"And what does that mean to you?"

"Well, I guess it means tomorrow shall be another fine day. What does it mean to you, Holmes?"

"To me, Watson, it means someone has stolen our tent."

It takes about the same level of deductive prowess to determine that if we want to learn how to pray we should study the way the Lord taught us to pray.

The Lord's Prayer was first taught by Jesus, early in his ministry, during the Sermon on the Mount. I find it interesting that although all of the disciples would have heard Jesus deliver the Sermon on the Mount, they didn't get it. It was not until they saw Jesus' ministry of prayer that they really became interested in prayer. And so much later in Jesus' ministry, in Luke 11, we see Jesus teach the Lord's Prayer to the disciples again . . . this time it is at their desperate request – "Lord teach us how to pray."

As we track the lives of the disciples we come to see that after the second time . . . They got it. Let's follow their ministry through the first two chapters of Acts and we will see the formula for their success.

### THE LORD'S FORMULA FOR SUCCESS:

Started with a **Promise** of Acts 1:4, 5: ***Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, . . . in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.*** Believe the promise friends, the promise of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is for you.

This led them to **Practice the Prayer** as indicated in Acts 1:14: ***They all joined together constantly in prayer.*** Don't let the significance of that slip by you. We are going to come back to that verse in just a moment but right now just note: ***They joined together constantly.*** They practiced prayer.

We are always looking for the secret of success . . . the secret of a successful marriage, of making money, of self-discipline, of a great golf game, of powerful prayer . . . I know the secret for every one of the above. The secret of a great marriage is to practice being a great husband. The secret of making money is to practice making money. The secret of self-discipline is to practice self-discipline. The secret of a great golf game is to practice the game of golf.

The secret of prayer is the practice of secret prayer. That's what the disciples did. They gathered together in a secret place and practiced prayer constantly.

This led them to the **pouring** out of the Spirit as recorded in Acts 2:17: ***I will pour out my Spirit on all people.*** In response to the practice of prayer, God poured out His Spirit on those believers.

This led them to **power** (Acts 2:37; Acts 1:8): ***When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”***

This power led to **production** (Acts 2:41): ***about three thousand were added to their number that day.***

Phenomenal things happen when we practice prayer. **The secret of prayer is the practice of secret prayer.**

**Prayer does not need proof, it needs practice (William Evans).**

Now come back with me to that other comment on Acts 1:14. Brad Young in his book *The Jewish Background to the Lord’s Prayer* makes a fascinating observation based upon Acts 1:14: ***They all joined together constantly in prayer.*** There is something special about that phrase that can only be detected upon careful study of the original Greek.

Doing a Greek grammar study may seem a little ‘heavy’. It reminds me of the church that was considering the purchase of a new Chandelier. A parishioner who was unable to attend the business meeting where it was initially discussed wrote a note to the pastor to express her opinion. The note said simply:

*I am definitely opposed to buying a new chandelier for the church, for three reasons:*

- *I can’t spell chandelier [I struggle with that one myself].*
- *If we got one, who’s going to play it?*
- *If we’ve got that kind of money in the treasury, why don’t we buy a new light fixture to brighten up the church sanctuary?*

Well, here goes “Greek 101” for Acts 1:14 . . .

**οὗτοι πάντες** (*houtoi pantes*) - *joined together, these all*  
**ἦσαν προσκατερούντες** (*asan proskarterountes*) - *intently engaged in*  
**ὁμοθυμαδόν** (*homothumadon*) - *with one mind, in one accord (KJV)*  
**τῇ προσευχῇ** (*tay proseuchay*) - ***the** prayer.*

In the very earliest Christian writings the Lord’s Prayer is referred to as “the prayer”. Do you see the implications here? The disciples were praying the Lord’s Prayer over and over again.

Wouldn’t that get a little old . . . constantly practicing, praying the Lord’s prayer for 10 days in a row?

*"I hope you didn't take it personally, Reverend, when my husband walked out during your sermon."*

*"I did find it rather disconcerting," the preacher replied.*

*"It's not a reflection on you, sir," insisted the church-goer. "My husband has been walking in his sleep ever since he was a child."*

It wouldn't be boring when we understand the way in which prayers were used in the time of Jesus. The first-century rabbis taught by giving topics of truth. They listed certain topics, used those topics as an outline and taught under each one. In His model prayer, Jesus enumerated topics and instructed: ***After this manner therefore pray ye*** (Matthew 6:9). I believe what Jesus is giving us in the 66 words of the Lord's Prayer is an outline that we can follow in our prayer time with Him.

### THE PRAYER OUTLINE:

This concept of the prayer outline is not original to my study. Even though this is not a new discovery, it has not yet taken any kind of foothold in the Christian community and so I want to promote this concept of prayer among our people.

1. The **Progeny** of Jesus: ***Our Father which art in heaven (Matthew 6:9a).***
2. The **Promises** of Jesus: ***Hallowed be thy name (Matthew 6:9b).***
3. The **Priorities** of Jesus: ***Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).***
4. The **Provision** of Jesus: ***Give us this day our daily bread (Matthew 6:11).***
5. The **Pardon** of Jesus: ***And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors (Matthew 6:12).***
6. The **Protection** of Jesus: ***And deliver us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:13a).***
7. The **Praise** of Jesus: ***For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (Matthew 6:13b).***

View the Lord's Prayer as a prayer outline. We can use each phrase as a springboard to remembering in prayer the aspects of our lives that are related to that phrase. When we pray through all of the phrases, we have touched on all the areas that require prayer.

### APPLICATION:

As we enter into this series on "the Prayer of Jesus" I want to encourage you to pray the Lord's Prayer everyday. Without these special times of prayer it is impossible to live the holy life of the disciple. The great author Oswald Chambers has written:

*Your motivation should not be the desire to be known as a praying person. Find an inner room in which to pray where no one even knows you are praying, shut the door, and talk to God in secret. Have no motivation other than to know your Father in heaven. It is impossible to carry on your life as a disciple without definite times of secret prayer.*

Never, has there been a time when there was a greater need for prayer in the life of the Christian.

Our Political Leaders and nation need prayer. Our pastors need prayer. Did you realize that 1 out of 20 pastors stay active in ministry right through to the time of retirement.

Our Church needs prayer. This is the day of greatest opportunity . . . the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field (Matt. 9:37-38).

Our families need prayer. The home has always been regarded as a fortress into which Satan had no access. Today, evil ways have easy access into your home through the T.V., the music culture, the internet. Pray for the purity of your home.

The day of greatest need is the day of greatest opportunity.

*Could it be that one reason we have great problems is that God wants to show us great solutions? He longs to show us the riches of His grace and the poverty of our own resources. Prayer is uniquely designed to demonstrate both truths.*

*-Dr. David Jeremiah*

This is a great day for “The Prayer of Jesus”. God is going to fit you for this day of opportunity as in the coming weeks we learn the secret of prayer through learning the practice of secret prayer: A couple verses before the Lord teaches us the prayer, he gives us this instruction: ***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 (Matthew 6:6.*** He continues then with the instruction:

***After this manner therefore pray ye:***

***Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.***

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

***Give us this day our daily bread.***

***And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.***

***And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:***

***For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***