

The Ministry of Prayer VIII

*This, then, is how you should pray:
“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...”*

This is the beginning of a short but very powerful and effective teaching on prayer from Jesus in Matthew chapter 6. The whole prayer is only 52 words. Some people pray through this prayer quickly, some take their time and meditate as they pray through it. Some folks look at it as a format and others see it as an example. I would like to look at this prayer more as a mandate. In other words, this is not a suggested way to pray, it is not just a good idea or a good format, it is essential.

We have been looking at the place of prayer. If you have missed any of the devotionals about the place of prayer you can catch up by going to our web site. But now we are going to look at this prayer mandate that Jesus gave us. When you hear the word mandate I hope you hear the word mandatory. That means required, imperative and utterly necessary. Many Christians do not like anyone telling them what to do. I get that way sometimes too. But our faith in Jesus as our Savior and our commitment to Him as our Lord has got to be more than a good idea. It has to be firm. James says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God... (James 4:7)” As usual, James is direct and to the point. If you want to have a blessed life, you have to follow the King. Yes, he is gracious. I’m so glad for that. When we lose it to worldliness, there is forgiveness in the heart of God for those who confess. But in the heart of God there is also direction and his direction, when it becomes non-negotiable to you, becomes a life giving flow.

OK, that said, look at the beginning of the prayer again. Jesus says, “This, then, is how you should pray...” Anybody hear anything suggestive? No. Let me translate a bit here. “This, right here then, right now, is to be how, in what manner or way, you should, you shall, you are obligated, and you are expected to pray...” Does anyone hear optional???

When Jesus starts off this teaching on prayer he says, “When you pray...” Does that sound like a nice suggestion? Then he says, “Go to your room (inner room or most private room or place)...” Does *that* sound optional?

What is the first thing we are commanded to do when we start off our prayer time with the Lord? We are to have a blowout worship time, magnifying the Holy God of heaven! Don’t forget, this is not Pastor Gene asking you to pray like this. This is Jesus telling you how you must pray. Jesus wants all of the praise and all of the glory and all of the honor going heavenward to his Father who deserves a blowout worship time in your prayer “closet.” Now I know why some are so reserved when they get with the other saints on a Saturday night for corporate worship. I bet they are reserved in their prayer closet, what do you think? ☺ Or maybe they haven’t been faithful to meet with Jesus daily and lift up the name of the Lord our God and Father. We are working on a principle here, what sensitivity you develop in your personal time with the Lord will reflect in you public life. I’m going to end it here. It’s time. Go praise him. Don’t worry about your life. Don’t worry about anything really. Just go, find a place of solitude and praise Him.