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THE PAPER PULPIT

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Prayer

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The Model Prayer

The prayer in which Jesus led His disciples, in Matthew 6:9-13, is commonly called, "The Lord's Prayer." It is, however, a misnomer. Nowhere in the text is it ever stated that the Lord intended for people to repeat this prayer over and over again, verbatim. It is better to think of it as a "Model Prayer" with which Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. He indicated that this was His purpose, when He said, "*After this manner therefore pray ye*" (Mat. 6:9).

The first lesson we learn from the Model Prayer is that we are supposed to address our prayers to God, the Father. This particular lesson is discussed in greater detail on page two.

The next lesson we learn from the Model Prayer is that our prayers must reflect a willingness on our part to submit to the will of God. The best example there is of this is in the Lord's prayer, which he prayed in the garden (Mat. 26:36-39). He indicated that He did not necessarily want to go through all the suffering He was about to endure, as He prayed, "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*" But, in the same breath, He also indicated His resolve to abide by the will of His Father, as He prayed further, "*nevertheless not as I will, but as thou*

wilt." How many of us get discouraged, when we do not get what we pray for? How many of us ever stop to think that maybe what we are praying for is not in harmony with God's will for us?

Another lesson we learn from the Model Prayer is that we ought to pray for things we need. Jesus said, "*Give us this day our daily bread*" (Mat. 6:11). Some may ask, "Doesn't God already know what we need?" The answer is, "Yes, He does" (Mat. 10:30). But, He still wants us

to pray for our needs. Prayer is an opportunity for us to relieve ourselves of burdens that weigh upon our minds (2 Pet. 5:7). People who pray enjoy a peace of mind that others do not.

Another lesson we learn from the Model Prayer is that we ought to pray for forgiveness. In the Model Prayer, Jesus prayed that His disciples might be forgiven for their sins (He had no sins of His own; Heb. 4:15). Thus, it behooves us to pray for the forgiveness of our sins as well as the sins of others whenever we pray. If we neglect to pray for forgiveness, how can it be said that our hearts are in the right place (Mat. 5:8)?

There are only a few lessons we can learn from the Model Prayer. Further study is encouraged.

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

—Matthew 6:9



Quotable Quotations

"To be reverent toward Deity is truly a mark of character. The greater the character, the more profound will be the reverence. Reverence toward God is honor, veneration, awe, adoration magnified to a superlative degree!"

—Garland Elkins

"Somebody suggested to me that if we wanted to get

really familiar with God we could say, 'Dear old buddy, we adore your name.' That is familiarity carried to the extreme...We should exalt him in every way possible..."

—W.C. Hall

"Personal, private prayers are indeed a privileged communication between the Christian and his Father, through Jesus Christ..."

—James R. McGill

"Consider the following truth: 'Jesus went more readily to the cross of Calvary than we do to the throne of grace in prayer.' But why is that so? Is it because of a lack of faith? A spirit of independence? Carelessness? Yes, yes and yes."

—Steve Higginbotham

To Whom Shall We Pray?

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

—Philippians 4:6

People seem to be more confused than ever about who the object of their prayers should be. Should Christians pray to Jesus? Should they pray to Mary? Should they pray to some other "saint?" What about prayers that people offer to dead loved ones? Is it okay to pray to Allah? Buddha? Krishna? What does the Bible say about all of this?

As we learned in the article on page one, the Model Prayer teaches us that our prayers are to be addressed to God, the Father (Mat. 6: 9-13). This concept is consistently taught throughout the Scriptures. Whenever

we read about prayer, in the Old and New Testaments, we read about people praying to the Father.

Jesus did not pray to Himself, nor did He teach His disciples to pray to Him. The Lord does, however, play a role in every Christian prayer. In John 16:23, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." It is through Christ, the Heavenly High Priest, that every Christian has access to God (Heb. 6:20). Therefore, we pray to the Father, in the name of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Prayer to Mary, the mother of Christ, or one of the apostles, or some other departed "saint" is a tradition begun by the Roman Catholic Church, and has nothing at all to do with any teaching of the Scriptures. Prayer to dead loved ones is a remnant of the practice of ancestor worship, which was part of many ancient cultures. The gods worshipped by Muslims, Buddhists, and other pagans are not the God described in the Bible. People may pray in many different ways, but the only prayers that make a difference are those offered to our Heavenly Father!

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For Whom Shall We Pray?

Considering the question from every possible angle, it seems that there is not anyone for which Christians should not pray. The Bible is actually quite specific about the people for whom Christians are supposed to make intercession and prayer. Many of them are people who, at first glance may seem undeserving of our prayers.

In First Timothy 2:1 and 2, Paul instructed our ancient brethren to pray *“for kings and for all that are in authority.”* Most of the “authorities,” in the first century, were enemies of the church. Even in this day and age, it seems that most of the “authorities” are corrupt, worldly and immoral. In the minds of some, it does not

make sense to pray for people like that. But, in the second verse of First Timothy 2, it says that our prayer for them should be *“that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”* We should pray for our earthly leaders, so that we can live in a peaceable society. Even if we did not vote for our president, or our senators, or our congressmen, we ought to pray for them to make decisions that will be in harmony with the will of God (Rom. 13:1).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, *“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of*

your father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5:44,45). Again, it seems counterintuitive for Christians to pray for people who are persecuting them, but this is what our Lord commands us to do. If we truly love lost souls, then we must be prepared to pray even for those who are mean and spiteful toward us. We must pray that their hearts will change and that they will be converted. More than that; we must work to make such a transformation happen (Rom. 12:18-21).

It is much easier to pray for people who love us than it is to do so for people who hate us. May God give us all the presence of mind to pray for everyone—including those who seem undeserving of our prayers.

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

—1 Timothy 2:1,2

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Web Sites That Won't Waste Your Time...

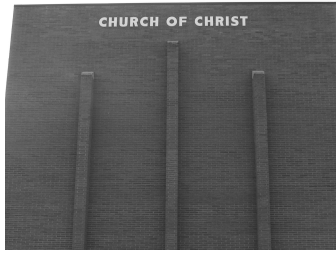
The **Online Academy of Biblical Studies** is an internet-based school, which offers a curriculum that covers the entire Bible and Bible-related matters. Their site is loaded with video and other kinds of resources for your personal study. Their web address is www.oabs.org.



The **Memphis School of Preaching** is an educational institution devoted to training gospel preachers and their wives. Their site is rich in educational content. Their web address is www.msop.org.

House to House/Heart to Heart is a bi-monthly publication, which is devoted to reaching lost souls with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Its site is rich with educational materials and archived issues. Their web address is www.housetohouse.com.





Madisonville Church of Christ

Sunday Morning Bible Study

—9:30 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship

—10:30 a.m.

Sunday Evening Worship

—6:00 p.m.

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

—7:00 p.m.

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Pray Without Ceasing?

One of the “Five Pillars,” or core doctrines of Islam is that Muslims are commanded to pray five times every day. In the Bible, Christians are commanded to “*Pray without ceasing*” (1 The. 5:17). While a precise number of prayers per day for individual Christians is not stated in the Scriptures, are we not any better than the Muslims? Shall we not take advantage of *every* opportunity we have to pray to God? Some Christians may ask, “The Bible says that God knows what I need, so why should I pray so much?” The simplest answer is that God is your Father, and he wants to hear from His children. The Revelation tells us that the prayers of the saints are an incense to God (Rev. 5:8; 8:3,4). It pleases Him to hear the hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, triumphs and tribulations of His precious people, so He commands them to pray. Praying without ceasing is not necessarily about spending all day every day on your knees, in prayer. Rather, it is about making the most out of every opportunity one has to talk to God. It’s about keeping the lines of communication between Heaven and Earth wide open.

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