

Lake Cities Community Church
May 2, 2010
Pastor Craig Schill
Series: Prayer, "Mission Impossible"

"How to Pray"
Matthew 6:9-13

I have great memories of my girls experimenting with food in the kitchen when they were little. It usually started with them asking, "Daddy, can I cook something?" And then into a large bowl they would begin to mix together a great variety of things – put in some flour, water, orange juice, ketchup, some peanut butter & jelly beans, some sugar, a couple eggs, a banana, let's see – maple syrup and left over Easter candy. Then they would break the goo into little balls and place them like cookies on the cookie sheet - turn on the oven and cook it for about two hours – pull it out and say, "Daddy taste this!" Has anyone else been in this position? They are so innocent and eager, that you taste it, and they say, "Do you like it, Daddy?" What do you do? You lie to the glory of God! "Yes dear I love it – you are going to be an excellent cook, just like your mother."

The experimental cooking of a six or seven-year old child is really cute – and trial and error is how they first begin to enjoy cooking. But there comes a time where, to progress they will need mentoring and instruction. If you want to learn how to make the secret family meat loaf, or a perfect flaky piecrust – you will need some instruction.

That is a lot like prayer. Anyone can pray, and there is nothing more precious than to hear a child or a new believer talk with God. It is honest and innocent. But as we mature if we want to grow in our prayer skills we will need some instruction. The disciples had

been praying for years, but they came to the point when they asked Jesus, the master teacher: "Teach us to pray." And Jesus gave them a training session. He shared a sample prayer which has become one of the most precious and powerful assortments of words and phrases known to mankind - "Lord's prayer." The purpose of the prayer was to train the disciples on **how** to talk to God - the ingredients of their prayers -the content of their prayers. The Lord's Prayer was like a cooking lesson (so to speak) - when you pray - pray like this. Not word for word - but the concepts needed to be skilled in prayer. Look with me at six ingredients of prayer, which Jesus wants us to apply in our own prayer lives.

Six Ingredients of Prayer

First Ingredient: Personal Tone / Touch

The first ingredient of prayer is to pray with a **personal tone**, we read in **Matthew 6:9** "Pray then, in this way, 'Our Father who is in heaven...'" Scholars point out that various parts of the Lord's prayer are tied and found in other Jewish synagogue prayers of the first century. In stark contrast, however, is this opening line. When the Jews addressed God they addressed their king, seated in great glory and power. One old Jewish prayer starts this way, "Exalted and hallowed be his great name in the world" (Qaddish). Now there is nothing wrong with exalting the name of God, but very intentionally, Jesus teaches his disciples that the discipline of prayer is based on a relationship with God - who is our father.

If you go to the bank and fill out a withdrawal slip for \$100 in cash and present it to the teller. She looks up your name in her computer and says, "I don't see your name in our system? Do you have an account with us?" And you say, "Not I don't, but I really need this

money, and I have filled out the form correctly. I believe this bank can meet my needs!" She will turn you away – you can't enjoy the benefits of a bank if you don't have a relationship with them to start. When I walk in and overhear Tammy talking on the phone with someone, I can tell by her tone and vocabulary what kind of relationship she has with that person. I can tell when she is talking to her mom or dad, or to a phone solicitor. How do we pray? With a personal tone – from a real relationship: **Our Father, who is in heaven.**

SECOND INGREDIENT: PRAYER OF PRAISE

The second ingredient is praise. "**Hallowed be Your name.**" Immediately, Jesus teaches His disciples after entering into God's presence to give Him praise. To talk about God's name – is to talk about God's character or essence. God is hallowed – which means sanctified or set apart – God is wholly different from his creation, so that we approach him with praise.

When we praise God in prayer, we attribute to Him those things already true of Him. Like holding a mirror up to God. "Your name is holy, you are great and mighty, patient, good, just, slow to anger." And true praise comes out of an authentic relationship. True, rich praise comes because in the relationship we have experienced God's goodness and patience. We have seen his power and received his blessing. C.S. Lewis observed that two people in love don't complement the other person just for the sake of complementing, but he said, "the delight is incomplete till it is expressed." The little boy took his dad to play darts outside, he said, "I'll throw and you say, 'wonderful.'" That is our job to praise God for who He is and what He has done. "**Hallowed be your name, O God. Blessed is Your Name. Let all the earth praise you, Father.**"

Third Ingredient: Prayer for the Planet

The third ingredient moves us into the area of petition - or asking God to do something or make something happen because of our request. The first petition in the Lord's prayer is a prayer for the planet. "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Notice first the scope of the prayer – it is a global prayer – a prayer for God's kingdom and His will to be done here on earth, as it already is in heaven. Not only in Jerusalem, not only in Rowlett - but in all the earth.

And here we learn that in prayer we seek God's will – It is God's way that is perfect – and not ours. That will may or may not be in line with our desires. You can almost hear Jesus' prayer in the Garden – "If possible, Father, take this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what you will be done." Our petitions seek God's perfect will – and the scope here is global.

This is perhaps the most neglected portion of the Lord's Prayer. How easy it is to pray and to never lift our eyes off ourselves?

Dawson Trotman was the founder of the Navigator's ministry. He was someone who never forgot to pray for God's kingdom to come all over the world. One early disciple recalled this about Trotman: "I suppose along with hundreds of other young men, I was most impressed with Dawson's vision for the world. I can remember standing alongside him as we held up a large map and he would have us put our fingers on different countries. Then we would pray for that country, that laborers would be raised up in China, Korea, Kenya, South Africa, Europe, Latin America – around the world we would pray."

How often do you and I pray for the needs of the world? For God's will and kingdom to be established? How do we pray? Have a personal tone, a dash of praise, and be sure to include planetary petitions. Global prayers.

Fourth Ingredient: Prayer for provision

The fourth ingredient that Jesus teaches his disciples is to pray for provision: "Give us this day, our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11). We have gone from a global petition to a very personal petition for daily provision of needs. And what is emphasized in the text is the word "daily" repeated twice. It is actually a difficult phrase to translate. My translation goes like this: "Give us our bread today, for the coming day." We recall God's provision of daily manna to Israel. Bread is used as a figure of speech meaning, "food." There is nothing more basic than the need for food and water.

Jesus teaches his disciples to pray for daily provision of needs. That would extend to needs for employment, transportation, and housing – those things necessary to function each day in our culture. One commentator said, "We pray for our needs not our greeds."

Our petitions for provision remind us to not take for granted our food, and jobs and houses. Of all the parts of the Lord's Prayer, perhaps this has become the most real to many of us over the past two years. With the bad economy we have had many people out of work for months at a time. We have prayed for God to provide rent payments, for Him to provide places to stay. We have prayed for jobs and money to pay basic bills. And what a blessing to see God answer specifically in so many ways. Seminary was a very difficult financial time for our family. We felt financial pressure like we had never felt it before. There were weeks where the money did not go far enough to pay the bills or buy groceries. Yet in that hardship

we were able to see the importance of daily provision. One day in our mailbox at the school, we found this envelope, containing \$500 in cash. The envelope said the money was from the Bank of Texas – but ultimately, this was from God’s hand to provide for our needs.

How are we to pray? With a personal tone, praising God, pray for our planet and for personal provision.

Ingredient Five – Prayer for Pardon

The fifth ingredient of prayer is a **prayer for pardon**: “**And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors.**” The word “debt” is translated many different ways, but basically it is a financial word – a person who owes money to another. It is used here broadly to communicate that in our relationship with God we do not measure up to His standards, we come up short in paying Him with the obedience His deserves. And so we ask Him for forgiveness of our sins. And notice what is happening on the other side – we are also forgiving the sins of those who have offended us. True repentance both seeks God’s forgiveness and forgives others. Because if you are not willing to forgive other people’s sins, you will put up a barrier for God to forgive you! In three weeks we will look more deeply at this and other situations that actually hinder our prayers.

Marghanita Laski, was a very well known secular humanists, atheist and novelists. Not long before she died in 1988, she said this in a television interview: "What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me." (John Stott in The Contemporary Christian). How do we pray? We pray with a personal tone, with praise, with prayer for our planet, for provision and for pardon.

Sixth Ingredient –Protection Petition

The sixth ingredient of prayer is a prayer for protection: ‘**And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**’ We live in a world full of evil and danger. We face temptation to sin – “Dear God - keep us away from that!” We have a spiritual enemy who seeks to destroy us – “Father, deliver us from Him.” Like prayer for our planet, we often neglect this prayer. Only when we recognize the reality of the supernatural – the devil and demons and their work, do we seriously seek protection. Only when we realize we can’t overcome temptations in our own strength do we pray this prayer.

This is a good place to point out that all these prayers are not individual but corporate. Deliver us from evil. (1st person plural). We pray not only for our protection but the protection of others. Satan is real, temptation is strong, the flesh is weak.

Lorrie Anderson, missionary to the head-shrinking Candoshi Shapra Indians of Peru, was looking for a quiet place for her daily time of Bible reading and prayer, so she went down by the edge of the river. After reading the Bible, she took up her prayer list. Eyes closed, she did not see the deadly anaconda snake weaving through the water until it struck, burying its fangs into her flesh. As it held her, screaming, in its coils it hit her again and again on the ground. Then suddenly the giant snake, never known to release its prey, relaxed its grip and slithered off through the water. While Lorrie was being treated, a witch doctor from a nearby village burst into the hut and stared at her. She couldn't believe Lorrie had survived. She said her son-in-law, also a witch doctor, had chanted to the spirit of the anaconda that morning and sent it to kill the young missionary. "I'm certain," Lorrie said, "that except for the protection of God, it would have worked."

And then the Lord's Prayer ends with another liberal amount of praise, "For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Summary:

Personal prayer. Praise. Prayer for the planet, for provision, for pardon and for protection. These are all ingredients in prayer. If we grow in our knowledge and application of these items, we will serve to the Lord a beautiful offering of prayer.

Application:

I would like to suggest now a few ways to apply the Lord's Prayer into your life, and to grow in prayer skills. First – in the area of praise – you have to grow in your familiarity with who God is in order to reflect those things back to God. An exercise I've given you is an ABC list – see if you can list at least 26 things to praise God for – one for each letter of the alphabet. If you can't think of something for a letter get a bible concordance out and try to find something. I've started with you a few as examples. This would be a fun thing to do as a family, and then pray those 26 things back to God in prayer.

Second, regarding your prayers for the planet, let me encourage you to use two very helpful guides. First is our 2010 mission's prayer guide. This will take you from Rowlett, to Colorado to Africa, Japan and Germany – with very specific prayer needs that are associated with our church here. Second, last week I recommended purchasing the Book of Common Prayer. My second book recommendation is a book called *Operation World* – which gives prayer requests and details for every country in the world. If you feel compelled to pray for Haiti and their continued rebuilding from the earthquake – this will give you some specific prayer requests and information about the country, from a Christian worldview.

Third, continue to have the body pray for you – if you are having a struggle with forgiving someone, if you are praying for God’s provision of a daily need and it has not happened yet; if you know someone who needs spiritual protection in a special way – get others praying with you. We are going to again today, use this blue card to pray for one another. Jot down a simple prayer requests, put it in the offering plate, and at the end of the service, the ushers will distribute the cards to everyone who filled one out with contact information. That is an easy and practical way to get your request prayed for and to pray and intercede for someone else. Then – drop them a phone call or e-mail to let them know you have prayed for them.

Conclusion:

Taylor did a lot of food experimenting when she was a little girl; she made some very creative. But with the tutoring of her mother, and her own reading of cook-books, she has become a very good cook; and today as I have been giving our “prayer ingredients” she has been adding them one at a time into a bowl – and has helped make a French vanilla cake. And when we get home, we are going to pop that in the oven and enjoy some prayer cake this afternoon! We want to grow in our prayer skills – to present delicious offerings of prayer to the Lord, including these six ingredients.