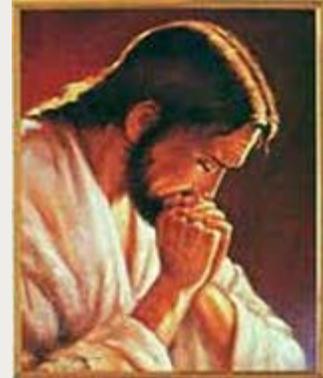


THE LORD'S PRAYER

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The Bible has two versions of the Lord's Prayer, in the Gospel of Luke and the other in the Gospel of Matthew. Both versions teach us to trust in God the Father, to have confidence in Him and to turn to Him with our prayers and petitions. The Gospels teach us how to pray, to pray from the heart without too many words but rather with simple words and profound filial love towards the Father.



In the Gospel of Matthew we see Jesus on a mountain teaching His disciples. "When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him" (2005). He taught them and very likely the crowds below many things, one in particular how to pray. He strongly urges them to pray in secret, in other words in your heart, from your heart not "so that others may see" but rather "pray to your Father in secret" (2005). It is clearly not important for those around us to see us praying or to regard us as prayerful people, it is much more important to pray to the Father with complete trust in the silence of your heart. Remembering in the Old Testament, the times "Moses went up the mountain to God;" Jesus' going up the mountain is a symbolic way of showing His disciples and the crowds that the teachings come from God. He does this because He knows there are many who doubt Him, who do not regard Him as the Son of God and in this way He indicates the fact that what He communicates comes from God the Father. In the Old Testament Moses went up the mountain to speak with God, in the New Testament Jesus, God Himself, calls them all up to speak with them.

He ends this teaching on prayer, with forgiveness. "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions" (2005). This seems to speak about love, love for God and neighbor. "Love one another as I have loved you," (2005) forgiveness requires love. In the end it is all about love, love underlies all of Jesus' teachings. In chapter 22 of this Gospel, Jesus says when asked which is the greatest commandment? "You shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (2005).

Another important detail to note is that God the Father is a father in every sense of the word and beyond. He cares for, guides, nourishes and protects His children. "Like all fathers, God sometimes has to discipline His children" (Mills, 2008). The Old Testament clearly depicts time and time again God the Father disciplining His children, bringing them back to repentance and His mercy towards them is clearly seen. In His final act of mercy He sent His only begotten Son as expiation for our sins - redemption is fulfilled.

The Gospel of Luke, Jesus in on a journey towards Jerusalem. "He was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples'" (2005). How powerful must have been the mere sight of Jesus praying to instill in His disciples the desire to also pray. To pray not as they had done before but as their souls perceived Jesus was praying, perceiving that profound communion between the Father and the Son and desiring to have that same relationship with the Father. He goes on to elaborate on prayer telling them a parable and ending, "I tell you, if he does not get up and give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence" (2005). Jesus teaches them that they have to be persistent in prayer, to ask the Father to fulfill their needs and the more they pray to Him, the more He will grant them their petitions.

In the section immediately following the Lord's Prayer Jesus speaks about the answer to prayer. This describes God the Father, wanting and giving what is best for His children. It speaks volumes about His mercy towards mankind. He says, "And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you...how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?" (2005). As in Matthew, his disciples needed to learn to trust God, trust that He would give them what they asked for, that He already loves them unconditionally - sitting there in front of Jesus, the Word made flesh, the Son of God sent to redeem them once and for all from their sins.

The passage before the Lord's Prayer is about Martha and Mary. Again, we see the essential message of trust. Martha serves Him while her sister Mary sits and listens to Jesus. When Martha complains Jesus replies, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need for only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her" (2005). Mary knows that the most fundamental necessity is to listen to Jesus, to absorb His words, His teachings and then trust that all else will get done. Martha on the other hand was so concerned about what needed to be done that she does not listen to Jesus. We can imagine she could have been complaining interiorly as she served Him and therefore not be open to hear Him. Not because she did not want to, but rather because she was consumed with the everyday things of life. The disciples had to learn to pray and establish a strong relationship with God, while Jesus was present but most importantly after He was gone. They would need to dedicate time to prayer, not neglect daily life but not to let the daily life's dealing keep them from praying. There were to listen to Jesus, learn from Him, absorb His gestures and actions, and finally to teach them to others.

The prayer ends with "deliver us from temptations,
"Jesus endured being tempted by food, by self-destruction by taking His own life, and then with the power and glory of the riches of this world. Three times Jesus rebukes Satan. The Gospel of Luke recounts the same series of events; however, Luke concludes his passage in the following manner, 'and when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time' (Luke 4:12-13). So in the Lord's Prayer, we pray that God delivers us from any temptation of the evil one and that our faith may not be tested as Jesus was tested. As our Lord and Savior Jesus has made a pathway to the Kingdom and He has accomplished all things for us" (Mills, 2008).

The Lord's Prayer teaches us about love, trust, abandonment and perseverance. Love of neighbor in forgiving those who harm us. Love of all those around us and those we encounter everyday. Trust in His will for each one of us and our lives as well as for humanity in general. Abandonment as a child in his father's arms, resting in knowing that He always wants what is best for us and for our lives - even if this means suffering. Perseverance in our prayer lives, in establishing our relationship with God and in doing the good He teaches and shows us we should do, in every area of our lives.

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