

Turning the Crap of Life, Into the Fruit of the Spirit Prayer

Prayer, *n.*, The act of making a reverent petition to God, a god, or another object of worship. An act of communion with God, such as in devotion, confession, praise, or thanksgiving. A specially worded form used to address God.

How do we Pray? How do we know that what we pray is right? What if my prayers don't get answered? How do I deal with life when I don't feel like anyone is listening? How is it that God wants to hear from me? What do I have to say? Why would He listen to me?

Perhaps you have asked these same questions. Even if you haven't, chances are you are thinking of them now. Prayer is our cry, or call to God. Not just in times of need but in times of rejoicing. But it is in the times of need that prayer can feel completely like the wrong thing to do. When someone is hurting at the loss of a loved one, prayer seems like we aren't even doing anything. Someone is in the hospital; prayer seems like a lazy way of dealing with the problem. Prayer seems like a position of weakness, not of strength.

This week I was thinking about that. Why does prayer seem so often to be the one thing we don't want to do? We want to help. Give me something and I will do it. But prayer requires us to focus not on the situation but on God. We have to focus our minds, not put them to sleep with busy work. When we pray, we are weak and in that position of weakness, God is strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9 tell us, *And He (Jesus) said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* In our perceived weakness, God is at His strongest.

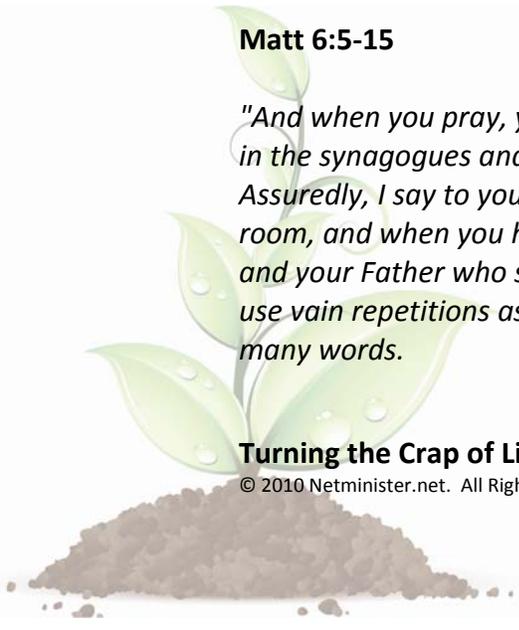
So, How Do We Pray?

Matt 6:5-15

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

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"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,

The word for Father is the word for Parent. It isn't a formal statement, instead it is the statement of what we might term "daddy" today. An intimate term that shows a relationship with someone that has authority but that with the intimacy we are allowed into a closer relationship. God is our daddy, who desires to listen when we speak. You may grow weary of your children talking all the time, but God never grows weary listening to you. When you pray you address Him with an intimate term. A way that provides for your place to speak to Him. Because you are His child, you are important and He stops to listen. The bible tells us that He inclines His ear to our words, literally meaning when we pray, God leans over and listens. Amazing!

A friend of mine talks to God not with the Holy Heavenly Father starter that many of us grew up on, instead he talks to Him as if He just walked in the door and sat down. Like a conversation. When you hear that kind of prayer you can almost visualize Jesus sitting in the chair and listening intently. Image Jesus sitting with you when you pray, listening to your every word, because He is.

Hallowed be Your name.

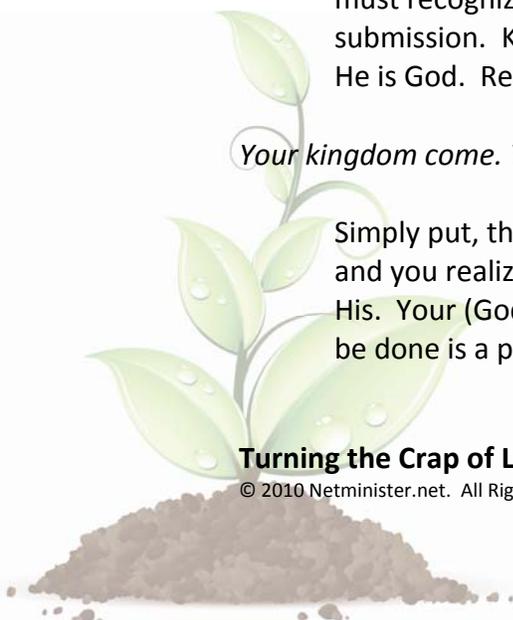
This then is the amazing part, God is important to say the least. A dad working might not stop to listen, a mother washing dishes may casually answer a child talking but God, is listening. Stopping everything to hear you! YOU! Your pathetic, pitiful attempt at talking He is hanging on every word! WOW! Here is where you acknowledge His place. By acknowledging that God is truly Holy. We must recognize that He is high, lifted up and above us. This is an issue of submission. Knowing that He is Holy, knowing that He is High, and knowing that He is God. Recognize Him for who He is.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven.

Simply put, this is submission. Stand over a grave, at a funeral or the hospital and you realize very quickly what submission is all about. Submitting our will to His. Your (God's) kingdom come is a plea for Him to rule in this world. Your will be done is a plea to rule in our life. Pain, loss, suffering, tragedy, all of it we

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submit our lives to Him because we want His will to be done – here on earth as it is in heaven. In heaven, God’s will is done, but we want it here on earth. When we pray we have to realize that submitting to His will may mean that person doesn’t live, that situation doesn’t get better or that challenge doesn’t go away. But because God is holy, we can know that what is happening in our lives He is in control and seeking to draw us closer to Him. Submission is hard. But it is required in our hearts so that we can do His will.

Give us this day our daily bread.

This is second thing we request of God. First that His will be done, in and out of our lives. Second we pray for the needs we have for today – our daily bread. In ancient Egypt, when the children of Israel were coming out of the slavery, they were provided Manna. One day supply. Anymore and it would spoil. But it was the needs for the day. Sometimes we feel we need more to make it through the day but here is where we realize our sustenance – our lives – each day comes from Jesus.

Tell Him your needs. This is what I need Lord. He knows already, but He wants to hear it from you. Imagine that. You have all the evidence in the world but you so desire a relationship with someone that even though you know what they are going to say, you still want to hear it from them. Imagine that, God wants to hear it from you, from me! Even with what He knows He wants to listen. Wants to talk, wants to hear it come from you.

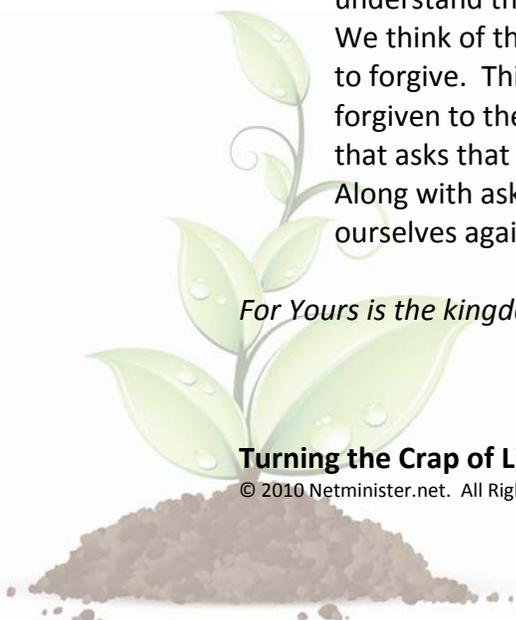
*And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.*

Submission of our will to Christ. Submission of our needs to today. Now it is our turn to take action. Forgiving our debts, our sins, as we forgive. God wants us to understand that those that sin against us, are the same as our sins against Him. We think of them separate, but God sees it as the same. To be forgiven we have to forgive. This is tough, no doubt about that. It is a requirement, we are forgiven to the degree we forgive. But there is an encouragement immediately that asks that God protect us ourselves, temptation. Nobody sins without it. Along with asking for relief from the satan (the evil one). We are submitting ourselves again. Willing to forgive because we should in order to be forgiven.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

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"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

In this example, Jesus is telling us how to pray but pointing out something important: that forgiveness is not only a need but a requirement of having your prayers heard. Are you feeling unheard? Is a lack of forgiveness blocking your prayer and weighing on you? Today is the day to lose it. And open your life to Him and listen, you might hear Him talking to you.

In a simple way, pray like this: imagine Jesus sitting there with you. Listening and waiting anxiously to hear from you. Speak to Him as you would someone you know. He knows you, He wants you to know Him. Ask for His will to be done in your life and in the life of your friends, family and loved ones as well as all over the world. Tell Him what you need, all your needs. The ask Him to forgive you where you are sinning as you ask Him to help you forgive those that have done bad things to you. Ask Him to help you not to be tempted and when you are, to deal with the temptation without sinning, hurting others or yourself. The last part is to listen and praise Him with your prayer. Imagine, the sovereign of the universe is taking time out of His day to listen. Not impatiently but with a joy of listening to His child. You are His child. Did you know that? He loves you? Did you know that? And He wants to hear from you this morning, this afternoon and this evening. Anytime, anyplace.



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