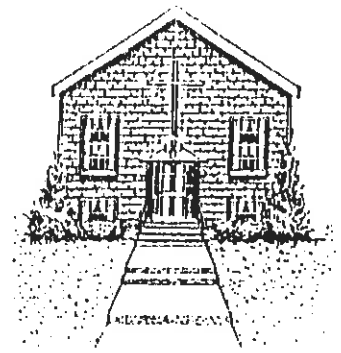


DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Norton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: The Disciples' Prayer
Scripture: Matthew 6:1-8

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 1 Jan. 6, 1991

The DISCIPLES' PRAYER (Introduction)

Introduction If a person knows any Bible at all, he probably knows by heart "the Lord's Prayer." Many of us were taught from a very early age those 67 words from the Gospel of Matthew that begin with *Our Father, who art in heaven...* And in many churches those words are repeated Sunday after Sunday as part of the worship service. That's OK, I think, because in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus prefaced these words with, *When you pray, SAY ...Father, hallowed be Thy name...*

Today, and in the weeks to follow, we are going to look at this prayer in detail and seek to learn why Jesus gave it to His disciples and how we can enhance our own prayer-lives from those 67 words.

Prayer is one of the two most *basic* activities that a person learns to do when he or she becomes a Christian. The first basic activity is to read the Bible, and to see how to HEAR GOD'S VOICE from the pages of Scripture. That is, he learns how to LISTEN to God. The other thing we need to teach our children, and converts how to do is how to TALK TO GOD. Give your child these two things, and the love he deserves, and he doesn't really need much else to really walk closely with Jesus Christ. Give a new convert these two things (along with Christian love) and he doesn't need a great deal more to start growing in the faith.

But even though prayer is so BASIC to the Christian life, it is also the *deepest* thing in the Christian life. There is nothing that we do as Christians more *supernatural* than when we set down to pray. It is by far the most *invisible* activity in the Christian walk. And therefore it is, perhaps, also the most difficult thing to build into your life.

One time a four year old was just learning to pray, and as he knelt down by his bed to pray, he was heard to say,
*Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
If he hollers, let him go. Eenie, meenie, minie, mo.*

Sometimes though, because prayer really *IS* a profound thing, our prayers feel not much more meaningful! When we seek to pray, dear ones, it is not an imagined thing that we are embarking on a lofty conquest-- that we are endeavoring an undertaking of supreme significance and wonder. When we pray, we are entering a "reality", far more "real" and permanent than this old world.

Jesus knew that prayer was important:

And He wanted His disciples to have prayer as their CLOSEST FRIEND.
 He want them to know HOW to pray.
 He wanted them to give themselves to a LIFE of INCREASING prayer.
 He wanted them to have CONFIDENCE in prayer.

Prayer was important to Jesus, and it was important to Him that His followers understood about prayer. In Matthew 6 fasting is mentioned. In Matthew 6 giving is mentioned. But in the same context prayer is dealt with at length. And before we get to the "DISCIPLES' PRAYER" itself--and that is what we should call it--we need to consider the things Jesus said in the preceding context first...

An Underlying Theme in Matthew 6

There is an underlying theme throughout this chapter. It is that pure religion is really an *invisible* thing. Whether we're speaking about prayer or giving financial assistance to people, or fasting, the Lord is the One Who looks at the HEART. We are motivated by a *couple* of things with the activities we undertake for Christ. We do certain things, just because we know He wants us to and they please Him--that motivates us

Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and PLEASE GOD (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more... (I Thessalonians 4:1)

And, we are motivated too by the PROSPECT of receiving what the Bible calls "rewards" from God, when we are finally with Him:

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 6:1).

Receiving a reward, or even *multiple* rewards from God the Father is no insignificant thing! How utterly foolish it is to say, "Well, I'll get to heaven; I just won't get any rewards;" AS IF FORFEITURE OF GOD'S GIFTS is no big thing. Dear ones, whatever it is that I may be eligible for from God, I want! He doesn't give away junk!!! If He purposes to reward the saints with something--I cannot say that I understand *what* those rewards consist of--but if it is HIS *desire* to reward the faithful, then brother, MAY I BE FOUND IN THAT LINE! This motivates us too, or it *ought* to, at least!

Proper Prayer Conditions

When we bring this to prayer, we need to look at another passage in the NT: Luke 18:9-17. Here's exactly what Jesus says should be avoided at all costs! Prayer is not something to sound the trumpet out front about. Frankly, I am embarrassed at some of the television preachers with this... But this doesn't mean that we should *never* pray out loud. It is very possible to pray out loud in corporate worship or in a prayer group, and do it with GOOD motive, not to be seen by men, but to join together in an *intelligent and conscious* way with your brethren.

The Pharisees didn't have the wrong idea about prayer. They were right on in their belief that God wanted them to seek Him in prayer and warmly invited it. They were right on in their belief (as the *Psalms* so clearly show) that their God was indeed "findable" in this thing called "prayer." But by Jesus' day, the Jewish practice of prayer had largely deteriorated into something not only meaningless to GOD, but in fact offensive to Him. It was offensive because

1. Prayer had become REPETITIVE.
2. Prayer had become ROUTINE.
3. Prayer had lost sight of WHOM WAS BEING ADDRESSED.
4. Prayer had become FORMALIZED.

Prayer was *NONE* of these things as God had blessed earlier Old Testament saints with it. But it had largely become such by Jesus' day.

The right conditions for prayer though, Jesus makes clear. In Verse 6, Jesus tells us *When you pray...* The first "right condition" for prayer is that we SHOULD DO IT.

The second "right condition" is that we should *go into your inner room and shut your door*. Prayer is to be PRIVATE, not because we should be paranoid of anyone hearing HOW we pray, but because when you are praying privately you can be the most *real* with God and you can be (and should be) AT YOUR "REALEST."

The third "right condition" is to PRAY INTELLIGENTLY. We should note that Jesus did not forbid repetition at all. What He forbade was *meaningless* repetition. We need to handle our conversations with God with at least as much intelligence as we handle our conversations with each other. It does nothing for God to say ".." although you would *think* God really gets a kick out of that by how many Christians use that incantation! We need to use our minds and THINK about what we're saying and not just fall back on many words.

In verse 8 Jesus gives the *reassurance* (not a condemnation) that "Hey! The Father knows what you need before you ask Him." It is not information that God wants from us. It is communion. It is our fellowship that He desires, and through our fellowship with Him He will hearken unto the cries of our hearts, and the genuine NEEDS we present to Him. Here's a little poem I found:

I asked for strength that I might achieve; He made me weak that I might obey. I asked for health that I might do great things; He gave me grace that I might do better things. I asked for riches that I might be happy; I was given poverty that I might be wise. I asked for power and fame that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness that I might feel the need for God. I asked for all things that I might enjoy my life; I was given life that I might enjoy all things. I received nothing I had asked for; but I received all that I had hoped for.

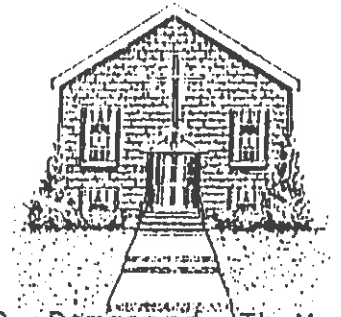
Dear ones, let's commit ourselves to becoming a people of prayer and a people who, whatever else one can say about Dartmouth Bible Church, we are a bunch of people who LOVE TO PRAY. Let's develop this. Let's learn to seek God FIRST when we have needs. Let's learn to seek God *not only* when we need *His hand to move*, but all the rest of the time too!

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Norton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: The Disciples' Prayer
Scripture: Matthew 6:9

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 2 Jan. 13, 1991

THE GOD WE'RE PRAYING TO

Introduction My "paraphrase" of Psalm 103...

Hey Neil, give praise to the Lord. Hey Neil, come over here and look at all the great things the Lord has done for you. Hey Neil, you know the Lord has pardoned every one of your sins and has made you well from every weakness--Remember that time you were so depressed and the Lord restored your enthusiasm for life? HE did that! The biggest thing about Him is how much He loves you, and He loves nothing better than to demonstrate that fact over and over again! Yes, you can be so weak some times, but HE is *never* weak and He never forgets His loyal love for you. Hey Neil, bless His name; *praise* Him with the many and wonderful titles by which He has revealed Himself...Remember His goodness, Neil, at all times, wherever you are and in whatever you're doing.

My suggestion to you last week was that prayer is the most supernatural thing that we do as Christians, and that is why feeling confident about it sometimes eludes us. And we are conscious of so much ERROR around us on the matter of prayer--a thing which Scripture warns us about--that we are fearful of falling into those errors or slips in judgement, and so we decide, by default, to live the Christian life with little or no prayer in it. It is such an incredible thing to actually be *able* to approach God personally, that even as born-again Christians we're still not sure those assurances from Scripture are real.

Dear ones, if you can identify with that little thought process I just rehearsed, you are in good company. For I believe it is just the line of thinking resident in some of Jesus' own disciples' minds.

Like us, THEY saw abuse of prayer going on around them.

Like us, THEY were just "regular guys", not given to a lofty view of themselves.

Like us, THEY found themselves overwhelmed by all the incredible implications of Jesus' claim to be King.

Like us, THEY lost their theological perspective some times.

I find it important therefore, that after *warning* the disciples about how NOT to pray (and how not to fast, and how not to give to others), now He tells them the POSITIVE side--how they *should* pray.

I don't want to belabor a point here too much, but personally, I just can't seem to get over the fact that implicit in Jesus' giving this "disciples' prayer" is the invitation TO PRAY. I think that I shall go to the grave *never having quite gotten over the fact* that God actually DESIRES my fellowship and communication with Him. And dear ones, the very fact that Matthew and Luke

record separate occasions where Jesus gave His followers this skeleton outline for prayer, echoes to me again and again that God saves people that He might have fellowship with Him and that they might enjoy Him! Incredible! Amazing...

The British NT scholar F.F. Bruce quotes two other Britishers ("Hogg and Watson") who give a little summary of what the disciples' prayer is all about. I liked it and here it is:

"It can be repeated in less than half a minute, contains petitions which range from the common bread-and-butter needs of our breakfast tables to the ultimate achievement of the age-long [long range] purposes of God; puts God's glory first, our needs second, does not rule out material matters as too trifling to pray about, yet insists on the supremacy of the spiritual, and emphasizes the basic condition of the disciples' *enjoyment* of the Father's forgiveness."

quoted in Understanding the NT--Matthew

Intro. to Verse 9 Today we are going to consider Matthew 6, verse 9, the first piece of the outline for prayer which Jesus gave His disciples. I remind you *emphatically* that whatever else we say about these verses, Jesus never intended them to just be something RECITED, no matter how many times... These verses are the WAY to pray. In them He is providing a PATTERN for prayer, a guideline for what is appropriate, and in what priority. This is not an incantation to be buzzed off. It is rather a theological outline, containing all the essential elements of HOW TO TALK TO GOD. That's what Jesus wanted His people to know--HOW to talk to God.

On the other hand, I think getting this outline into the memory of our children is not a bad thing to do, either. But as parents we need to *model* the PRACTICE of prayer, all the while reflecting the TRUTHS of these verses--we do our children a great injustice if all we ever do with these verses is rattle them off dispassionately and routinely. All that does is tell our kids that God is appeased by incantations, and that is no different at all from what pagans do.

The first part of verse 9 can be translated, *After this manner, therefore, you should pray* (A.T. Robertson), or, *This then, is how you should pray...* (Wm. Hendricksen). Prayer is not some last ditch-effort to contact the Deity when all else has failed. Prayer is not some kind of spiritual parachute that you "pop" when you're just about to slam into the dirt! It is something that Christians

- * have available all the time
- * need to develop and nurture as a central focus
- * should model to each other regularly
- * can employ for each other regularly
- * should routinely enjoy.

So, Jesus says, here's how to go about it...

"Patēr hemōn..." Jesus starts with "Our Father..." Both words are significant. Through the cross, all Christians are brothers, and Jesus wants us to be conscious of that in our prayer lives.

Second, the Greek word for "Father" is *pater*, but that is not the word Jesus used because Jesus spoke in the Aramaic language. *Pater* is the Greek translation for the Aramaic word *Abba*. Mark tells us (14:36) that in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus called the Father, *Abba*. It's most equivalent English translation would be "Poppa," or "Daddy." And it is that concept that He enjoins upon His disciples--It is always appropriate that our prayers should open with an address to God as our "Poppa." (See also Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6).

Now in one sense, God is Father to all on the planet, in that He is the Creator of all. Not one single human being ever evolved out of pond-scum or seaweed, or used to be a gorilla and then turned into a person. All people are special creations of Jehovah God. But theologically, that is where our brotherhood with all people ends. God is the Father of all men by Creation, but not by RELATION.

He *made* a Moslem, but He is not "Poppa" to a Moslem.

He *made* a Buddhist, but He is not "Poppa" to a Buddhist.

He *made* a New-ager, but I am sorry...He is not "Poppa" to a New-ager.

He is "Poppa"; He is *ABBA* only to the born-again Christian. Period. Now I hasten to remind you that *anyone*--anyone at all--can become a born-again Christian! Not only 20th century Americans...not only middle to upper-middle class Westerners...not only people who can read a Bible...not only people who come from Christian homes, can become Christians. The Sovereign Spirit of God moves about on the planet, and has delighted to do so, opening the hearts of all kinds of people, from every "tribe and nation" unto the good news of Jesus Christ. But it is only those who experience the new birth who can then address Jehovah as "Poppa," as *ABBA*. God is OUR Father in a different and more wonderful way than He is to anyone else on the planet. Now I know this is going to come as a great shock and disappointment to those around who believe--sincerely, or no--that your membership card as a *homo sapiens* is also a "bona fide" membership card into the throneroom of God, and a valid ticket to the throne of grace. But it is not true, and it is one of Satan's most clever modern tricks. Only Christians can pray *Our Father*...

Please notice too, that nowhere in this "disciples' prayer" is there a personal pronoun in the singular number. Eight times "our" or "us" or "we" is specified, but nowhere is prayer spoken of as "I." Now this is first because Jesus is talking to the *group* of His disciples, but prayer itself is laminated with a community flavor. It is always appropriate for believers to pray together, and of all the things that believers DO together--worship, help the poor, evangelize the lost, go to Congress, eat, bowl--PRAYER is the thing that most quickly and most solidly binds us together.

- * I am glad for the "Silas" Prayer Group we have.
- * I am glad that in our worship service usually, we take the time to pray *corporately*.
- * I am glad that on Feb. 2nd as many of the leaders of this church as can make it are going to gather for several hours FOR PRAYER.

And so, when we set to pray, we can open our prayer with an address, which acknowledges right at the beginning that we have a common God, and One who is our *ABBA-Father*. Let me say one further thing about God as our Heavenly Father:

It is admittedly almost a psychosexual cliché anymore, but it is nonetheless true--a person's God-concept is often already conditioned from childhood--from *early* childhood--by that relationship the person sustained to their earthly father (assuming they had one).

For those people who *knew* no earthly father, or whose father was absent most of the time, or worse, who was an abusing father, grasping GOD in a Father-role is often (though not always) particularly difficult.

Nevertheless, Jesus told them to acknowledge God as Father, and also to view Him as residing in heaven. Heaven is the place of His authority and fully visible reign. In heaven, there is no question of who God is and isn't. There is no debate and no uncertainty as to whether God cares about His creatures, or He does not. But in heaven there is also no need for faith either. THIS PLANET is the place of faith. The writer to the Hebrews, in that great chapter on *faith*, wrote:

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe to God that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

When we pray, dear ones, we need to understand that the God to whom we're talking is not of this world. He is not like us. His Son came down and was *made* like us in every way--but God the Father is not like us. He does not reside on this old earth (though He is everywhere present on it). He resides in a place the Bible calls heaven. I do not know where that is, but I am persuaded that it surely exists. It is a place unstained with sin. It is a place free of confusion or strife. No inhabitant of heaven ever grows weary of exalting God and loving Him, for they are not from *earth*; they are in heaven too.

The application to our prayer lives, is that when we set to pray, and when we do it properly, we transcend this world a little. We plug into a "reality" more "real", timeless and substantial than any form of communication here.

Communication, as a subject of study, is interesting. It used to be that men thought the only ways of communicating with each other were verbally and graphically. But as scholars pondered it, they discovered NEW ways to communicate, and in fact that people have always utilized a great many ways to reach each other. Now we use car phones and computer modems and fax machines, etc. But prayer, dear ones, is the most profound and powerful form of communication in existence! It is when a Christian sets to pray that the creature "reaches out" and touches the Creator.

His Name Last in verse 9, Jesus says there needs to be an acknowledgement of the specialness and purity of God's name. You know, God is not limited by the human words which we use to describe Him. We use "names" to designate, to characterize, to prophesy, and so forth. But God has many names--not "Allah" or "Vishnu"--I don't mean that of course. But in Scripture He is known by many titles. When you pray, use them thoughtfully and freely. Choose the name that matches your mood and your need at the moment.

One of the Christian sweatshirts that is being marketed by some Christian organizations today especially grabbed me lately. The slogan read GOD'S LAST NAME IS NOT DAMNIT. (*Mine is, or nearly so*) But God's is not. Amen. And how widespread an error is addressed by that slogan. Its not that taking God's name carelessly somehow offends God's sense of security, or that He is proud in a petty way, the way we can be about our names. But His names, and the very fact that He has revealed Himself at all are tokens of God's care and love for men. To disregard the preciousness of His name, or to abuse it is to fly in His face and say "I don't care who you are, or where you are."

When someone says to you, "Oh, I don't really mean it; it's just an expression," then you can say to them--quietly, slowly, tactfully--"THEN DON'T SAY IT. THAT'S THE LIVING GOD, YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT."

Finally, Jesus is saying more than that we should revere His name just when we're in prayer. In praying with reverence, we should be reflecting a whole LIFE of obedience and worship of His name. When we pray, we're just speaking about something that is true ALL THE TIME. We remind ourselves of it *verbally* when we pray, but Christians live in His light and walk in it, and therefore they know His name *all the time*.

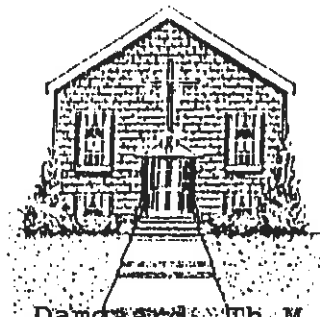
Summary 1) Jesus invites His followers to pray. 2) Prayer needs to start off on the right foot--acknowledging God's *paternity*, our *mutual* brotherhood through the blood of Christ, and God's holy place and name.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Norton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: The Disciples' Prayer
Scripture: Matthew 6:10

Neil C. Dangaard, Th.M.
Lesson 3 Jan. 20, 1991

IS CHRIST KING?

Introduction Living under the kind of a government which posts a King is something none of us can really understand. There are countries in the world which still recognize royalty, though. If you lived in England the idea of a King and Queen would be very familiar to you, even though in this century their roles are largely symbolic. If you lived in the Soviet Union, you might be of the persuasion that unless Mikhail Gorbachev is granted almost royal power, the country is going to fall. If you lived in Saudi Arabia or Jordan, you would live under a real monarchy, where the monarchs themselves actually DO rule. And if you lived in one of the world's nations which is ruled by a dictator (whether he/she is called "king" or "queen", or not), you would definitely understand what it means to live under monarchy.

We live in a democracy, though. We do not have a king. We do not have a dictator. And therefore it is not easy for us to imagine what it would be like to live under a King... And yet, dear ones, we sing about it all the time! Consider some of the words you have sung this morning:

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run; His kingdom spread from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more... Let every creature rise and bring grateful honors to our King..."

"Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne..."

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

"Jesus, we enthrone You, We proclaim You our King..."

"You're my friend and you are my brother, even though You are a King"

You get the impression that we DO seem to think we're living under a monarchy. Of course, I admit, these songs were rigged. Ron and I chose the songs with this theme! But it is our STATED CREED, at least, which promulgates that we perceive ourselves as subjects of a kingdom--whose King is Jesus Christ. We say, to those who ask, that this kingdom is not just imaginary, nor is it just off in the distant future. We say, at least, that it is REAL. And we pray things like,

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

In fact, let's talk about that part of the prayer--outline Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew 6:10!

Thy Kingdom Come With every VERB in these verses, the *aorist tense* is used. That means that the verb is what we call "point action"--WHAM! It indicates that what Jesus is telling them to pray for, should be prayed for with an URGENCY. Now when the disciples would pray this, and when WE pray it--and I remind you that this is the kind of prayer request that ought to *SATURATE* our prayer lives--not, I believe, what currently *does* predominate in our prayer lives--the salvation of loved ones--when we pray

for this, we are praying that GOD'S RULE MAY EVERYWHERE PREVAIL, over all hearts and wills. This is the most Jewish part of this prayer-outline. It sums up all the Messianic hopes of the Hebrews. The Jewish Talmud says:

"That prayer in which there is no mention of the Kingdom of God is no prayer at all."

The "kingdom of God", or, "kingdom of heaven" is no minor theme in the Bible, Old or New Testaments. Matthew alone quotes Jesus as speaking of it about 50 times. It is a reign which is invisible still, but will one day, maybe soon, become visible. Here are a just a few of the things Jesus said about the kingdom of God:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).

Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments [the Law and the Prophets] and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19).

...Unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3).

I do not believe that WE can usher in the kingdom of Christ--it is His to finish establishing when He and God the Father decree it. In fact Jesus said something real interesting to Pilate:

My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

(John 18:36)

But we are practicing kingdom-principles NOW. First, we ought to pray, pray, pray for it. We ought to USE UP our prayer-time with specific petitions that this person and that person and this current event and that one, would all be (as Spurgeon wrote) "subdued to loyal obedience" to the will of an Almighty and loving God. And then we should pray that there would be an increase in how much compliance there is around us (and IN us) with the will of God--and that, of course, is the second part of verse 10 of Matthew 6...

Thy will be Done Now God's will is an interesting subject. Much of the attention modern Christianity gives it has to do with sort-of-an existential feeling of God's direction for our lives. We want God to tell us which car to buy, which person to marry, which parking space to park in. And don't get me wrong, I depend upon the leading and voice of the Lord too. But *IN SCRIPTURE*, the "will of God" is not that mystical leading that we crave. In Scripture the phrase "the will of God" refers to what He wants, which He has already revealed. I refer you to such verses as:

He has shown you, o man, what is good and what the Lord requires of thee--but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord

is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ (Eph.5:17-21). For this is the will of God, your sanctification...(I Thess.4:3ff).

The will of God is not some elusive vapor. It is clear, the things that God wants us to occupy our lives with, and the kind of people He wants us to mature into...

So, dear ones, when we pray, "Father, may your will be done..." He might reply, "Where? Where would you like My will to be done?" To which our first answer must be, "Right here, O Lord--may Your will be the delight of my heart. May I desire more than anything to be pleasing to You, my Savior."

You see, we are not our own. We think we're our own. But if you are a Christian, you are not your own--for you have been bought with a price and you, in fact, DO OWE your life to that man who died on the cross... And He is worthy (or so we sing...)

And then, part of the prayer-request can be for His will to be done in the hearts of others too.

This war in the Middle East--how have you prayed about it? I wonder how the Pope and how Billy Graham and how Saddam Hussein pray about it... What CAN be prayed? I am not smart enough to know if it is right for us to be there. I am not smart enough to know if the Arab cause is fully Satanic or if the American cause is fully righteous. So, I have been praying--and with confidence--that His perfect will shall be accomplished.

I also pray for the men and women performing abortions on Brigham Street to be turned away from that wickedness, and to desire to do God's will. I pray that young men and women would desire to do God's will more than they would desire to have sex out of wedlock, and therefore make babies they don't want--brethren: to me, *that's* the bottom-line on the abortion question. You can't be tempted to abort what doesn't get conceived...

So we need to be praying that what GOD WANTS for people, would be what PEOPLE want for themselves. *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done...*

On Earth As It Is In Heaven You see, they DO God's will in heaven. No creature in that place debates whether God might be wrong with His views. But to see that kind of compliance here on earth--that is a thing to pray for!

We can be praying that God's will might be done on earth here, (as it is in heaven) in the area of WORSHIP. In heaven

there is none who is worshipped but Jesus Christ.
We can be praying that God's will might be done on earth here,
(as it is in heaven) in the area of PEACE. Satan is the
wager of war, and he loves to inflame men with it to,
who seem to have their own fondness for it...
We can be praying that God's will might be done on earth here,
(as it is in heaven) in the area of UNITY WITHIN FAMILIES.
I don't think that in heaven we will be divided up by family,
but I think we will know each other--and enjoy each other
with no cautiousness, self-protection, insecurities, or
unfair expectations. There will be complete TRUST AND LOVE
and we can pray to see that HERE, just like it will be there!

Seeking Christ's Kingdom and for His will to be done, is something we
do publicly, yes... The public commitments we make evidence our subjection
to King Jesus, as for instance the gesture these parents have made this
morning...or as evidenced by the songs we like to sing and hear each
week...or as evidenced by baptism...or by praying out loud with other
believers...

But the public commitments and demonstration mean nothing if there
are not private decisions to obey His will. The Pharisees made plenty of
public demonstrations of religion. But the loyal subject of the
"invisible King" will make *invisible* decisions which, when tested by God's
Spirit, prove to be aligned with God's will! We unquestionably prove our
subjection to King Jesus by the invisible conviction that His kingdom
shall never end and that it is God's will FOR ME that I make private
decisions *for-the-here-and-now* in light of His kingdom.

Private decisions like:

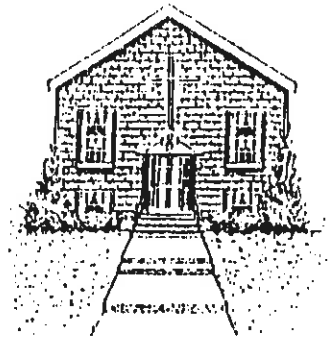
1. Spending more time with my spouse and children, even if it
costs me something in my business or career.
2. Taking risks, maybe even from the government, to defend
the helpless (remember *Micah 6:8*).
3. Saying "No" to some of my personal entertainments or pleasures
so that I may have more energy, time, money to invest in the
kingdom of Christ.
4. The refusal to give in to the trends of the world, even if
my refusal to give in makes me unpopular.
5. Helping someone out financially, anonymously.
6. Getting "secretly" involved with a missionary family.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Norton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: The Disciples' Prayer
Scripture: Matthew 6:11

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 4 Jan. 27, 1991

HOW OUR NEEDS GET MET

Introduction Its a fascinating era we live in... Over the course of world history, more people have more time to work with than ever before. More people have more money available and more opportunity than ever before. More people have more possessions and more elaborate ones than people in any other era of human history. Its a fascinating era we live in...

We have more disease licked today than in any other time that man has walked the planet. And medical research is accelerating, not slowing down. We know more about science, and how to do all kinds of interesting things than ever before. (Last week's bulletin had a picture of a space station on it--you will probably live to see it happen). Its a fascinating era we live in.

Also, there are more divorces, more deviant lifestyles, there is more lawlessness and cynicism than ever before in the history of our country, at least. More and more people are giving in to selfishness; to protecting their own hides and to going to all extremes to minimize any form of risk that they can. One of the biggest budget items in most American families is INSURANCE: health, auto, homeowners, life, malpractice, mortgage, travel, moving... Its a fascinating era we live in...

So, even with more TIME, more MONEY, more POSSESSIONS, more MEDICINE, more OPPORTUNITY and more TECHNOLOGY, for some reason we still have more and new diseases, more and faster wars, more divorces, more teen pregnancies and more abortions, more fear and more insecurity than ever before. Even *Christians* can become entangled in the unconscious anxiety that if I am not careful--and even if I am--tragedy is going to come into my life, and put in simplest terms, MY NEEDS ARE GOING TO GO UNMET.

This is why Jesus' words in Matthew 6:11 are so important for us to believe and use. In that part of the outline we are calling "the Disciples' Prayer", Jesus spelled out the first of three "prayer-requests" which are always appropriate for the believer to utter.

Give us today our daily bread...

These words are so familiar to many people they almost lost their meaning if one is not careful to think through what the petition is actually asking for... Today, I would like to make some observations on these words themselves, and then to suggest some applications for you and I to incorporate into our walk with Christ.

First, this verse comes only after verses 9 and 10 in the outline. One way of looking at the Disciples' Prayer is to see that in verse:

9 b	we enjoy and acknowledge God's	PATERNITY, and in
9 c	we recognize and exalt His	PRIORITY, and in
10 a	we ask Him to establish His	KINGDOM, and in
10 b	we ask Him to perform His	PLAN, and in
11	we ask Him to aid us with His	PROVISION, and in
12	we seek His	PROTECTION

As Jesus gave this outline, He shows us to freely seek His provision, but in the outline at least, only after we have recognized His paternity, His Lordship, His overall reign and plan...

Now in verse 11 itself, we can ask God for bread DAILY. You see, God wants us to depend on Him on a daily basis, not just in times of crisis or once a week or once a month. I think one of the saddest sayings ever made up (and this is not in the Bible) is "God helps those who help themselves." So many people think that is a fine, noble and even biblical creed, and really it is nothing more than an excuse to forget about God except when your spouse gets cancer, or when you are on the battlefield. For people who adopt "God helps those who help themselves" as their creed, they have effectively exempted themselves from consciously depending on God on a daily basis. (Of course, that is the very point of that school of thought popular in the early days of this country, and now popular again--deism)...

But dear ones, our God WANTS us to tie into to His goodness and loving care daily. He wants us to "log onto" His schedule daily!

Again, I refer you to the fact that WE WANT to control our lives and provide for ourselves, and to actively and consciously seek His provision only when all else fails... That is a wickedness and the kind of self-sufficiency that Satan entertains. The Living God has not made Himself freely available to you and I because He has nothing else to do. He loves us deeply and wishes us to TAKE from His hand what we need.

Notice next that it is daily "bread." Now Jesus could have chosen lots of more scrumptious or delectable food-items for us to ask for, but He chose "bread" because it so clearly symbolizes the simple. We can fully depend on God to provide for us WHAT WE NEED. That is the content of what we ask from God, and we can remember when we're asking it that God LOVES to give good gifts to His own. Many times what He gives does far exceed what we ask for. But our NEEDS is what we can and should ask for.

Now what are your needs? I think we have just a few real needs. I think we can expect God to be good and gracious...and right now, in the era we are living in, we are in a time of great abundance. We can thank

188,
25-
34

God that in His providence, He has allowed us to enjoy so much. He doesn't owe it to us, but we enjoy a lot right now. Give Him thanks for all that you have and enjoy. But what NEEDS do we have?

- A. Salvation.
1. Food.
2. Clothing.
3. Shelter.
4. Transportation.
5. Christian Fellowship.

Now compared to all the things we *think* we need, we can survive without much else than these six things. Now the point is this: You can ask God to supply these things, and you can expect Him to PROVIDE THEM regularly, even daily. He may do it through normal channels, and sometimes when its required, He can and will do it supernaturally. Of course for God there is no such thing as the supernatural. He is the Lord, the King, the Creator. But for us there definitely are things which we call miracles, and if need be God can provide our needs that way.

There are a couple of biblical principles that go along with this part of the Disciples' Prayer:

1. We need to be learning contentment. *James 4:3*
2. We need to be responsible stewards of our resources.

These are a problem sometimes. Christians can fall into the trap of feeling or saying things like:

- * I can't be happy without a spouse (or without a *new* spouse).
- * I can't be happy without perfect health.
- * I can't be happy without more financial security.
- * I can't be happy without a better job (or "calling").

Now I don't think that if we blow it and DO complain, or DO squander our resources--time, money, etc., that we terminate God's paternal relationship with us. Praise His name, He is forgiving and gracious. And learning contentment (Phil.4) and learning responsible stewardship are things we need to concentrate on, and encourage in each other.

Jesus tells us to ask God for DAILY bread and to ask it THIS DAY. God wants you and I to daily depend on His goodness--to taste and see that the Lord is good *each day*.

This kind of dependence on God begins with receiving Jesus Christ as Savior; with receiving the Bread of Life to place me *into* an eligible Father-child relationship. Then I can depend on Him for those six needs the rest of my life.

The protection of His child and treasure, is a charge that on Himself He laid...

God makes it His own responsibility to meet my needs. Ultimately, it is HE who must provide for me to walk with Him, to live a meaningful and significant life, and to enable me to serve Him and work for His Kingdom.

Place your life now, in light of this. Where are you? Are you consciously asking Him to provide what you need? Do you meet this promise by Jesus with the faith that He will honor what He has said He will do?

WHAT DO YOU NEED?

A. Salvation

B. Emotional (spiritual)



intimacy with God
intimacy with others
significance

C. Physical



Food
Clothing
Shelter
Transportation

MATTHEW

6:9

9

10a

10b

11

12

13a

GOD'S

Paternity

Priority

Program

Plan

Provision

Pardon

Protection

Forgiveness is not

false

premature

naive

IS !



letting go of the
"right" of vengeance

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Norton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: The Disciples' Prayer
Scripture: Matthew 6:12,14,15

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 5 Feb. 1, 1991

FORGIVING and LETTING GO

Scripture reading - Matthew 18:21-35

Introduction If you found yourself "on the spot," and you had 60 seconds to answer the question "what is the Bible about?", how would you answer? What is of SUCH PRIMARY IMPORTANCE, that you could not leave it out? Ask yourself this question: "what comes up most often in the Bible?", OR, "which *issue* about people and the things they deal with, comes up most?"

Dear ones, it ought to be possible for us to articulate really what we're all about in about 60 seconds...

Knowing Christ is about this: *forgiveness*. Its also about a lot of other things too, but mainly, its about *forgiveness*. And this part of the Disciples' Prayer zooms in on asking God for daily forgiveness, and passing that along to the people in my life, also on a daily basis.

Now the word that Matthew gives us--"forgive us our DEBTS"--is one of 5 NT Greek words for *sin*:

Hamartia (the most often used word) has the idea of missing the mark. Like missing an archery target, our sins cause us to miss the mark of God's righteous standards for us.

Paraptoma ("trespass") has the idea of slipping or falling, resulting more from carelessness, than from intentional disobedience.

Parabasis has the idea of stepping across the line, going beyond the limits prescribed by God--often translated *transgression*.

Parabasis is more intentional than *paraptoma* or *hamartia*.

Anomia means lawlessness. It is direct and open rebellion against God and His ways.

But the word that Matthew uses here is the word *opheilema* which means a moral or spiritual DEBT owed to God. Jesus called sins DEBTS here, because they deserve to be punished.

An underlying assumption of this prayer is that PEOPLE ARE SINNERS. For all the rejection of the biblical world-view that we see in the world today, I still want to see someone suggest an explanation for the EVIL that captivates our planet today. People are sinners. By nature, in the core of their being, they are evil. And even Christians are still sinners. Jesus knew that, of course, and He knew that we would ALWAYS have spiritual debts, and therefore that we would continually need to cry out to God, "Forgive!"

It needs to be said that sometimes Christians *forget* their CONTINUING need of God to be forgiving. We just don't ever out-grow or evolve out of our need for the Lord to be merciful to us. At least I don't, do you?

One of the things the Holy Spirit does within the Christian is to convict us of sin. Now I want you to mark that--CONVICT, not CONDEMN. One thing the Holy Spirit never says to me is, "You scum-buzzard...!" He convicts, He reveals to me and reminds me of my utter need of the Savior's payment on Calvary, but He does not condemn.

Now I find it interesting that Jesus suggested this part of the prayer-outline right after we ask for daily needs. One of my daily needs, surely as much as the need for food, is to be forgiven for my new sins--the ones I just invented today. Right after He said, "Say, 'Give'," He said, "Say 'Forgive'."

This is so important for us and it is absolutely central to our faith. It is the CORE of our faith. It doesn't matter whether we're talking about Grace Chapel, or some Scottish church in the highlands, or some Chinese house-church, or a Russian fellowship or a bunch of Eskimo believers, or Dartmouth Bible Church. Christians everywhere just keep needing God to forgive them.

Asking for forgiveness implies *confession*. And confession, contrary to what many think, is not some automatic process whereby I say some magic words ABOUT sin, and--"poof!"--God automatically erases them from my account. Confession means to agree with God about my sin, and to bring myself into agreement with Him regularly. It is *humbling*, dear ones, and that's why proud people don't like to be reminded much. But we cling to the Apostle John's words,

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).

That verse is one of the first that a new Christian should memorize, because, dear ones: YOU GONNA NEED IT!

Now why am I hammering this point? Because we *forget* it. We allow our estimation of sin to get watered-down, diluted, weakened and compromised. We can so quickly forget that feeling of LOSTNESS that we felt just before we were saved.

One of the scary statistics you hear at lots of discipleship and church growth seminars, is that most modern American converts to Christianity have a productive outreach for about 18 months. By then they've lost most of their non-Christian friends and relationships, and they're hanging around with Christians almost exclusively. If that trend is true, it explains why it is so easy to forget why we became Christians in the first place...Its because we're sinners. We're debtors. We're transgressors. We sin, and we like it. It feels "good" to sin, and apart from the sovereign grace of God and the light of Scripture, I would be a complete slave to sin.

The 2nd Part of the Verse

Now as Jesus worded this, He grammatically attached "Forgive us our debts" to another phrase. We may wish that He hadn't, and just to make sure we don't miss it, He presses this second part again in verses 14 and 15.

Receiving forgiveness is inseparable from my willingness to BE a characteristically *forgiving* person. Now at first glance, it may look like Jesus is making BEING-A-FORGIVING-PERSON a prerequisite for salvation. We know that is not at all what He meant, because more than anyone who ever walked on this planet, Jesus knew that men were *bound* by sin, helpless to overcome it, really, and enslaved by it.

So what DID He mean? How is it that when we ASK for forgiveness, we need to be attaching this self-pronouncing proviso to the request?

The answer is that BEING-A-FORGIVING-PERSON is the *fruit* of having *been* truly forgiven by God! Listen to something the Anglican theologian John R. W. Stott wrote:

...One of the chief EVIDENCES of true penitence is a forgiving spirit. Once our eyes have been opened to see the ENORMITY of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to US appear by comparison, extremely trifling. If we have an exaggerated view of the offences of others, it [shows] that we have MINIMIZED OUR OWN...[and]...there is a disparity between size of debts...(Christian Counter-Culture, p.149)

It is not that going on a campaign, undertaking a self-improvement project to go around forgiving people that have hurt you is going to make you ELIGIBLE for God's forgiveness--it is that HAVING EXPERIENCED God's forgiveness, you will BECOME a characteristically forgiving person.

This is why bitterness and cynicism are so incredibly *incongruous* with a person's claim to be a Christian. Jesus is telling us to weave into our prayer lives--as often as we look to God for physical needs--to weave in the petition for forgiveness, NOT FOR A MINUTE holding any grudges ourselves. Charles Spurgeon wrote,

"It would not be safe for God to forgive a man who will not forgive others."

What Forgiving Others Means

First, I want to "bracket" a description of what forgiveness IS, with three things that it is not--or rather, three symptoms which betray that forgiveness hasn't really happened yet...

Not: false forgiveness - this is just saying "I forgive you" but there is still a grudge, a distrust inside. It is a common practice among Christians.

premature forgiveness - this goes hand in hand with "false forgiveness" and it is making the decision to forgive too lightly, without realizing the depth of injury you've sustained. Also common among Christians.

naivete - this is expecting yourself (or someone else) to be able to erase their memory of injury. It is, in a word, stupid to expect

this of yourself or someone else. If it happens, by God's grace, then praise Him.

FORGIVENESS IS THIS: letting go of the "right" to take vengeance.

It means to "leave behind" or "abandon" the offence. The way to do this, is to keep yourself in close proximity to your own need for God to forgive you. That is why Jesus gives us the prayer-outline in Matthew 6. I need to be a person who "cuts loose" the injury others have done to me, and one who cuts it loose fairly quickly, because I keep running into an awareness that God has had to extend great and many mercies to me. I need to have a healthy portion of acquaintance with my OWN unworthiness of grace. And of course, part of what the Lord's Table does for me is in its reminder of what Jesus had to sacrifice for ME to be forgiven.

The Scripture says, *A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression (Proverbs 19:11)*. The highest virtue a person can express, is to forgive another person for a sin against them--because it reflects most clearly God's forgiveness of they, themselves...

John MacArthur suggests three other benefits for being a forgiving person:

1. Forgiving others frees the conscience of guilt. Holding other people as "guilty" interferes with my peace of mind, my happiness, my satisfaction in life, and even the proper functioning of the body.
2. Forgiving other people benefits the whole congregation of God's people. Probably nothing short-circuits the mission of the Church like conflicts among God's people (See Psalm 66:18).
3. Forgiving other people delivers us from God's discipline. Where there is an unforgiving spirit, there is sin. Where there is sin, there will be chastening from God. Unrepented sins in the church at Corinth caused many church members there to be weak, sick and even to die. But a church which routinely practices personal and corporate forgiveness, is freed up to SEE God's power and plan unfold!

How gracious are we, dear ones? How soon is it between when someone injures you, that you go to your knees and remember your injuries to God?

You know we surround Christianity with all kinds of religious doo-dads--music programs, church buildings, committees, offering envelopes, paperwork, libraries, electronic equipment--

--but at the bottom line, we are a collection of forgiven people, seeking to spread the NEWS and the FLAVOR of forgiveness. So that we can pray, *Forgive us our debts, as we we also have forgiven our debtors*. Sometimes, friends, we just need to cut loose the debts people owe us. I don't mean financial; I mean spiritual and emotional. Sometimes we just need to look them in the face and tell them, "Hey--its OK; forget it." We need to give each other a fresh start, the same way the Lord gives each of us a fresh start each morning.

NT words for "sin"

Hamartia missing the mark

Paraptoma slipping or falling, from carelessness

Parabasis stepping across the line; "transgression"

Anomia lawlessness; direct and open rebellion against God

Opheilema a debt owed to God, deserving punishment

Series: The Disciples' Prayer
Scripture: Matthew 6:13, etc.

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 6 Feb. 10, 1991

FATHER, PRESERVE ME

Introduction It is probably a real good thing that we cannot see the future, don't you think? If you somehow were granted, say, a five minute look into the future--what would you like to find out? Would you ask to find out how the Persian Gulf War will turn out? Would you check up on your children? Would you ask for the winning lottery number for a particular date?

Maybe something you would *not* want to find out about--and I probably wouldn't have even thought of this had I not been preparing to preach on today's passage--is what sins you will sin during a given week, month or year, somewhere down the pike... That is information, folks, that you would probably like to steer completely clear of, right? And me too...

Now usually the PAST & the FUTURE are things that we cannot do anything about, or so we perceive. We tend to think of our lives as ACTIVE only in the present, and while we ponder the past and future, we are not engaged in them...But dear ones, the prayer-outline that Jesus Christ gave to His disciples (and to you) does engage the past, and it engages the future as well. In fact, from the consideration of TIME, it covers all times: your past, your present life, and your future.

Last week we considered the need for forgiveness; both MY OWN need to be forgiven by God, and at the same time my need to BE FORGIVING, to "let go of the right to take vengeance," as I defined real Christian forgiveness. That has to do with forgiveness for the sins I have committed in the past, and the sins that others have perpetrated on *me* in the past.

Today we read the final part of the Disciples' Prayer, which relates to my *future* sins. Now if I told you that starting now, I am never going to sin again, you would be looking for antennae on the back of my head and asking what planet I've come from... Because you would KNOW that any announcement of planned sinlessness is unrealistic (if not stupid). The fact is, you and I are both going to make conscious, intentional decisions to disobey God, or to NOT obey Him. We're going to continue to face the opportunity to disobey, frequently and repeatedly. Do you agree with that?

And why does God allow that? Why doesn't He just "zap" us and make us like the angels, who just do not sin and live in perfected bliss? Why allow us to live out our lives, ever *candidates* for all-over-again, needing His mercy and forgiveness because, Yes, Lord--I blew it again...?

It is because He has chosen to make us *different* from the angels. We are creatures charged with the special responsibility to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." And, in point of fact, God has chosen

to leave us yet vulnerable to our own leftover sin-nature, to the snares of the world and the devil. Whining about it doesn't change it. I'm a sinner; a redeemed one, but a sinner nonetheless. And every incident where I have decided to disobey God, or NOT to obey Him is an incident for which I must give an account at the judgement seat of Christ. That will be hard, dear ones. It is not penal judgement that I will receive from Him, because I have placed my complete confidence in His already having received that FOR me. But His holy gaze I will face.

Therefore, does it not make sense, that (for many reasons) I undertake to do everything I can to minimize the *number* and *frequency* times that I fall into sin here? Wouldn't it be great, if there was some kind of action, some device whereby I could CUT DOWN the number of future incidents wherein I'm going to blow it, to miss the mark again, to rebel and to step over the line? Dear ones, I introduce to you Matthew 6:13!

Spurgeon wrote: "In the course of providence, the Lord tests our graces and the sincerity of our profession; and for this purpose He does "lead us into temptation." *Comm. on Matthew*, p.35.

Now we know that God HIMSELF does not tempt us. James (1:13) wrote "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God.' for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone." Jesus is not giving His disciples an incantation to ward off some schizophrenic God, nurturing His children one day, and tantilizing them the next. But God does allow us to continue to sin, if we--even as Christians--chose to do so. This is the point where I would welcome that abused expression so commonly rattled off by people, "free will." I think that no non-Christian really has a fre-will. They all have bound-wills, sold into bondage to sin. But once saved, once born-again, once redeemed...THAT person then has some liberty NOT to sin. He can now CHOSE to obey the Law of Christ and to follow His will and joyfully concur in it. He could not do that before conversion. But still, there are times when we do sin. It breaks His heart, dear ones, when we do (whether its the routine bad-habits we still have, or the BIG-CATASTROPHIC sins). He allows it to happen, especially if we're not praying much.

Paul's words in Romans 7 have always been a great comfort to me, as he laid out his own battle against the flesh. Even he still had this war going on inside him...

So what is Jesus telling the disciples to ask for, then? Well, the Greek word translated "temptation" really means something more general, of which specific temptation is a kind. The word peirasmos more generally means TRIAL--"Don't lead me into TRIAL." Now there's a problem here. James also told us that trials are actually kind of good for us. Didn't he write, "Consider it all joy, brethren, when you encounter various trials [same word, peirasmos], knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (James 1:2,3). If then, they are actually beneficial, why should we petition the Father to be made exempt?

I think it is because what Jesus means for us to ask might be translated as follows: DO NOT ALLOW US SO TO BE LED INTO TEMPTATION THAT IT OVERWHELMS US. This ties into the second part of the verse, deliver us from evil. This is a prayer to OVERCOME temptation, not to avoid it. We know we can't avoid it. It is evil that would swallow us up, and this word "evil" can also be translated "evil one." Satan is pretty strong, after all. He is smarter and more clever than any of us. He knows how to

entice that still-sin-loving power-of-choice of yours, and to set you up to MAKE YOUR OWN DECISION to miss the mark, to step across the line, to rebel. Jesus gave us words to pray--simple words--to ask the heavenly Father to DELIVER US from situation after situation, if we call on Him.

'Course, if you never or rarely CALL on Him, then you will never make it your habit to claim verses like (once again, from James [4:7]), *Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* After all, dear ones, my basic burden in bringing this message is not that you would just understand the right interpretation of these few verses about prayer but that you might PRAY more, and pray with MORE CONFIDENCE, and as you develop your own burden for prayer that you might know clearly what to ask God FOR!

AS YOU ASK God to deliver you--maybe daily--you will at the same time start to develop what Paul spoke about in Ephesians 5:15 when he told the Ephesian believers to "walk circumspectly" (or, carefully) as "wise men."

Making wise decisions goes hand in hand with the personal prayer request, "Deliver me from evil." Do you have a problem with money? Don't be around it. Do you have a problem with being alone? Don't be alone. Do you have a problem with bitterness or cynicism? Don't spend all your time with bitter or cynical people. Walk "circumspectly."

Jesus suggested this item in this prayer-outline, because He KNEW the potential for sin His disciples (and we) would continue to live with. He knew that a request like Matthew 6:13 would not fall on deaf ears with God, but that no sooner would the words be out of our mouths when the Father would set to answering it. The problem is not with a reluctant God, it is with the slow-to-pray disciple. God will always--every time--render aid. I don't know how He does it--maybe He uses angels--I don't know; but I know He does.

You know, dear ones, these prayer requests are not like lottery tickets: 1 in a million chance of scoring a hit. They are Jesus shedding light on the kinds of things we can confidently ask of the Father, knowing IN ADVANCE that He's going to listen and move.

My past sins were taken care of at the cross. So are my future ones. But it is God's will that as I grow in grace; as I log more and more hours and YEARS as a Christian, that I will become more DEPENDENT on prayer and less quick to sin. He will help you with that, dear ones. Do you want Him to?

You're fighting three enemies: your old nature, a world system that is fundamentally hostile to God's ways, and an incredibly intelligent and just as incredibly evil creature who wants nothing better than for you to fall, be it emotionally, intellectually, physically, any way he can achieve your apostasy and the undoing of your faith.

But my friends, make it your motto what James wrote: *Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*

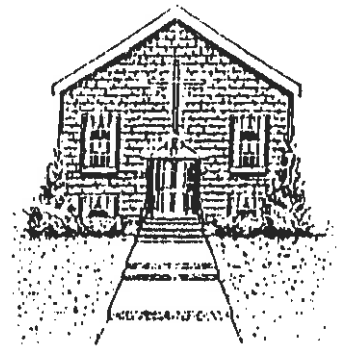
Change is hard; I mean real change. You might have already bought into the lie that you cannot change in certain areas, even though you have trusted Christ. It is not so. You can change in any spiritual area you want to, if you want to bad enough. And the Disciples' Prayer is given to show just that.

DARTMOUTH BIBLE NOTES

Sermon

Notes From the Sunday Messages

52 Morton Avenue North Dartmouth, Massachusetts



Series: The Disciples' Prayer
Scripture: Matt. 6:9-13; I Peter 3:7; etc.

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 7 Feb. 17, 1991

PRAYING FOR YOUR SPOUSE

Introduction This morning is three days after Valentine's Day and I was so moved by Dr. Dobson's radio broadcast on those two days, that it burdened me to bring a message, which is sort of a spill-over from Valentine's Day. We want to talk again about prayer today, and apply it to marriage. But first, have you ever asked, "How much good does prayer do?" Probably most Christians ask themselves that question at some point or other in their Christian life, if not periodically. In order to get a handle on this question, we need to ask a couple of other things:

1. How much good does prayer do FOR WHOM?
2. How much good does prayer do BY WHEN?

These two "auxiliary" considerations draw us to consider a little deeper idea of REAL prayer, than just a "gimme, gimme, and do it now" approach to fellowshiping with our heavenly Father.

It is not easy to become a man or a woman of prayer. Prayer is the most supernatural thing that we do as Christians. From Jesus' words in Matthew 6 we know that it is easy to be motivated by the wrong things when it comes to prayer. Praying with RIGHT motives is sort of the straight-and-narrow path, that is easy to miss. But, become men and women of prayer WE MUST! It is the highest activity of the Christian, and it is also (in my opinion) the most exciting.

Now, we have been studying the "Disciples' Prayer" for a few weeks (called by many "the Lord's Prayer"), and as I have been enjoying my preparation of these messages, it occurred to me that in addition to being the most supernatural spiritual activity we do, prayer is something ELSE, too. It is one of the most CREATIVE things we can do as Christians. While we are not immune from praying in a repetitive or boring or flashy way, generally you are exercising a very creative and expressive ability when you pray. It is too bad that so many Christians are so afraid to pray out loud; they deprive the rest of us the beauty of entering into and fellowshiping in their worship. But in general, I think, it is a high point of corporate worship (be it in church, or a small prayer group) to listen to and enjoy the spontaneous pouring out of the hearts of our brethren to the Lord.

Today, I would like us then, to consider how to apply this Disciples's Prayer to one area of our lives. We're going to walk through the Disciples' Prayer once again, and I would like you to ponder how it applies to *praying for your spouse*.

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name"

All prayer should begin with an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. When we pray, it should never begin capriciously, for after all, we are not talking to another person or even just a heavenly being. We are actually talking to the Creator, the Lord, the Almighty. We should always PREPARE our minds and our perspective when addressing Him.

Where He is, there is no haste.

Where He is, there is no frenzy or confusion.

Where He is (in heaven), there is no stress, and so when we approach the throne of grace--and Scripture assures us that if we come as true believer's in Christ, we may do so boldly--the approach should not be like dashing into a Cumberland Farms for a quick purchase. It needs always be FIRST with a conscious acknowledgment of the WONDER and GLORY of His Name.

>>> *Brief Pointer:* Use a praise song or hymn you know, to begin your prayer times. It can help you HALLOW His Name, and at the same time lift your spirit!

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done

So often in marriage, there is the question of WHO'S IN CONTROL? When we are praying for our spouses, and we begin with an invitation to God to establish Himself on the throne of MY life ("Thy kingdom come"), I am consciously turning the RIGHT TO RULE over to Him.

From my own experience, and from my counseling experience and all that I read too, it seems that the difference between happy marriages and unhappy ones, is the degree to which each partner's WILL is submitted to Jesus Christ. When I can say to the Lord, "Thy will be done in my life as a husband," I give my wife a better husband. If I say to her, "MY will be done," and insist on MY way, it only discourages her and damages the marriage. So, when I'm praying for my spouse, right near the beginning, its good to SURRENDER myself over to HIS good pleasure, is it not? I need to *recalibrate* my own naturally selfish attitudes right at the outset of every attempt I make to support my wife in prayer. And dear ones, you need to consciously do that too...

There come times in every marriage where one spouse or the other must release their beloved into the Lord's hands. It may be because of rebellion; it may be because of sickness or aged-ness, but sooner or later all face the difficult task of entrusting their spouse to a loving and all-wise God, with the words, "THY will be done."

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread One detail I think I have failed to point out in this little exposition of the Disciples' Prayer, is that Jesus did not say "Pray in this way...Give ME this day MY daily bread." He said "*Give US this day OUR daily bread.*" Now it is true that He was speaking this in an immediate sense to His disciples. So far as we know, He wasn't talking to couples. But when we are in prayer, there is little room for ONLY the first person. If you are a Christian, you and I have been forever grafted into the BODY of Christ. We are jointly part of the BRIDE. If you are blessed with a Christian spouse, you need to always remember that you are both FELLOW-HEIRS of the grace of life, as Peter put it in a verse we shall turn to shortly.

I've been reading a remarkable book this week, entitled *Evidence Not Seen*, by a missionary name Darlene Rose. Darlene and her husband Russell were new missionaries to New Guinea in the late 1930's. Her story of the mission field, when the believers have little other than prayer to sustain them (they are the TRUE heroes of society), is deeply moving. At one point she tells of when her husband left her and the other women behind while they went inland on the first trek toward the remote mountain region of New Guinea called the Wissel Lakes. He was gone for several months, and as there was of course no telephone or mail, Darlene could only wait and pray for her husband. She writes in her book, "*With the other missionaries, I prayed that God would overshadow him, enabling him to reach the Wissel Lakes speedily and safely. How very much he suffered--*[here are the few words from Darlene that lept off the page to me]*--HOW IMPERATIVE OUR INTERCESSION--I was not to know for many weeks to come.*" Prayer is indeed a supernatural exercise, and the most supernatural thing we do!

So as you pray for your spouse, and for yourself too, you pray for God's daily provision to fall upon your JOINT needs as a couple, as a team, as a little "model" of the greater community of which you are part.

I believe it honors God too, when you as a Christian (if your spouse is not yet saved) perform a "priestly" function on behalf of that unsaved spouse...you pray for your joint-needs as a couple. Just because he or she isn't saved yet, doesn't mean that God looks on you and your spouse as on man and animal. He cares about that spouse too, and how do you know but that God might not still use YOU to lead that person to the Savior? (This is exactly what Paul says in I Corinthians 7:16).

And Forgive Us Our Debts, As We Forgive Our Debtors There are probably not many tools a couple needs to build a strong and healthy marriage, but one tool which is absolutely indispensable is the tool of *forgiveness*. When Jesus gave this part of the prayer-outline, He was intending that His disciples should couple *their own personal* willingness to freely forgive others AS A FRUIT of their having received such profound forgiveness themselves. In what arena could this be more appropriate than in marriage?

I ask you, dear ones: How many of you knew HOW to be married when you got married? Nobody goes into the thing a "pro." Every person who gets married (or nearly every person) isn't married long when

they run smack-dab into fresh discoveries of their own selfishness, and NEW HEIGHTS of self-centeredness--it may surprise even them! I say this carefully and full of affection, but more and more people are taking two or three marriages to learn how to make it work.

When you pray for your spouse, do it full of forgiveness for him or her. Take no bitterness to the throne with you and no grudge against the wife or husband of your youth! To the husbands in our midst, the Apostle Peter has a special word:

You husbands, likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered (I Peter 3:7). Paul adds, Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them (Colossians 3:19).

Did you catch that last line, husbands? ...SO THAT YOUR PRAYERS MAY NOT BE HINDERED... With a few husbands, they trudge through the Christian life with little joy and little use for prayer... They find their prayers flat, lifeless, blase. They may be mystified as if God's word were silent on WHY... And it is because they refused to acknowledge their wives as partners and co-owners of the blessings of life. Maybe they nursed some grudge; holding onto some disappointment concerning their wives, or MAYBE--just MAYBE they've got problems that they brought into the marriage that the wife surely inherited, but were surely not her fault! The husband will not forgive, even though they, themselves have needed so much of God's forgiveness; even "new and fresh mercies every morning." All the while, though, the Lord gave the mechanism whereby that fellow didn't have to live with a damaged prayer life--Paul wrote to the Ephesians, *Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger (Ephesians 4:27).*

I think prayer-support for our spouses is one of the things we sometimes might USE, maybe unconsciously, as sort-of a *bargaining chip*. We think, "HA--you don't know it, but I'm not praying for you--how do ya like THAT!" Oh yes, we can still be pretty bad...

A little quote I came across in *Our Daily Bread* on Valentine's Day, this week:

COMMITMENT PROVIDES THE FOUNDATION FOR ACHIEVING SECURITY and INTIMACY in Christ, based on FORGIVENESS and the REBUILDING of TRUSTWORTHINESS (Dennis J. DeHaan).

And Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil

This last part of the "Disciples' Prayer," is essentially crying out to God, "Father, preserve me." So, as we apply this to praying for our spouses and praying together AS spouses--we are praying, "Father, preserve US." The evil one would surely love to wreck our ship on the rocks of divorce. Older believers sometimes tell me, "If the young couples would never look at divorce as an option, it never would be." I think that this is not true.

dwang

On Dr. Dobson's program this week that I mentioned to you, there is the heart-breaking testimony of a Christian man who lived with his Christian wife for 24 years. They had 8 children. He says he and his wife felt they were immune to divorce. But it happened...

Dear ones, do you pray for your spouse? Do you lift that beloved of yours that YOU CHOSE to promise to love and stay with for life, UP to the Lord as your greatest ministry? Wives, pray for him. Husbands, pray for her. We do not need to be paranoid or terrified about his, but we do need to live Peter's words, *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (I Peter 5:8)*. My friends, pray for your beloved. Pray long and pray faithfully. And do not ever give UP praying!

Final Thoughts

What do you do with this message today if you don't HAVE a spouse? If you're single, and you *desire* to get married, then start praying now for that man or woman. You say, "But I don't know who he or she is." Well, God knows, doesn't he? Start petitioning daily for that person, and praying for all the wonderful things that Scripture tells us clearly it is God's will to pray for. (You end up with a better spouse, too!)

If you are a widow or widower, and your married days are over, what can YOU do with this message? Why not select one young couple you know in the church here--maybe one who is struggling with marriage and make them your personal prayer-ministry. You don't have to TELL them about it--do it in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will WORK in secret, delighting (I believe) to "hurry" and answer those prayers of yours!

Finally, if you're divorced--you don't have to ever again have a good thought towards that scum-buzzard of an "ex"; do you? Even though you're now a Christian, because you're divorced you get the special privilege of hating your "ex", don't you--or at least you get to ignore that foul person, don't you? No, dear ones, you do not. If you're a Christian, the Holy Spirit is saying to you to forgive, to let go of the right-to-vengeance. And maybe for the divorced there is a special grace to be found--unknown to the rest of us--in developing a faithful prayer ministry for that "ex"; first, that THEY TOO might somehow find Christ, and second for there to be healing in *their* hearts...and maybe you could think of OTHER things to bring before the heavenly Father on their behalf...

May the God who beckons us "*Come, all you who are heavy laden,*" make us first and foremost, a people of prayer on behalf of our beloved. May each of us make a SECRET COMMITMENT this day--to DAILY--at least ONCE a day, to pray for the spouse whom God has given us.

Series: The Disciples' Prayer
Scripture: Judges 6:36-40; Matt. 15:21-28

Neil C. Damgaard, Th.M.
Lesson 8 Feb. 24, 1991

UNDERRATING PRAYER

Scriptures read: ^{ψ22^{9,10,24}} Psalms 4:1; ^{31²²} 6:8,19; ^{Jonah 2^{1,2,7}} 28:6; Acts 4:31; James 5:17,18

Introduction When it comes to finances, you and I tend to use all the resources we can find to better our lives, don't we? Here's a few of the financial resources we like to make use of...(I thought of 13 resources, outside our main jobs!)

Overtime, side-jobs, inheritance, credit, yard-sales, bonuses, investments, interest, retirement funds, unemployment compensation, workman's compensation, rental income, litigation...

Now, if you had a resource available to you--a good one, let's say, and you DIDN'T take full advantage of it, people would think that was foolish, wouldn't they?

Today, I wish to say some things again about prayer. It is our greatest resource! It's a greater resource than our rivers and "fruited plains" and youth and everything else! It is the greatest AID to being a happy, fulfilled person that God has given us. And frankly, I think it is grossly underrated. I think it is underrated among Christians, who are, in fact, the only KIND of people on earth who can expect a friendly audience with God. (That, by the way, is not narrow-minded; it is just the fact). To get done what needs to be done--prayer is better than

A Visa Gold card with 0% interest.....its better than
Having a whole family of strong-backed sons to run the farm...
its better than
Having the most reliable and fuel-efficient car or truck on the
market. Its better than
Being able to perform signs and wonders... Its better than
All the best seminars and books and preachers and conferences
and radio programs and videos.

PRAYER ACCOMPLISHES MUCH! And it has been on my heart this week to bring another message about the efficaciousness (or, power) of prayer for the life of the Christian. Last week I brought a message on "Praying For Your Spouse." It was much on my heart, and still is; in fact, at first I was going to bring another one on the same subject--I myself, have never heard any preacher deal with it. But instead, I settled on a more general exposition, just on the POWER of prayer.

Let's review something first about prayer, as Jesus taught it in the "disciples' prayer"--

1. It is to be secret.
2. It is to be done with full awareness of God's sovereignty; that is, it is HIS right to answer prayer as He sees fit.
3. It is to be done with expectancy of:
 - a. provision of needs
 - b. receiving mercy
4. It is to be done only when I am willing to let go of my anger and desire for vengeance for injuries I have sustained.

These are the conditions that surround correct praying, as taught by Jesus. And when these conditions are heeded, we avail ourselves of the greatest, most powerful resource for CHANGE that exists on the planet. GREAT THINGS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH PRAYER, and THROUGH PRAYER ALONE!

But dear ones, I am haunted by the firm conviction that WE DON'T BELIEVE that. I'm not sure--to be honest with you--how much I actually believe it. Don't misunderstand me; I KNOW its true--I'm just not sure how much I believe it...

That is one of the great ironies of calling ourselves Christians. What we know to be true, is often more than what has really grabbed us. We "know" a whole lot more correct theology than we have yet been IMPACTED by. But God is gracious, and it is good to get all that good theology down early in the Christian life; and then we spend the rest of our days assimilating it into our daily routine. And dear ones, it TAKES the rest of your days to plug all the right-theology into your day-to-day life...

Becoming a real man or woman of prayer is a big area, I believe, where we need growth. We've got the theology of prayer pretty well down. We know Christ is our high priest. We know there is one (and only one) mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (I Tim.2:5). We know that prayer is supposed to be a basic aspect of the Christian life. But I sense that we don't fully appreciate the great POWER of prayer. We are not yet making full use of the resource of prayer to effect change.

I know one of the biggest cliché's in counseling each other, is when you may share a problem with someone, and they shoot back the "pat" little question, "have you prayed about it?" You hear that too many times, and you get cynical. But I must ask you today that same question, "have you prayed about it?"

Now let me say at this point that prayer is not LIKE a credit card, or a bank account, or a stock option or real estate--I do not mean to imply that prayer is some impersonal, sterile thing that if you just "kick it in," WHAMMO! And out come your wildest dreams...

Prayer is communicating personally with the living God, by means of the Holy Spirit who (the Scripture says) resides in your very person. As a genuine Christian, a person has access--as a "son"--to the very throne room of God. The writer to the Hebrews called it "the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16)...

When I talk with God, I am BY DEFINITION exercising faith, because I cannot see Him--it *has* to be an exercise of faith. And because I am trusting Him to BE THERE, and to LISTEN, and because I am going to Him by faith through the access provided by the blood-atonement of His Son, dear ones--be assured--He is pleased to receive me! He is interested, and even moved by the requests on my heart. He delights to hear my feeble attempts to praise Him. He gladly and graciously receives my thanksgiving to Him.

Now, to demonstrate my point that prayer can be the most powerful resource for strength in your life, I would like to look at two passages from the Scripture, one from the OT and one from the NT...

Judges 6:36-40 This is the situation where Gideon asks for *reassurance and confirmation* of God's presence as he undertakes the task at hand, (which was to deliver Israel from the Midianites). Gideon did not need to find out God's will--that had already been made clear to him. Rather, in prayer, he sought REASSURANCE that God wasn't going to abandon him.

That the Lord not only was willing to condescend to drench the fleece but that He was patient enough to work the *opposite* thing--to dry it out again--shows you and me that God is RESPONSIVE to prayer. He is not intimidated at the shakiness we feel when we're up against big tasks. Instead for Gideon, God met him right where he was and granted his requests freely and more than once.

Matthew 15:21-28 Here is the incident of the Canannite woman, seeking for Jesus to exorcise a demon from her daughter. More "pathos" mankind does not feel, than when one's child is in serious distress. But this woman is not a Jew--not a member of the household of the chosen people of God. How can SHE expect the Jewish rabbi to listen to *her*?

Because she so doggedly believed that He was compassionate, irrespective of race. Her belief was so fervent that she just bowls right over Jesus' disciples, even to argue with Jesus. When it came to her daughter's desperate need for healing, she threw herself at Jesus' mercy, reasoning that even DOGS get some help!

Jesus' response is powerful... Would He respond any less compassionately to YOU? Would He meet your faith with less interest? Would He answer your prayers with less drama?

Dear ones, we should not underrate the value of prayer to our lives. It is the thing which most will give you spiritual confidence, joy and comfort. It should not be a last resort; it should be a first, middle and last resort!

I encourage you to undertake an experiment:

1. Make your marriage an earnest matter of prayer. In addition to using the Disciples' prayer as a model for praying for your spouse, begin to ask God fervently, *intensely* to develop the fruit of the Spirit in your spouse. And if your spouse is still unsaved, pray long and hard and like the woman we read of for him or her...

2. Make the level of joy you are experiencing an earnest matter of prayer.
3. Bathe your child or children in prayer.
4. Quietly select somebody in this Body and begin a faithful prayer ministry for them.
5. Pray for revival in our area.
6. Support our missionaries--use their prayer letters and pray through them once a week.
7. Ask God for clear conversions through the ministry of this church, and that we would be making a noticeable impact in this town.

And after really concentrating on prayer for two months, look it over and see if God has been listening. I am certain you will not be disappointed. May He burden you and I to give more time and more faith to the ministry of prayer. It is our most powerful asset.

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT PRAYER.....

- 1. in secret**
- 2. aware of God's sov.**
- 3. w/ expectancy**
 - a. of provision**
 - b. of forgiveness**
- 4. w/ true forgiveness**