



The Joy of Prayer: A Biblical Guide to Prayer

Lewis Stanek

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It has been said that there are no atheists in foxholes and that may or may not be true, having never been in a foxhole, thank God, I have no way of knowing, but I suspect it is true; if not, I pity the poor atheist the lack of solace otherwise available through a belief in God. One thing is unquestionably true though, that is throughout the world in every culture and throughout history mankind has felt a deep yearning to cry out to something, someone greater than themselves. A desire to pray to one's creator is common throughout the world. It has been said that there is a vacant space in the soul of mankind that can only be filled by God's presence. The desire to reach out to God is an echo of our need to fill this void. How this desire is displayed from one culture to the next varies from cultures that practiced human sacrifice to those that believe in the efficacy of using prayer wheels to gain God's favor. In the passage quoted from Luke 11:1 one of Jesus' followers asks him to teach them how to pray. It is a straight forward request, but let's think about this for a moment. It may be safe to say that Jesus' disciples had been raised in good Jewish families. They were familiar with the Torah, they had learned from the Pharisees in the synagogues since their youth, and at that time that temple worship still took place, and they were familiar with the animal sacrifices and prayers offered in the temple for the sins of the people. Furthermore, they were familiar with the prayers taught by John the Baptist. What more are they seeking and why are they asking Jesus? Because they are his followers, yes of course, but more importantly because they had first hand experience to the effectiveness of His prayers. They had the privilege of witnessing many of the miracles he wrought and they had the privilege of witnessing him pray. The disciples could see with their own eyes the connection between Christ' prayer life and the effectiveness of His prayers. They wanted to know what he knew that the others didn't, why His prayers consistently brought results when other's did not, could not. How did Jesus respond to their request? By blessing them and us with what is now known throughout the world as the Lord's prayer or the Pater Noster. Which, in fact is the perfect template for us to follow in our daily prayers. Jesus answered them. "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. Lead us not into temptation." Luke 11:2-4 We will discuss this template for prayer in detail later in this book, but at this point I only want the reader to realize that prayer can be more than a primal cry to our creator in times of despair and need, but is a God given means of personal communion with our God. Furthermore, that prayer is something that can be taught, something to be learned, and something that must be practiced, and perfected if we desire to grow in our spiritual life. Prayer is something we must know and a skill we must be proficient in if we expect to reach spiritual maturity.

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