

Equipped to pray as Jesus taught

Do you pay careful attention to instructions when you're setting up self-assembly furniture or do you try putting it together in your own way? If you're cooking a meal, are you more likely to ignore the recipe and just throw in the right ingredients, hoping it all turns out alright? Sometimes you can get away with this but, when it comes to prayer, we would do well to follow the instructions from one who really knows how to do it - the Lord Jesus Christ. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus tells his disciples how they should pray¹. This suggests that knowing how to pray isn't something automatic - we need to learn how to do it properly. Who better, then, than Jesus to be our teacher? In going through what is usually called the Lord's Prayer, I have found it helpful to follow the general contours of the verses. I do this by dividing the prayer into sections, with each section representing a different aspect of prayer. To make it easier to remember, each section begins with the same letter - **P**.

- **PRAISE** - "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name"².
- **PRIORITY** - "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"³.
- **PROVISION** - "Give us today our daily bread"⁴.
- **PURIFICATION** - "Forgive our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"⁵.
- **PROTECTION** - "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"⁶.
- **PRAISE** - "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen"⁷.

This is the model that Jesus gave to his disciples to help them to pray. We don't need to recite this prayer word for word, but these divisions help us focus our thoughts on the types of things that Jesus believes are important prayer points. Using these headings to guide you, why not begin a list of what you might include under each one? You can always update your list as time goes on.

Starting and ending your prayers with **praise** is a great habit to get into. It involves adoring the Lord for who he is and thanking him for what he has done. There's no better way to get a right focus!

Will you also remember to pray for what God considers **priority** - for his kingdom to be established and extended, and for his will to be done in your life as well as in the life of your family, church, community, nation, and throughout the whole world?

Don't forget to pray daily for God's **provision** for you and for others. While some elements of provision will be the same, others will change from day to day.

How much are you in need of **purification**? Going to the Lord frequently for forgiveness is something we can't afford to do without.

And what about **protection** in areas where you're likely to encounter temptation? Do you realize there's never a moment when you don't need God to protect you from the evil one, the devil?

After praying through the principles of the Lord's Prayer in this way, you'll probably want to finish off by offering more **praise**. Why not revitalize your prayer life by praying the way that Jesus taught?

¹ Matthew 6:9-13

² verse 9

³ verse 10

⁴ verse 11

⁵ verse 12

⁶ verse 13

⁷ continuation of verse 13 in some manuscripts