Section: Stand Alone, Prayer Night

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Steven Obert

**TEACHING NOTES**

*Midweek Prayer Night 2021 – P.R.A.Y. Teaching – Scott Waterman*

Good evening.

Tonight, I have the pleasure of walking through a tool that we like to use at Disciples Church.

As you saw when you came in this evening, you got a bookmark with the P.R.A.Y. acronym on it. In the next 15 minutes, I’m going unpack why this is a valuable tool for us.

# Introduction

It’s common for many of us to desire an improved prayer life. Realistically, it is a constant battle to set aside distraction in order to get time to commit ourselves to God in prayer. We hope that this brief teaching and bookmarker would help remove possible issues that may impede our prayer life.

This P.R.A.Y. acronym is patterned after the Lord’s prayer in scripture. Tonight we will look at Matthew 6:9-13. Turn with me to that passage.

Jesus says,

Matt 6:9 Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. **(PRAISE)** Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **(YIELD)** Matt 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread, **(ASK)** Matt 6:12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **(REPENT)** Matt 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. **(ASK)**

Jesus starts by instructing us to “pray then like this.” The Lord’s prayer is not necessarily the only prayer we should say, rather – it’s intended by Christ that we pray *like this prayer. T*he Lord’s prayer is full of elements that are meant to teach us how to pray.

The attributes of the Lord’s prayer can be easily unpacked in an acronym P.R.A.Y.

This stands for:

* **Praise**: Worshipping God for who He is.
* **Repent**: Confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness.
* **Ask**: Asking God earnestly for our needs and letting Him know our concerns.
* **Yield**: Trusting our requests ultimately to His plan and will for us.

# Let’s look at the first letter, P – Praise.

The beginning of our passage starts with “Out Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” Jesus is drawing us to our hallowed Father. This word hallowed means to be treated as sacred, or reverenced. We are to approach God in prayer with reverence, understanding our position before the Holy and omnipotent God of the universe. We are to adore Him for who He is.

Specifically, we are to adore him as our Father. Think of the theological truth to this! Our Word of Truth Catechism says that, “Adoption is the gracious act of God in which He makes a believer one of His children, giving the privileges of sonship.” Ephesians 1:5 says, “God has predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.”

This should spur us on in prayer to worship our Father with great praise. I taught on this recently, that our prayers need to be God exalting, not *just* man-benefitting. We should come to God with the utmost desire to praise Him for his glorious nature and attributes.

To give you a brief (and not comprehensive) list of the attributes of God – He is self-sufficient, eternal, good, gracious, holy, immutable, impassable, incomprehensible, infinite, spiritual, loving, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, triune, righteous, simple, sovereign, wrathful, and transcendent.

Any of these can stir us up to hallowed worship of God, let us do that when we come to him to Praise Him.

# Secondly, let’s look at the second letter, R – Repent.

We are to come to God with hearts that desire repentance, to confess our sins to Him. We see Jesus model this in verse 12 “and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

To Christians, this may sound confusing. Why do we ask for forgiveness if we’re already forgiven?

The truth is, that if we’re Christ’s, we are forgiven. Our sin guilt made us desperate for forgiveness and we are fully forgiven in Christ. In light of that, it is proper to acknowledge that in our prayers. *God has redeemed us, undeserving sinners, to eternal life through Jesus’ perfect, sinless life; substitutional, sacrificial death; and victorious resurrection from the grave. We confess the truth that we’ve been saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus alone from the eternal wrath we deserved and are reconciled into an eternally secure relationship with God. (WoT Q68)*

Furthermore, Theologian John Gil says, and I’m paraphrasing here – that this portion of the Lord’s prayer supposes a sense, acknowledgement, and confession of sin, and an inability to make satisfaction for it. He goes on to say that only God can forgive it (sin). God does this, for Christ’s sake, and on account of his blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction. [In the New Covenant], ***What is requested here is the [demonstration] and [petition] of the pardon to the conscience of the sinner.*** This is a daily need and should be daily asked for.

Basically, we confess our sins, acknowledge and thank God for His forgiveness, realize the gospel and praise God for it. We daily remind ourselves of this reality!

Church, we do not fret that if we sin, God will somehow un-save us. That’s not what Christ is teaching here. No, it is meant to remind us of the gospel. We are to let this truth fill us with great renewal as a means to empower us to walk in repentance.

Also notice the 2nd part of this verse, we are to forgive our debtors. Even in Jesus’ teaching in the sermon on the mount, He is directing us toward loving our neighbors. Let our hearts be on notice here! As we confess our sins, let us also use this as fuel to remind us of the great forgiveness with which we’ve been blessed. That forgiveness should compel our hearts to love our brothers and sisters more and more, to practice forgiveness toward them as we walk out the one-another’s with the body of Christ.

# Let’s look at the next letter, A – Ask.

We are to ask God for what we need and desire. Again, we see Jesus model this in verse 11 and 13: “Give us this day our daily bread” and “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

There is nothing wrong with asking God to provide us with our daily allotment of needs. However, in our plush western culture, we have much, and I fear that it is very easy for us to fall into bringing idolatrous requests to God. Remember, God is not a genie who must bless us with material possessions, great health, and earthly prosperity. God is primarily set to conforming us to the image of Christ, and often that is done by giving us much of what we need, not what we may desire in a given moment. So, bring your requests to God, but remember to bring sanctified requests to Him. Here’s an idea, Ask Him to sanctify you in what you desire!

Remember the teaching of James 4:3 “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”

As we pray to God with prayer that is man-benefitting, we must also pray and ask God to protect our hearts as Christians. This is what Christ is bringing focus to in verse 13, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Church, we need to be asking the Holy Spirit to keep us on guard so that we fight and resist temptation. Every waking hour of our lives are spent living in a world that is fallen into the mire of sin. There is real danger out there and in our flesh!

This is why Peter exhorts us to be sober-minded and watchful! 1Pet 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

We must come to God, not only to ask Him for our needs and desires, but we must come to him to ask Him for one of our greatest needs – to resist temptation and fight sin. What is the ultimate point here? *That we would be delivered from evil.* We must persevere until the end! We do that by praying, in earnest faith, that God would cause us fight temptation and sin. We pray that God would cause us trust into Christ daily with our lives.

# The last letter we’ll look at tonight is, Y – Yield.

We see this in verse Matt 6:10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Jesus is instructing us with something that is massively important. So often in our prayer life, we make demands on God. Dear Lord, heal my father, give me a job, etc. But the clarity Jesus is giving us is vital, He is teaching us to accept God’s will.

James 4:13-16 is relevant for us: Jas 4:13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—Jas 4:14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.Jas 4:15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”Jas 4:16 As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

The clarity comes in verse 15 – if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. He even goes on to drop a massive rebuke: As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. If we come to God in prayer and ask him for anything, and yet have hearts that demand these things, we are committing arrogant evil against our Lord. We are essentially saying, “I don’t care what you think, I only want what you can give me, so you better give it to me!” No. We cannot do this. We must come to God with hearts that desire His righteous, wise, and good will over our limited and fallen perspective.

Furthermore, we must confess the truth of Romans 8:28: And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Beloved, you *don’t want your fallible will*, you want God’s infallible will! We want what God gives us in His providential timing. If you ask God for something and in His governance, He denies this – then it is for your good.

Let us come to Him with willing and yielding hearts.

Remember, “Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God in praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, and expressing our requests to Him while submitting to His sovereign will.”

# Conclusion

It’s my prayer and hope that this simple tool is a blessing to you. Keep it in your Bible, keep it on your nightstand, or keep it in your car. Let it be a tool to assist you in your communication to God in prayer.

Let’s pray.