

Lesson 2.6 – What Do I Say to God?

Introduction: Think of the people with whom you converse most often. What leads you to speak with them?



1. What is Prayer?

Psalm 19:14 ¹⁴May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

1 Kings 18:21 – 39 The account of Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

Christian prayer is our side in a heart to heart conversation with the one true God.

2. Why Should We Pray?

Matthew 7:7 ⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

Philippians 4:6 ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

God has commanded us to pray to him.

Psalm 91:15,16 ¹⁵He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. ¹⁶With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

Ephesians 3:20,21 ²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

God promises to answer our prayers and has immeasurable power to grant what we ask.

3. What are hallmarks of Christian prayers?

John 16:23 ²³In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Christians offer their prayers in Jesus' name, whether his name is spoken or unspoken.

1 John 5:14 ¹⁴This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

Christians pray about things that are in line with God's will.

James 1:5-8 ⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. ⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

Christian prayers flow from a believing heart.

Matthew 6:9-13 ⁹”This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our daily bread. ¹²Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

Jesus teaches us to emphasize spiritual needs and concerns in our prayers.

4. What does Jesus teach us about our prayers in his model prayer, the Lord's Prayer?

Matthew 6:9ff, Luke 11:2ff, 1 Chronicles 29:11 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

- Jesus teaches us to be confident in prayer: we pray in a Father-child relationship.
- Jesus teaches us to pray about the most important things for time and eternity: the honor of God's name and success of his Kingdom.
- Jesus teaches us to pray about our earthly needs: the necessities of life and protection.
- Jesus teaches us to pray for our personal spiritual needs on earth.

5. What kinds of prayers does the Bible encourage us to offer?

Psalm 8:1-9 ¹O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. ²From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. ³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ⁵You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. ⁶You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: ⁷all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, ⁸the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. ⁹O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

God encourages us to offer prayers of praise.

Psalm 136:1-3 ¹Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever. ²Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. ³Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever.

God encourages us to offer prayers of thanksgiving.

Philippians 4:6 ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

God encourages us to bring requests or petitions to him.

Psalm 51:1-9 ¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. ²Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ³For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. ⁴Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. ⁵Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. ⁶Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. ⁷Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ⁸Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. ⁹Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

God encourages us to offer prayers of repentance and confession.

Genesis 18:22-33 ²²The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ²³Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? ²⁵Far be it from you to do such a thing--to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” ²⁶The LORD said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their

sake.” ²⁷Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, ²⁸what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?” “If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.” ²⁹Once again he spoke to him, “What if only forty are found there?” He said, “For the sake of forty, I will not do it.” ³⁰Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?” He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.” ³¹Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?” He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.” ³²Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?” He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.” ³³When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

God encourages us to offer prayers of intercession: requests for the benefit of others.

Genesis 24:1-4; 10-14 ¹Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ²He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh. ³I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, ⁴but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac” . . . ¹⁰Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. ¹¹He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water. ¹²Then he prayed, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴May it be that when I say to a girl, ‘Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too’--let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.”

God encourages us to offer prayers for guidance and understanding.

6. How does God answer our prayers?

Genesis 24:15-21 ¹⁵Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor. ¹⁶The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again. ¹⁷The servant hurried to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water from your jar.” ¹⁸“Drink, my lord,” she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. ¹⁹After she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.” ²⁰So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. ²¹Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.

Sometimes the Lord immediately gives us what we ask.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ⁷To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is

sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Sometimes the Lord decides not to give us what we ask for.

Matthew 15:21-28 ²¹Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.” ²³Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” ²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” ²⁵The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said. ²⁶He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” ²⁷“Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” ²⁸Then Jesus answered, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Sometimes the Lord makes us wait until a later time to receive what we requested.

Matthew 7:9-11 ⁹“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

The Lord’s answers will always be the best thing for us.

Luther's Small Catechism on Prayer

The Address: Our Father in heaven.

What does this mean?

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.

The First Petition: Hallowed be your name.

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.

How is God's name kept holy?

God's name is kept holy when his Word is taught in its truth and purity and we as children of God lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives contrary to God's Word dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, dear Father in heaven!

The Second Petition: Your kingdom come.

What does this mean?

God's kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.

How does God's kingdom come?

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven

The Third Petition: Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

What does this mean?

God's good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God's will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.

The Fourth Petition: Give us today our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What, then, is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

The Fifth Petition: Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither have we deserved them, but we ask that he would give them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.

So we too will forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

The Sixth Petition: Lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean?

God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.

The Seventh Petition: But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean?

In conclusion, we pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil that threatens body and soul, property and reputation, and finally when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.

The Doxology: For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

What does this mean?

We can be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and are heard by him, for he himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Therefore we say, "Amen. Yes, it shall be so."