

RELIGION

Insight on the Word The Lord's Model Prayer: A Revolutionary Message

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The Bible text for next week's Sunday School lesson is Matthew 6:7-15. We encourage all our readers to investigate the Sunday School classes offered at your local church. Strong youth and adult classes will strengthen the knowledge of the Bible throughout the churches, and enhance the ministry of our pastors and their associate ministers.

When is the last time you recited "The Lord's Prayer"? Is it part of your personal devotions, or a prayer your congregation repeats together as part of their worship experience? Or maybe it's just become a part of your cultural heritage, a sign that you had some Christian upbringing.

The more we recite to the Lord's Prayer, the more we tend to trivialize it—to mouth its words without any real reflection on its meaning, or its importance. So this week's lesson gives us an important opportunity to look at each phrase of the Lord's Prayer, and discover its marvelous message for his people today.

To begin with, the "Lord's Prayer" is not a prayer that the Lord Jesus himself would ever pray. He was not a sinner (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15), and so he had no moral debts or trespasses to be forgiven (Matt. 6:12). In this passage, the prayer demonstrates the correct manner of prayer for his disciples: "after this manner pray ye" (6:9). The Lord contrasts this with the "showtime" prayers of some Jewish leaders (6:5) and the "secret formula" prayers of the pagans, who thought they could control God (or the gods) through certain chants, dances or rituals (6:7). We ought to examine our own prayer life, to be sure we aren't guilty of the same kinds of prayer abuse.

In another setting, later on in his ministry, one of the disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). Again, Jesus gave them essentially the same model (11:2-4), and followed this with two parables and additional principles concerning prayer (11:5-13). The words themselves are important, but our Lord intended them principally as a teaching tool, to show the right way to pray. What a shame, if people repeat the Lord's Prayer (or any other) over and over, thinking they were somehow earning merit or grace with God, when Jesus himself warned against that kind of repetition!

The opening address of the Prayer

demonstrates its uniqueness: "Our Father, who art in heaven. . . ." The basis of Christian prayer is our personal relationship with God. We emphasize this when we pray "in Jesus' name," in obedience to his commands (John 14:13-14; 16:24). Those who have trusted in Jesus for their salvation have become part of that special family with God as its heavenly Father; their position in that family is "in Christ," so they have all the privileges of sons and daughters of God himself. When God hears our prayers, he rejoices in our praises and thankfulness; and like a father on earth, he takes our every request seriously and answers each one for our own good.

Do we understand that prayer is our joyful privilege, the prerogative of children of the Great King? Then we should rebel against any attempt to make prayer a dull routine, or a last resort in crisis. We should celebrate prayer!

Next we see three expressions of the greatest priority of prayer: "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." God's children express in their prayers a preoccupation with the Kingdom of God. Let me try to translate these stately phrases of King James' English into our modern mentality. First, more than anything else, I am concerned for the "name," the reputation and revealed character of my God. I want people to know how wonderful he is, and how much he loves them, and I want to protect his name from attacks of the ungodly and the scoffers. His reputation is more important than my own. (Can you honestly say that, right now?)

Second, I am concerned for God's rule to be extended over the whole earth. Not that the Lord is not sovereign right now, but his rule is not yet recognized over all the earth. Most people in positions of power and influence put their trust in themselves instead of God. My prayers should be filled with specific requests that God would extend his Kingdom rule into new groups of people, where the name of Jesus is not even known, or else among people where he is rejected, or his good news is perverted into bondage.

Third, I am aware of the injustices in this world, and I recognize that these demonstrate just how far the Kingdom has yet to spread. As the prophet heard the voice of Yahweh, I must cry out "let justice roll on like a

river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24, NIV). As Dr. Ralph Winter puts it, the Lord's Prayer calls for a rebellion against "the way things are," the status quo. When we see around us the rise of crime, the innocent victims of abuse, the hate-mongers, the exploiters of women and children in pornography, and so many other evils, we refuse to accept the situation as inevitable.

Others may sink into complacency or despair; some others may take up humanitarian or humanitarian causes with great vigor. But the Lord's Prayer calls us to lift up the evils of our society to the goodness of a holy God—to call on him to bring his perfect will, his righteous Kingdom rule, against these evils to destroy them. He will often move his people to take up the causes of justice and holiness, but the success must begin with submission to God, as we pray "thy will be done."

Only after we have celebrated our relationship with God, and wrestled in prayer with the Lord, concerning his Kingdom and his will, do we turn to our practical daily walk with God. Again, there are three concerns in our daily lives, which Jesus invites us to pray about consistently as we live for him: true physical needs, forgiveness for ourselves and others, and power to overcome evil in our lives.

Let me make just one observation on these model prayers, and our typical "prayer requests." If I really have prayed for God's will to be done, I will be content if God decides something I want is not the best for me right now. I should seek only those possessions which will enrich my relationship with God and other people, and bring glory to his name. I must recognize that sometimes we have to suffer for a little while, and that the Lord's grace is sufficient (1 Peter 5:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; John 9:2-3).

If God's kingdom is my greatest desire on earth, I will be able freely to forgive others, "as God in Christ has forgiven" me (Eph. 4:32). Their sins and mistakes are nothing to me—only an opportunity for God's grace to triumph! And I will never toy with sins of the flesh or the spirit, for my relationship with my Father and my Savior is too precious, too beautiful, to take lightly.

If you are like me, you still have a long way to go, to perfect these attitudes. Is there anything we can do? Sure! We can pray the Lord's Prayer—slowly, carefully, and with a holy understanding!

Piedmont Foot Patrol Celebrates Its Second Year Of Patrolling

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block area paralleled by Martin Luther King and North Vancouver boulevards. Most of the homes they pass are modest but well-cared for. If they see a garage door open or shrubbery that might hide a burglar, they will make a note to stop back the next day to talk with the owner.

Along the way, the patrol picks up litter and encourages residents they meet to attend an upcoming neighborhood association meeting. They go out of their way to escort a middle-aged woman to her home and stop to encourage a young couple who are converting an old tavern into a recreational center for local teen-agers.

The mood of the patrol is upbeat and friendly. "We've got little gray-haired ladies and even a high-school student in our patrol," says Radigan. "Before we started walking last year, prostitution was chronic along our stretch of Lombard and King boulevards. It's really dropped off now, and the word is out on the street that sooner or later you'll bump into our patrol."

The Piedmont Foot Patrol is one of six that are extensions of Portland's Neighborhood Watch program. Several patrols have received the praise of crime prevention specialists and police officials.

Capt. Alan Orr, commander of the North Precinct, works with the foot patrols in his jurisdiction and says that the Piedmont patrol has contributed to the 70 percent drop in prostitution and significant drop in burglaries in the area over the past year.

"If you take a look at Martin Luther King Boulevard for instance, you'll see that strong law enforcement, the forfeiture ordinance of customers' cars, and citizen involvement, especially the foot patrol, have brought about a major reduction in prostitution," says Orr. "We caution the patrol that they are not the police." Still, their presence clearly demonstrates their ownership and concern about the neighborhood.

Paul Craig helped organize the Piedmont patrol after confronting a pair of armed burglars in his home. He wants the patrol to begin looking at ways to make the neighborhood more attractive to potential homeowners.

"Just watching for crime can be a pretty negative thing," says Craig. "We know that over the long term, we need people to make a commitment to solv-

ing all of the problems of the neighborhood. That's why the foot patrol is one part of that process."

A few blocks south of the Piedmont neighborhood, Alan Lashbrook is preparing to lead his own foot patrol through the Overlook neighborhood. His equipment is the same -- flashlight, walkie-talkie, and distinctive orange jackets and caps that he designed.

Lashbrook, a firefighter with the Port of Portland, started the first foot patrol three years ago in an attempt, he says, to drive prostitutes and drug dealers out of the neighborhood, especially along North Interstate Avenue.

Now, he says, neighbors feel secure enough to come out in the evenings again. They hold block parties, garage sales, and exchange telephone numbers and house keys when one of them is going on vacation.

Best of all, he says, neighbors are watching out for each other.

"We've been out enough now that people call us by our first names," says Lashbrook. "They know that we have credibility with the police and that if we report a situation, the police will respond immediately."

Lashbrook says his patrols have stopped at least one burglary in progress, and he personally rescued two people from an automobile that smashed into a telephone pole.

With neighborhood burglaries and prostitution on the decline, Lashbrook's patrols are going after the few remaining drug houses and trying to eradicate graffiti they find sprayed on neighborhood businesses.

Expenses for the foot patrol for jackets, caps, flashlights, and two-way radios run about \$150 for each volunteer, Lashbrook says. Neighborhood fund-raising activities and donations pay for some of the costs, but he says many members pay for the equipment out of their own pockets.

The report from the Sabin neighborhood foot patrol is much the same. John Campbell coordinates the dozen volunteers and says that in the six months since the patrols began, he has seen a marked reduction in drug dealing and other criminal activities.

Volunteers wear bright yellow T-shirts, calling themselves Sabin United Neighbors, or SUN for short.

"We know that our presence is

making a difference," says Campbell. "But we're also looking at long-term objectives such as breaking down isolation and helping support better feelings among racial and ethnic groups in our neighborhood."

The success of foot patrols in Northeast neighborhoods prompted the Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation to test a pilot project in Lents Park using similar volunteer walking patrols.

"With the passage of Measure 5, we have had to eliminate funding from our 1991 budget for private security for parks," says Dean Williams of the Parks Bureau. "We know that any legitimate presence in the parks will displace destructive behavior. Volunteer walking patrols may be our answer."

Meanwhile, foot patrol members say they are tired of all of Northeast Portland being painted with the same brush. They want people to know they care about their neighborhoods and that they are out walking several times a week to make this part of the city safe for families.

When they find an abandoned house, a neglected rental, or a suspected drug house, they pass the information on to the neighborhood association, which talks with the owners or brings pressure on city agencies to correct the problem. Next they want training sessions to teach landlords ways to deal with troublesome tenants, neighborhood beautification programs, and more extensive crime prevention programs.

Residents admit that foot patrols alone will not revitalize the neighborhoods, but all say they have seen a major reduction in crime and feel more secure knowing they are around.

"With their help, unrecognizable people on our block have dropped to near zero," says Ronald Grice, a Piedmont resident since 1968. "The police can't be here all the time, so we have to be observant ourselves."

Sharon McCormack, inner Northeast crime prevention coordinator, agrees with community policing as a way to complement crime prevention efforts.

"We know that it is the first step in revitalizing Northeast neighborhoods," she says. "We are already seeing success in the growing number of owner-occupied and long-term renters who are choosing to stay in Northeast neighborhoods."

Portland Observer encourages our readers to write letters to the editor in response to any articles we publish.

Older Women's League To Meet

On Saturday, February 8, from 10:00 a.m. to noon mid-life and older women are invited to the Portland Chapter of the Older Women's League (OWL) at 2145 N.W. Overton. The topic will be "Where Can Mid-Life and Older Women Find Affordable Housing? Shared Housing Or Other Alternatives?"

Speakers will include Maria Talbot (School of Social Work, PSU), and Carmen Schleiger (Housing Our Families, an organization working with women and their families).

UPS Receives Social Responsibility Award From Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change

On Jan. 18, United Parcel Service (UPS) received the 16th annual Social Responsibility Award from the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change. The award is presented to the corporation which best exemplifies the spirit of social responsibility that was demonstrated by Martin Luther King, Jr. during his lifetime.

Kent C. Nelson, UPS's chairman and chief executive officer, accepted the award on their behalf.

The award was presented by Coretta Scott King, Dr. King's widow and the founder of the King Center, at a breakfast ceremony in Atlanta.

UPS, based in Atlanta, is a worldwide company serving all 50 states and more than 180 countries and territories. With revenues of \$13.6 billion and volume of 2.9 billion packages and documents in 1990, UPS is the largest package distribution company in the world.

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