

## Issues With Prayer

The deepest and most heartfelt desires we bring to God in prayer ought to be desires that have to do with His glory, His purposes, and His will. It is too often, and it can be very easy for us to reach a point where the only question on our minds is whether God is working things out the way that we wish them to. How often is it really that we concern ourselves with the more important question: Are the things that we are asking for support us in giving all praise to God and His glory? In its simplest form, although we are able to ask for the things in life that we feel are important, prayer is about God, not about us.

In Luke 11:1 we see the disciples approach Jesus and ask Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” We should be willing to do the same as the disciples and go to God and ask Him to teach us. But learning how to pray is not simply learning a more effective way to ask for what we want. Beyond that, we must also learn to want the higher things, in other words the more heavenly things. And not only that, but we need to learn to want the more spiritual things for more spiritual reasons than any earthly or fleshly reason that may motivate us. Both our requests and our reasons for making the requests will indicate how far along the road of spiritual growth we’ve traveled. As we learn to seek God more diligently, the less selfishly we’ll pray for what we want from our God and the more genuinely we’ll desire what God wants for us.

Modern prayer is sometimes characterized by what can only be called a “demanding” spirit. Conditioned as we are to think that “feeling good” is the main thing in life, our dealings with God can often revolve around His ability to do whatever will make us feel better. But this type of approach just kills the communication that God seeks from us. When we only think about God’s usefulness to us and thus threaten to quit believing in if He doesn’t straighten out every one of our difficulties, we’re being childish and shortsighted, if not outright blasphemous. God is not Santa Claus; He doesn’t just give us what we want, and real prayer has to do with far more than whether He is giving us what we want. Matthew 6:33 says, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” To “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” means, among other things, that we are to lay aside our requests and simply trust God to give us what we need and give thanks for what He has done for us so far. Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Our focus in this life should be how we get to Heaven, so our prayers and requests should always center around what will truly help us get to Heaven and how we may better glorify our Holy Father.

Oren Caskey