

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

Matthew 6:5-15

Sunday, November 20, 2011

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

1. In some places or parts of some countries, some Christians pray publicly before a meal in a restaurant. What do you think about doing this? What do you think Jesus would say about doing this?

In my opinion this is fine—to consciously give thanks and honor to God from whom all blessings flow. The place and time may be a consideration. One may choose not to pray aloud publicly for every meal. For example, at a banquet with strangers at your table, you may want to quietly bow your head for a few moments and pray silently. Praying in public can be a good witness and draw some people to think of and thank God for their food and other blessings. Jesus would know the intention of the heart of the person praying aloud publicly. He might ask someone to consider what their purpose is when they are praying aloud in public or in a restaurant. If the intention is to draw attention to yourself as the Pharisees wanted to do, Jesus would probably say that you have received all of the reward you are going to get for your prayer.

2. Some have objected to saying the Lord's Prayer in unison in a public service of worship. What might some of their reasons be for opposing the public praying of the Lord's Prayer in worship? What reasons might someone give for beginning or maintaining the practice of praying the Lord's Prayer in a public worship service?

They might not want people to be like the Pharisees, not realizing that the problem is one of the heart and not praying aloud in public. They might be afraid that some people will just recite the words as a habit and not really pray from their hearts what each part of the Lord's Prayer means. For example, some might pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," while holding animosity, resentment, and unforgiveness for some people in their hearts; therefore, they are not really meaning what they pray. On the other hand, by praying the Lord's Prayer each week, many will memorize the prayer who might not otherwise do so. Many Christians take for granted the memorization of the Lord's Prayer, when new Christians might not otherwise ever learn the Lord's Prayer. Worshipers will learn that prayer is important and some of the concerns a believer can or should express in all of their praying. They may face personal problems they might now otherwise face; such as, the problem of needing to forgive, and of needing to overcome temptations and deliverance from evil with the help of God.

3. In your opinion, what is the most important part or parts of the Lord's Prayer?

Beginning the prayer by calling God, "Our Father." Honoring God as Holy, Whose name is sacred and to be respected. The choice and willingness to have God's will done on Earth, and the desire to do God's will on Earth as a partial answer to that request.

4. Some have argued that because God already knows what we need and what He is going to do that we should never ask God for anything, but only offer God prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

We should ask God for things because Jesus told and to do so and demonstrated one way we can do so when He taught the Lord's Prayer. In some of His parables, He also told us to ask God for things persistently, but without heaping up empty phrases.

5. What might you say to someone who thought they could go to heaven even though they refuse to forgive someone who sinned against them but also repented and asked them to forgive them?

I would ask them to think about how they would feel, what they would think, and what they would say to God when in judgment He said to them, "I will not forgive you because you will not forgive." I would ask them what they would say to Jesus if He reminded them that if they loved Him they would keep His commands (John 14:15), and did their refusal to forgive someone indicate that they did not love Him enough to keep His commands.

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