

“The Lord’s Prayer: Elements and Impact”

[Luke 11: 1-4](#)

Prayer is the way we communicate with God. Prayer is at the heart of our relationship with God. Prayer is a relationship, the ultimate act of partnership between humans and God. Some of the medical doctors I have come across claim that prayer is good medicine. They also believe that prayer can influence the health, outcomes of those for whom we pray. Prayer aligns us with God’s vision and further inspires actions. Out of our prayers come liberating acts and the recognition that we can be the answers to someone’s prayer.

We have listened to pastor Yeung the past several weeks as she explains phrase by phrase the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer.

What I intend to do this morning with the same Lord’s Prayer is to identify the elements of effective prayer in the Lord’s Prayer and suggest how these elements impact our prayer life.

Some of the elements that make prayer effective and which imply in the Lord’s Prayer are:

1. Praise
2. Purpose of prayer
3. Needs or provision
4. Pardon/forgiveness
5. Protections

PRAISE: When we open our mouth to say “our father who is in heaven” we are saying “a praise and thank you”, we are honoring God for who God is and what God has done and continues to do. This notion implies what the psalmist states; “I will enter His gate with thanksgiving in my heart, I will enter His court with praise, and I will say this is the day that the lord has made I will rejoice for He has made me glad....” (Psalm 100:4) The choir can help us understand this by singing for us.

The next element is **REASON** or **PURPOSE** for prayer. Why do you want to praise God? When we say God, “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...”we are in other words saying that God, let your purpose on earth be done as it is done in heaven. This can be tricky or problematic, problematic in the sense that we do not really know or can tell God’s purpose for us on earth. We sometimes misjudge God’s purpose. We sometimes assume as we make requests in our daily prayers. This notion of the prayer pushes us to really examine who we are in relationship to God’s purpose in our life. It sometimes comes down to what some people may say “I want to obey God...” But can we really obey God or are we able to obey God?

However, in this statement we are acknowledging that God is God. This notion focuses on what God can do for us and not what we can do for God. It indicates that God is the Supreme Being and controller of the earth and humans are contributors to the growth of the earth.

The next element is **PROVISION, THE HUMAN NEEDS**. When we say the Lord’s Prayer we are making requests of our needs. We are asking God for our physical and spiritual needs on earth. Because of our

dependency on God we believe that there is nothing so great or small that God cannot take care of. When we say “give us this day our daily bread...we are still saying to God, please take care of these...big or small, significant or insignificant, urgent or not. This portion of the Lord’s Prayer indicates our total dependency on God. It is a declaration of who we are in relationship to God’s providence.

The next element is asking for PARDON or FORGIVENESS. When we say the Lord’s Prayer we are asking for pardon or forgiveness: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...” In this state we are basically reaching out to God through the Holy Spirit to reveal to us who we are. We are disclosing our human frailty. We are telling or confessing to God the things we were to do but did not do and the things we were not to do but did and continue to do. We are making a pure and sure declaration that we let go of all grudges and bitterness for the next person or persons. Furthermore, when we say “just as we have forgiven those who have trespassed against us...” we are assuming that we will be forgiven because we have been forgiven.

The other element in the Lord’s Prayer is “PROTECTION”. When we say “...lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil...” we are declaring our weakness and putting God’s strength over ours. In this phrase, we are affirming that the battle with the spiritual world is not ours but God who has dominion or control over everything. In this sense we are asking God to prevent us from the temptation we face day in and day out.

As I reflect on the Lord’s Prayer and these elements, I am reminded of the words of John B. Cobb Jr., a leading professor of process theology at the Claremont School of Theology. In his book *praying with Jennifer*, John states:

How we think about God affect how we pray...and what we expect our prayers to accomplish. If we pray to a kind of sky god, we are trying to influence some distance and may be absent being to pay attention to us and act on our behalf. If, instead, we think of God as already here, God isn’t above or outside watching what is going on but inside taking part. We don’t pray then to get God’s attention, but to align ourselves with a presence that is already there. We reach out and through others to a presence that is already working. We are not pleading with God to do something God would otherwise be reluctant to do (*Praying with Jennifer; 65-66*).

This statement allows me to suggest that prayer, like the Lord’s Prayer has to be:

Authentic
Sincere
Compassionate

The Lord’s Prayer is very authentic. There is no way one can pray this prayer for one person alone. The moment you open your mouth, “Our father...” you are authentically and clearly including other families, friends, strangers and enemies. I want to believe this is the universal intent of Christ as he taught his disciples. It is good to be authentic in prayers. It is good to make supplications not only for your needs but also for the needs of others. Prayer cannot limit itself to one small universe or group of people.

Prayer is generous, indiscriminate and compassionate. Prayer knows no bounds. Prayer changes things. It changes those who pray and further gives them a wider perspective and transforming enemies into God’s beloved children. Prayer changes challenging situations and can be a tipping point between life and death, health and illness, success and failure. Prayer like the Lord’s Prayer is completed when we reach out to

others in compassion. When we praise God, asking for our needs, when we pray to God to forgive us all our short comings, when you pray for the hungry in words you make sure you go out and feed them. That is how prayer works and Jesus did just that in his ministry.

Sincere and fervent prayer awakens us to God's vision for ourselves and for those whom we pray. It is the ultimate act of connection; it is not limited by space or time. Sincere and fervent prayer makes a difference and requires no prerequisites. When we pray, we praise God for God's goodness, creativity and love. When we pray we plead for help and protection from a power and wisdom greater than our own to complement and enhance our search for well-being. We can never fully understand the impact prayer makes on our own lives or the lives of others.

I believe, very much believe that prayer changes things. It changes the one who prays and connects us with those for whom we pray. I believe prayer provides energy of love, love that surrounds those for whom we pray. I believe that in this present life, in this present human adventure and condition, in this present age, prayer can soften hearts, including our own and gives us spiritual strength. Prayer reminds others too that they are not alone. Think of the shooting happening in recent hours in the USA. We are all thinking and praying for the families involved saying that they are not alone.

Our prayers like the "Our Father..." changes the world and open the door for God's vision to be more effective in the lives of those for whom we pray.

The Earth is in our hands. Though we face uncertainties and problems beyond our abilities, we cannot sit on the side line; we cannot sit on the fence and wait for divine rescue operation, but we can pray using the model Jesus gives to letting our prayers take wings, letting our hands inspire us to change our lives and to transform the world.

In concluding this thought, as we pray day in and day out, from season to season, I encourage and challenge you to pray and end with the name of Jesus. This is because Jesus sought and still seeks wholeness for every human and global conditions as demonstrated in the Lord's Prayer

Call the name of Jesus in your prayers because we can invoke his name always and anywhere. Call the name of Jesus in your prayer, because this Galilean man is present everywhere bringing healing to every aspect of the human conditions. Because praying in the name Jesus allows us to advocate for the homeless and outcasts. It allows us to support the single parents, orphanages, the name of Jesus allows us to challenge injustice and challenge policies like "send them back where they came from." It allows us to fight for good immigrations policies and stop dehumanizing people.

Praying in the name of Jesus embraces God's wisdom where it is found. Jesus is the way that excludes no ways and embraces all creation irrespective of race, color sexual orientation and irrespective of one's ascent or the way you speak.

Because Jesus wants us to feel the impact of prayer he taught us how to pray (Our Father...). It is a model to follow. Your prayers do not have to be the same words like Jesus, just follow the pattern. Jesus is alive and enlivens our hearts to bring wholeness to others. We are the hands and heart of Jesus. Let us continue to demonstrate what Jesus instructed and demonstrated in his ministry.