

## Steps to Successful Prayer, Part 5

Scripture: James 4:15

Code: B120509

### Part 5: Surrender to God's Program

Very few people make it through life without some sort of plan. The vast majority of us have to put a lot of thought into our schedules and plan ahead if we want to accomplish anything. And what we put the most time into planning says a lot about where our hearts are—too often vacation and celebrations get lots of forethought, while responsibilities at work and around the house fit into our schedules as needed.

But where does God's will factor into our plans? Are we too quick to get absorbed in our own plans and expectations for tomorrow without properly considering God's sovereign will?

Like James 4:15 says, we “ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that’” when planning the days and weeks ahead. We can't get carried away with our own program. Failing to acknowledge God's supreme will and control is disrespectful—especially when He's the One who grants our every breath.

That same mindset needs to carry over into our prayer lives. It's easy to get caught up in petitions to the Lord regarding our immediate needs and desires. It's much harder to routinely surrender those things to His will and wisdom, trusting in His perfect plan and provision.

Christ's example to the disciples makes it clear—the priority for believers is God's program, not our own. As we saw earlier in this series, our relationship to God gives us bold confidence to bring our requests before Him. But those requests—and our entire lives—must be subordinate to His plan.

And He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation’” (Luke 11:2-4).

The closing phrase of Luke 11:2 is “Your kingdom come.” It is a prayer for the advancement of God's kingdom. Like every phrase of the Lord's Prayer, this is antithetical to the prayers typically prayed by those who are concerned mainly about the advancement of their own programs, the building of their own empires, or the padding of their own pockets. This is a prayer that *God's* program be advanced, and that *His* will be done. In fact, in some Greek manuscripts the text includes the phrase, “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth” (KJV). Jesus Himself included that phrase in the model prayer when he gave it in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:10).

Every request we make in our prayers should first be run through this filter: *Is it in harmony with the goals and principles of God's kingdom? Is it consistent with the expansion of the kingdom? Does it truly advance the kingdom, or does it merely fulfill some selfish want?*

Name-it-and-claim-it theology is myopic, self-indulgent, and small minded. All it cares about is self-interest and selfish desires, with no thought for the greater cause of Christ's kingdom. A godly attitude says, *Lord, advance Your kingdom if that means I lose everything*. That's what the phrase "Your kingdom come" implies.

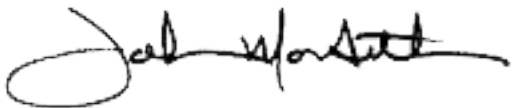
The kingdom, of course, is the sphere where Christ rules—the realm where He is Lord. To pray "Your kingdom come" with sincerity is to submit one's desires and to yield one's heart without reservation to the lordship of Christ. To affirm the program of Christ's kingdom is to set aside one's own fleshly, materialistic, or selfish prayer requests, because, after all, "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

There is truly nothing wrong with praying to God for things we desire—as long as the desires of our heart are holy. Indeed, we are encouraged—repeatedly—to ask, and to trust, and to align our desires with the will of God. And we are promised answers to such prayers. "Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4).

Remember, Jesus said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). "If you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you" (John 16:23). "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). Pay close attention to the qualifiers: "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, [then] . . . whatever you wish.*" "Anything *in my name.*" "Anything *according to His will.*" Jesus' model prayer has those same qualifiers built into it because of the way He taught us to recognize God's paternity, yield to God's priority, and get on board with God's program *before we ever make one petition for ourselves*.

Any prayer that follows a different pattern is not an act of true worship, and therefore it is not a legitimate prayer.

Conversely, all true prayer *is* worship. We go to a loving Father, accepting that He knows best. Our prayers, then, reflect an obedient heart, a passion for His glory, and a desire to see the extension of His kingdom—that God might be honored.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Fort". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping underline.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).