

2 Simple Ways to Put Some Zeal Into Your Prayer Life

“Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).

I resonate with the request that the early disciples made of Jesus. There’s a certain amount of humility any time you ask someone to teach you something. The acknowledgment behind the request is one of inadequacy: I don’t know how to do this, and I need you to teach me how. Like the early disciples, I often find myself floundering and blundering through the practice of prayer, ending up with the same request again and again: “Teach me how to do this, Lord.”

In response to their request, Jesus did indeed teach them how to pray, giving them what we refer to as “The Lord’s Prayer” or “The Model Prayer” today:

“Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Luke 11:2-4, MEV).

As others throughout history have pointed out, this prayer is a teaching tool. Jesus demonstrated the themes and requests that should dominate the prayers of one whose heart is aligned with the heart of God. It’s focused on the glory and honor of God, first and foremost, praying that the kingdom of God could come.

Longing for the Kingdom of God

Here’s the thing, though—if this isn’t meant to be merely recited but expanded on in a million different ways, all stemming from a heart that reflects these kind of themes, then

I've got a problem. The problem is that when I look to my own heart, I find that the dominant desires I bring to God don't start with His glory and kingdom, but instead my own. My comfort. My good. My needs. I find myself "wanting to want."

I wish that I longed for the kingdom of God to come so much that its coming is a heartfelt and genuine request from the deepest recesses of my soul. But I don't.

Is there, then, something I might do in order to grow my desire for the kingdom of God? Perhaps there is, and perhaps it's not as complicated as I tend to make it. Here are two such active ways you might grow in your desire for God's kingdom and improve your prayer life.

1. Say it. With any of the spiritual disciplines, including prayer, we must make a fundamental decision regarding our feelings. Of course, it would be perfect if we woke up and felt like reading the Bible, or if we felt like fasting. And it would be incredible if we always felt like praying, and praying for God's kingdom to come.

We're on a journey with Christ to the time when our feelings, too, are redeemed, and we want exactly what God wants. Until then, though, we battle with those same feelings, warring between what we know and what we feel.

So, do we begin to pray, and pray in this fashion, even though we might not feel it, or do we wait until we do, bemoaning the fact that we don't? One of the practical ways we can grow in our desire is to actually start doing the thing we want to desire. Simple as it sounds, we grow in our longing for God's kingdom to come by simply praying that His kingdom would come. And as we do, we follow it up with an honest plea for our hearts to long for it more and more.

2. Look around. The next action we can take to grow in our desire for the kingdom is to look around us. When we do, we'll be confronted with a thousand examples of the fact that things

on Earth aren't as they are in heaven.

The world is broken, and we can see the visible evidence of that brokenness all around us: poverty, homelessness, divorce, misshapen sexual values, war, drought, floods, tornadoes and a host of other things will meet our gaze as we look around. All of them are tangible evidence of a creation groaning for its redemption, of the world longing for its redemption when the kingdom is fully consummated.

When we see all those things, we can complain about the state of society; we can get angry at economics or the government or whatever; or we can recognize the brokenness of the world that can only truly be fixed by the rightful reign of King Jesus. What we see can be a conduit to move us into prayer for the day when all will be well once again.

We look around, and we pray for the kingdom of God to come.
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