

## How to Pray Part 4

### ***Have You Ever Known God Wanted You to Do Something but You Didn't Want to Do It?***

When God called me into full-time ministry, I was certain He wanted me to help people who were hurting psychologically as well as spiritually. But preach? I decided that wasn't the case. There was no way I would preach or be the pastor of a church and if that was ever what God wanted me to do, I would have to decline. I didn't have anything to say and I certainly would not stand up in front of a group and share my thoughts for twenty minutes or so. In fact, when I came back home from the Christian college I was attending for Christmas break, my pastor asked me to preach and quite unwillingly I agreed to do so. I stood up, shared the verse I was using, spoke for five minutes and sat down. I am certain no one in the congregation expected that short of a sermon and definitely the pastor didn't. No one knew what to do. Should we just close in prayer or do something else? For two years I avoided the prospect that God was leading me to be a pastor. I studied my Bible diligently, did well in my Bible classes in college but was never, ever going to be a pastor. As we take a close look at the model prayer Jesus has given us, we see that there is a critical component to all Christian praying that must not be ignored. Our Big Idea for the day is...If you want to pray like Jesus, then you must think like Jesus.

Every detail in the model prayer is a critical component to us understanding how we should go about praying. As we enter part 4 of this study, we come to the following phrase, **your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** (Matthew 6: 10 NIV) The difficulty in understanding precisely the intent Jesus meant here is that we do not have in English a comparable sort of expression to what is in these two phrases. One way of translating this to make the point clearer is, **your kingdom must come, your will must come to pass as in heaven, so also on earth.** (Matthew 6: 10) What makes this part of the model prayer fascinating is that it grammatically is a command. You are in a sense ordering it to be that the Father's kingdom must come about on earth and His will must be fulfilled on earth just like it already is occurring in heaven. Now this is almost laughable in its audacity. You are telling the Father what to do. "Get this show on the road!" Who in his or her right mind orders God around? That is though what this wording indicates. Yet the irony is profound. What are you telling God to do? "Be in charge". "Take over!" "Be the man...or in this case, "Be the Lord!" It seems crazy to tell the Father what to do but really what you are doing in this phase of praying is demanding God be in charge of everything...which of course means you aren't.

This is your declaration in your prayer. "Father, you are in charge and what you want to happen, do it!" It is revolutionary thinking. Rather than arguing with God over what you want done or think should happen, you are in no uncertain terms choosing God's will over your own, His plan over yours. All true praying is on this spiritual plane. God is in charge and what He wants is what you want. It is not easy. In fact, if Christ is not in your life as Lord and Savior, it is impossible. There is in this point of view no whining about what you don't have and no complaining about how things are. It is a momentous blast across the bow of self-realization and self-will. You cannot be in charge of anything if the Father is by your own admission King over it. This is such a different mindset from what we see in the prophet Jonah. The Lord had a job for Jonah. **"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."** (Jonah 1: 2 NIV) The problem for Jonah was that he hated the people of Nineveh. The terrible things they had done to Israel were unforgivable and it was wrong to Jonah that God demand he go there and preach, even if it was of coming destruction. So, rather than "God's will be done, it was Jonah's will and he got in the boat sailing as far away from Nineveh as possible. You know what happened. God sent a great storm, and when Jonah admitted he was the reason for the deadly storm, the crew threw him into the raging sea. Jonah was immediately swallowed by a huge fish. After three days in its belly, Jonah relented and promised God he would go preach in Nineveh. As a result, the fish spit him onto dry ground and Jonah immediately went to Nineveh and did as the Lord ordered. **On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned."** (Jonah 3: 4 NIV)

Jonah however proved the old adage, "Just because you do what you are told doesn't mean your heart is in it!" Jonah's heart was definitely not in it. When the people of Nineveh as one repented of their sins and begged for God's forgiveness, Jonah was furious with the Lord. He went up on a hot and dusty hillside and pouted. Jonah despised the Assyrians and threw a fit because the Lord generously accepted their pleas for forgiveness and did not destroy the city. There are many who do what God says to do but they do not want His will done, are not wanting to see Him in charge of everything. This part of your praying is a dynamic determination. You are declaring unconditionally your faith in the

Father to do what is right with you and with others. It is an assertion that regardless of how things look, you are confident God knows what is best and will do what is right in your life. This is not a passive acceptance of "whatever", it is a strong assertion that you want your praying to match God's plan for you and everyone else and that because of His love, His will is best.

Few people really want God's will for their life. It almost always is more, I want your will to be my will for my life and if it isn't I will either keep praying to change your mind or I will give up on you and go my own way, at least in regard to that one matter. Peter had that take on his relationship with God. When the Lord announced to the disciples that He was going to die, Peter argued with Jesus. **From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"** (Matthew 16: 21-22 NIV) Lest you think that wanting your will over God's is a light matter, Jesus' rebuke of Peter was swift and devastating. **Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."** (Matthew 16: 23 NIV) That may sound harsh on Christ's part, but it is the worst form of idolatry, wanting your will over God's. It is alignment with Satan and outright rebellion against God.

When you pray, **your kingdom must come, your will must come to pass as in heaven, so also on earth**, you are putting yourself within the perfect will of God. Jesus' prayer was just this in the Garden of Gethsemane. Knowing full well the terror of what He faced, He essentially prayed "your kingdom must come, your will must come to pass as in heaven, so also on earth." **"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."** (Luke 22: 42 NIV) God's will for you or someone you care about may not be pretty and could in fact be terrifying but when you have Christ living in you and His courage and mental strength there for you within, you can be just as aligned with the will of God as Jesus was there in the Garden. The actual purpose of prayer is to align yourself with God. Its purpose is not to get God to give you something, although that may happen. Its purpose is not to confess your sins even though you probably will. It is not even to offer the Father worship and that most likely will take place. But, in the end, it is to align yourself with God so perfectly that your life becomes the will of God.

I have never really spent much time considering the incredible story of Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Reflect on these details of her life. She just like her husband Abraham had a robust faith in God. She had her times of doubt as did Abraham himself but to the end, she prayed a prayer like what we have described, "your kingdom must come, your will must come to pass as in heaven, so also on earth." She took the long, arduous journey to Canaan with Abraham, some four hundred miles because God told them to move there. Dangerous bandits, hot and dusty trails, the constant search for water to be able to keep going was enough to convince anyone with less faith in God to stop and quit. She didn't. It was "your kingdom must come, your will must come to pass in heaven, so also on earth.". When she got there, Sarah trusted God and her husband and walked another seven hundred miles to Egypt. Returning the same seven hundred miles, Sarah struggled with her faith to keep believing God would give them children, even in their old age but then at ninety, she became the mother of Isaac. Imagine, waiting more than seventy years for God to answer your prayers, but then the ecstasy and mad happiness you felt holding your son and raising him with every ounce of your will and determination to be a great man of God. But then, God took Sarah to a new level of faith that broke every bit of self will she still held. **Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."** (Genesis 22: 1-2 NIV) There is no mention in the passage of Sarah and her reaction to this command of God. Early in the morning Abraham took off with their son to obey the Lord. Picture if you can Sarah standing in the distance watching them as they walk away. The anguish of heart, perhaps even tears, or more likely sobbing. There is though no mention of her complaining, grabbing at Abraham to get him to stop, just simple faith that God was good and right in all he did and could be trusted all the way to the bottom of life. The book of Hebrews tells us that Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead and perhaps Sarah did also. That day was the ultimate proof that Sarah's prayer was the same as ours, **"your kingdom must come, your will must come to pass as in heaven, so also on earth."** Sarah, like her husband thought like Jesus and that is our Big Idea for today. If you want to pray like Jesus, then you must think like Jesus. Pray this week and every week this great prayer of faith.