

Instruction In The Westminster Standards

The Historic Standards of Presbyterian Denominations

○ STUDIES IN THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Q. 99. What rule hath God given for our direction in prayer?

A. The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer, which Christ taught His disciples, commonly called The Lord's Prayer.

Scripture References: II Tim. 3:16, 17. I John 5:14. Matt. 6:9.

Questions:

- 1. How can the whole Word of God be used to direct us in prayer?
The whole Word of God can be of use to us in prayer in that it instructs us of our duties regarding our relationship to God. If we did not have general principles of the Word of God in our minds it would be impossible for us to pray aright (Rom. 10:14).
2. Could you give one example as to how a principle of doctrine helps us in our prayer life?
Yes, a good example would be the offices of Jesus Christ. The knowledge He is our prophet helps us to have the wisdom from Him we need; the knowledge He is our priest enables us to have an intercessor for our prayers; the knowledge He is our King teaches us we should live in submission to Him and this certainly includes our disciplining ourselves in prayer.
3. Why do we need direction in our prayer?
We need direction in prayer because even though the disposition of our souls has been turned into holiness by the Holy Spirit we are still sinners and would not seek after God if left to ourselves.
- 4. Why is it called "The Lord's Prayer" in our doctrines?
It is called "The Lord's Prayer" as it was in answer to the disciple's plea of "Lord, teach us how to pray."
5. Does the prayer contain all necessary parts of prayer?
No, it does not contain the confession of our sins and thankfulness of God's mercies.
6. Is this the form of prayer our Lord would have us use?
No, this is simply a pattern of prayer, a direction of how we should pray.

ELEMENTARY PRAYER

One of the difficulties of the prayer life on the part of many is that they attempt some of the more advanced patterns of prayer before becoming well-versed in elementary prayer. What is elementary prayer? The simple procedure of making of requests and giving thanks.

There are higher patterns of prayer. There are such things as adoration, communion, spiritual warfare, intercession and contemplation. But so many times the young believer — and many times the believer of many years — will attempt some of these higher patterns, become discouraged, and the prayer life will continue to suffer. How can we train ourselves to reach the higher patterns some day?

One of the simple methods is to keep a "Prayer Card" in your pocket or in your Bible or in your purse and keep an orderly list of things for which you can pray. As new things come to your attention, add them and you will be amazed at how your list will grow. You will also be amazed at the increase in urgency in prayer on your part.

This urgency in prayer is one of our greatest needs. So many times we seem to feel we can only pray when we are in the right mood. We should remember that our Sovereign God knows all about our moods and will give us the grace, as we cast ourselves on Him, to rise above our moods and be regular and urgent in our prayer lives.

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman tells the story of Praying Hyde (John Nelson Hyde) coming to his room for prayer. Dr. Chapman stated, "He came up to my room, turned the key in the door, dropped on his knees, waited five minutes without a single syllable coming from his lips. I could hear my own heart thumping and his beating. I knew I was with God. Then with upturned face, down which tears streamed, he broke out with, 'O, God!' For five minutes he was still again. When he knew that he was talking with God, there came from the depths of his heart such petitions for men as I have never heard before. I rose from my knees knowing what real prayer is."

We need more Praying Hydes today. Will you join with me with some elementary prayer? (Luke 18:1).

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