

**Do We Believe His Prayer? #1;
Hallowed Be Thy Name**

**2016 Feast of Tabernacles, Opening Night
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Jon W. Brisby
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What a wonderful opportunity it is to gather together to keep a commanded holy festival that the Lord God—the Maker of heaven and earth, and all that exists—has revealed to us and allowed us to understand. Now, the rest of the world out there—the majority of the seven billion people that are on this earth—have no idea that there is something incredibly special about this night. To them, it is just another Sunday night, as it is this year. Alright, you are some of the few on the face of the earth that recognize that it is special, and you are some of the few that have an opportunity to actually show respect for that God.

So, here we are, gathered together in one of those places that we believe God has placed His name. We have made provision to come before Him—to worship and to honor that God. We are all weak—we all struggle daily against carnal minds and the forces of this world, and we all need mercy, and longsuffering, and patience, and His forgiveness every single day. So we are not here because we are perfect. We are each a work in progress. But what you have in common with the other ones who are also celebrating correctly is that you believe that there is a coming Kingdom of God—you believe that the God of heaven and earth has created a Master Plan to offer salvation to the human family. You believe, therefore, that you are part of the Firstfruits harvest—not because you are better, but because, for whatever reason, He has picked you to be a part of that Family. This is your chance. This is my chance. Keeping the Feast of Tabernacles and all of the other Holy Days that God has set aside—both the weekly Sabbath and *all* of the annual days—is one of the key ways that we prove to God that we believe Him, and that we agree with Him, and that we want what it is that He is offering to us.

On this opening night, I am going to begin now with the eight messages that I am going to give you during the next eight days, and I typically try to have a theme—and kind of carry a theme through the whole Feast—and this year much of my theme is going to be taken from Matthew chapter 6, and it is going to cover, specifically, that which the world calls "the Lord's Prayer." I say what the world calls "the Lord's Prayer" because I don't call it "the Lord's Prayer." I am going to tell you tonight why that is, and it is not because I made that up. It is what I learned through the teaching of Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Raymond Cole.

But to put that in context, before we turn there, remember that Jesus gave a pretty long sermon called "the Sermon on the Mount," and that sermon was recorded through God's apostles, actually beginning in Matthew chapter 5, but not just Matthew 5, and not just Matthew 6, but it also continues into Matthew 7. So that is all one sermon, and if you have a red-letter Bible, you will see that it is in red all the way through. Okay, so it is a pretty long sermon.

So what is the context? Context is everything. Alright, in essence, "the Sermon on the Mount" is where Jesus Christ began to magnify the Ten Commandments. Isn't that true? Rather than just emphasizing what the ancient Israelites understood through the teaching of Moses from Mount Sinai—that they needed to obey the Commandments, literally, physically—Jesus came to tell them, "You know what? Murder is not just physically killing someone, but murder includes hating." Now, that was a new wrinkle. Also, adultery is not just a physical act with someone you are not allowed to have it with, but adultery is something that takes place in the mind, which makes you or me guilty of the violation of the seventh commandment. And so Matthew 5 describes this magnification of the spiritual principles behind the Ten Commandments, which makes them far more reaching into our lives than just physical dos and don'ts.

So as Mr. Armstrong taught us, Jesus Christ came not to do away with the Law, but in essence, to fill it full, or to magnify the intent of that Law. So that is what Matthew 5 gives us. Christ is expounding many principles in this sermon which distinguish the true spiritual thinking that we are required to put on, and also, by comparison, what actions are considered sin. So that sermon continues in chapter 6 and runs all the way through chapter 7, but we are going to focus tonight upon chapter 6—or at least a small portion of chapter 6.

So in chapter 6, Jesus is addressing how He wants you and me to think about a number of things, but I am going to focus on how He wants us to think about prayer. Again, my sermon series is going to be about "the Lord's Prayer."

Now, is this going to be a series about how to pray? No, I am going to give you a little bit about that, for a setup, but just to give you a little bit of the answer in the back of the book, what I am really going to be focusing upon, mostly, during this Feast is the content of that prayer, and what each of those phrases really mean to you and me.

But I can't just dive right in without a little bit of an introduction, so we are going to do that by starting in Matthew 6, and I will read verses 5 and 6. Here, He begins to explain a little bit of the setup concerning the proper way to pray, and in the first few verses of the chapter, which I am not going to take the time to read, He describes more about what He wants us to do concerning giving. You can read that on your own. He shows that giving is about the magnification of spiritual principles, and not just a physical act. So it is not just important, as He says, to give—making sure you give—but how you think about giving, and the way you give. That is the most important thing, which is why He says not to give so that other people know you are giving, because, in essence, you are getting paid for being seen as such a magnanimous person. He says to not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. That means do your giving in secret and God is the one who will reward you. Okay, He never commanded that of the ancient Israelites, did He? He never told them only to do their giving in secret. No, He told them to give, He told them to offer sacrifices, and to do all these physical things, but He did not require of them even a righteous orientation of mind. As long as they did the physical acts, you see, that is what He wanted them to do. But they weren't offered the Spirit. They were not offered the opportunity to be begotten of the Spirit, and to actually put on the mind of Jesus Christ. But you *have* been given that opportunity, which means you have a higher responsibility, and that is really what we want to talk about.

So, the same thing is true about prayer. In essence, in summary, it's not just important to spend your time in the physical act of getting on your knees. Hopefully you are doing that—hopefully, that is a regular part of every day that you set aside. That should be time, as Mr. Armstrong taught us, that is devoted to prayer. But is it enough just to go through a physical act? Not at all. And so, here in Matthew 6, Jesus is explaining the deeper significance of what He wants to

happen up here in our minds when we pray—how we pray, and what our prayers really mean. So here in Matthew 6 and verse 5 we read:

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets [Why? What is their motivation?], that they may be seen of men.

"That they may be seen of men." Are they really doing it as an honor to the God Who made them—Who controls their future? No, prayer is a religious act in order to get human beings to respond in a certain way to them—for their benefit, and for their favor. And what Jesus is saying is, "That may have been okay in times past because I didn't expect any more, but now everything is changing." We are talking about what we call the New Testament era, and moving into the time of the spiritual Church—the Body of Jesus Christ—and He is saying, "Let me explain to you a new standard of expectation—what God is really looking for." That is what He is doing here.

[F]or they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

So He is saying that if you or I, like the Pharisees, are praying so that other people think we are very religious, *that* is our reward—the good will of other human beings who come to like you, appreciate you, or laud you because they think you are very pious. And I don't know about you, but that is not enough of a reward for me. I want something more for my effort. What about you? I hope you do. It is not about having other human beings think you are great, or like you, or appreciate you. It is nice to have that, and hopefully, if we are behaving the way we should in walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, we will be appreciated by others who also share a love for that same Truth. But that is not the reason we are doing it.

Okay, what is it that He wants? Verse 6: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door . . ." And that doesn't mean it has to be a clothes closet, and it doesn't have to be completely dark. Some of you are probably a little claustrophobic. It means a private place, and sometimes

that is difficult. I will bet that some of you at the Feast of Tabernacles find that a little more difficult, especially if you are sharing accommodations. But you do the best that you can. Hopefully, in your normal circumstances at home, you have a private place where you can pray.

"[E]nter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Do you see the difference in the orientation here? He wants us to pray, not for anybody else's favor, but because you and I recognize that this is communion with God, the Father. The hypocrites, then, use prayer as a way to make themselves look good to others, but genuine prayer is simply communicating with our heavenly Father.

Now, I think we would understand the principle better if it was communication with another human being—like someone you love, or are supposed to love. And what would they think if the only reason you are standing there talking to them is so that other people might see you with them—because it makes you look good to be with them? And they are thinking, "You are just using me. You don't really like me. You are not trying to spend time with me. You don't appreciate me. You are just using me." You see, we would get that on the human level, wouldn't we? So, what about our prayers to God? Do you think that God doesn't know? He reads every thought. He knows our hearts. We are not hiding anything from Him.

So, genuine prayer—the kind of prayer that Jesus Christ is describing here—is simply communicating respectfully and sincerely with your heavenly Father. It is personal, it is private. It is private. That was one of the things that I learned through the ministry of Mr. Herbert Armstrong while growing up in the church. Praying is not something you do in public. It is not a part of a witness to other people. You know, there are other religions, especially the Pentecostals, and they make prayer a way to try to "witness for Jesus." And I know I sound sarcastic. They don't understand. But I'll tell you what really drives me crazy is when there are people who have been called into the true Church of God who behave the same way. Now *that* I don't like, because if they had paid attention to what we were taught about the right way to pray, and the right way to think about it, they shouldn't be behaving like the world does. It is personal, and it is private, which is why we were taught that when we go out to a restaurant, we don't pray

publicly around the table. Oh yeah, a lot of other churches do it, but that is not the way we were taught. Now, that doesn't mean that you can't ask a silent prayer to God to bless the food, but we were taught that it is something we don't do publicly. So, not only are we not going to have a private prayer in the middle of a restaurant, we are also not going to hold hands and do all the stuff that is designed to bring attention to what we are doing from other people who are around. That is exactly what Jesus is criticizing here. We don't do it. So neither should your personal prayers be publicized. Make it private communion with God.

Alright, but how? All I have told you so far is where and what, but how should we pray? That is the real gist of the series, and I hope to accomplish that during this Feast. The main way, as you are going to see, as we begin in verses 7 and 8, is to make it heartfelt—make your prayers heartfelt. And that is not easy to do when you are new at praying. I know so many who have shared with me the difficulty they have in effective praying. There are a lot of writings and sermons that we have done on the subject, and my intent, again, is not to go into the details on all of that, except just to emphasize the fact that your prayers need to become heartfelt. You are talking to a real person. God is not a figment of your imagination, or mine. He is invisible, but He is real, as real can be, and when we start to get that fact, that is the beginning.

So, when you bow before that Being, and you begin to talk to Him, show respect. The hardest thing in the world is undivided attention. Do you have that trouble? I have that trouble sometimes. Sometimes I don't have that trouble, but sometimes I *really* have that trouble, because my mind is trying to zap me to all kinds of other places, and I have to try to rein it back in. That is also an act of discipline, and it is good for us to learn that through the exercise of concentrating on this private conversation we are having with a real Being, and showing respect in that conversation. But He is your Father, and He is called "Abba"—like "Daddy." So, the goal is to generate the relationship—not a disrespectful, dismissive relationship—but one that is real, one that is close, and one in which you communicate with Him as your "Daddy." He is that.

Matthew 6, verses 7 and 8: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do." Now, what comes to your mind when you think about heathenistic, vain repetitions? I think about a lot of things, including the occult world, to the extent that we can know about it, and religions that involve a lot of chanting. And literally, what are they doing when they chant? They believe the way that they worship their god, or gods, or goddesses, or whatever it is they

worship, is that they can summon the power of the spirit world by what they say—like by repeating magic words, or saying them in a particular way, and then saying them over, and over, and over, and over again. This is a very common belief among false, Satan-inspired, pagan religions, which is why you see it done. And that concept was greatly absorbed into "Christianity" and the Catholic world. You know the history. For example, monks do it, and they call it chanting. And this is a very popular thing. It can be very beautiful, even like music. Maybe some of you have some of these CDs, and this stuff becomes very, very popular—especially as the occultists become popularized in this evil world. And so we have the idea of chanting, which is the repetition, over and over again, of the same words.

But Jesus is telling us right here, "Uh-uh, that is not the way to pray." Would you do that if you had a personal, real conversation with anyone else? Would you stand there and say, "Nice to see you, nice to see you, nice to see you, nice to see you"? That other person would think, "What is wrong with him?" But what do you think God thinks when we sit there and repeat the same thing over and over again? Yes, it is exactly the same thing.

So, these vain repetitions, otherwise known as incantations, are an attempt to use special, repeated words to summon power from the invisible world, and you know what they are really doing, don't you? They are summoning demons. That is what they are doing—summoning Satan and his demons. Satan masquerades as God because he appears as an angel of light. But Jesus is saying, "Don't get caught up in that."

"But when ye pray, use not [these incantations or] vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking"—that the very act of talking a lot over, and over, and over again, gets them close to God, and that it will get Him to give them favors. And God says, "That it is not the way it works."

Verse 8: "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him"—which points out something else that is very important: the fact that you and I ask God, does not mean that we are informing God of something He doesn't know, as though we are tugging on His sleeves, saying, "Father, I need you to solve this problem for me. You might not understand. Maybe you have your attention somewhere else, so I am trying to bring this to your attention for the first time." No, no, no, this is a God who has all

power, and He also has all knowledge—past, present and future. That is what omniscience means—all knowledge. It is one of the attributes of God. He is omnipotent—all-powerful; He is ever-present—omnipresent; and He is omniscient, which means that He has all knowledge which has ever existed, or ever will exist. He knows it all, which means you and I aren't informing Him of anything.

And so Jesus says here: "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." That is not the reason you are going to ask. Oh, He commands you to ask, but it is not for the purpose of informing Him, or of badgering Him over, and over, with the same thing.

However, you and I *are* commanded to be persistent in our prayers. So let's talk about that. Turn with me to Luke 18, verses 1 through 8. Luke 18 and beginning in verse 1: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray . . ." That is talking about consistency—a habit of communicating with God. That's what it is—the habit of communicating regularly with God.

"[M]en ought always to pray, and not to faint"—which means that you don't let off, you don't neglect that responsibility—and there are a whole lot of things that happen in our lives that put pressure on us to sacrifice prayer. Doesn't that happen? And so, we have to ask forgiveness for that, too. But the door is open if we are sincere. He is ever willing to forgive. God is not waiting to hold something against you, or me, so that He can have an excuse to push us away. He desires that close communion with each and every one of His priceless children. He wants that, and He knows we are frail—He knows that we make mistakes—which is why you have access to the shed blood of Jesus Christ so that you can be washed from that past guilt and be renewed in that communion with Him.

I don't care how much you have messed up. Well, let me clarify that: It is important to care about not messing up, but what I am saying is that it doesn't matter that you or I have had failures in the past. Today is a new day. Renew yourself in it and walk forward, and ask for the power of the Holy Spirit, and He will help you. And you can have that close relationship with Him. So we are not going to get involved in chanting and all this mindless stuff. Luke 18 and verse 1:

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint [What does it mean to always pray?]; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man [So he had authority—he was making decisions that affected people's lives—but he was pretty indifferent to those people in his court. Verse 3]: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. [She had a case. She had been wronged. She was trying to get justice through the courts, and the judge didn't care. Verse 4:] And he would not for a while [He didn't care about giving her justice. She was too much trouble.]: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God [He wasn't afraid of being judged by God in how he conducted his responsibilities. That wasn't what was on his mind.], nor regard man [And he wasn't afraid of getting into trouble with man. He could do what he wanted. Verse 5]; Yet because this widow troubleth me [she is a thorn in his side because she keeps coming back, time, after time, after time, with the petition], I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. [What does that compare to in the old adages? The squeaky wheel gets the grease. Verse 6:] And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

And, at first, you might think, "Well, wait a minute. How am I going to use that for a spiritual principle?" Because, guess what? Believe it or not, God is actually making a comparison between Himself and the unjust judge, because there is something He says they have in common: "And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him . . . ?"

Now, there is prayer. That is what this crying day and night is—it is prayer, it is the personal, private prayer of those of His beloved children who are in trouble of some kind, and they are here beseeching God for His intervention and help. And they are not criticized because they are coming repeatedly to ask for help. That is my point. We are not supposed to be like the heathen—chanting with incantations and repetitive speaking—but that does not mean that you and I are not supposed to come persistently before God to ask for his divine intervention for our problems.

"And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" Is it possible that God may not answer a prayer right away? Oh yeah, and many of you have experienced that, or may even right now be experiencing something very difficult in which it seems that God is not answering. For His loving purpose, He may allow you and me to wait, because the very purpose of what we are experiencing is to develop faith. If He gives us everything we want, when we want it, we would very likely become like the ancient Israelites who, when they had received all of those blessings in the early stages, took them for granted, and didn't learn to have trust and confidence in God, which was demonstrated as soon as He delayed giving them food or water. How long did it take before they began to murmur?

So you have been given access to the Holy Spirit, and God wants you to use that to develop confidence and faith in Him, which means that as part of this training program, He might make you wait sometimes to prove whether you will still trust Him, whether you will still believe in Him, or whether you and I might begin to doubt and then begin to compromise. It is a huge facet of what you and I are part of. But in the meantime, it is absolutely not wrong to be asking and beseeching Him for His intervention. You do it respectfully, and again, it is not because you are informing God. He knows—He knows before you voice them what your problems are and what you need—but He has commanded us to pray.

"[T]hough he bear long with them? [Verse 8:] I tell you that he will avenge them speedily." That doesn't mean that He is going to avenge, or solve, your problem immediately, when you ask, but when God's time has come to act, it will be speedy, according to His perfect will. That is what it means. It is not speedy as you and I count speediness, but it will be perfectly executed in God's time.

. . . though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

You see, I told you it was about faith. That is what He is trying to get us to learn. The hardest thing for a human being to learn is to trust God. We must pray in faith, believing—not doubtful. Now, when you have doubts—and you will, because you are human, you are carnal—acknowledge it to God, because He already knows. Don't think that you are hiding anything—any thought. You are

not, and I am not. So when you have doubts—when you have the antithesis of faith in your mind—you might as well admit it to Him; He already knows: "Father, I know I am doubting. I know I am waffling. I know I am being tempted to try to solve my own problems by compromising your Truth because you haven't answered in the time I wanted you to answer. And now my mind is trying to take me in all kinds of other places. Please help my unbelief. Please help my unbelief, and grant me the power of your Son's mind to help me overcome this." How about that for a prayer? Those are my words, not yours, but hopefully I am communicating the gist—the feeling—of it. And your words don't have to be in order. Again, He knows what is in your mind. So be sincere—be honest—in the thoughts that you communicate intentionally to God. He knows how to read what you are saying.

1 John 3, verses 21 and 22. And, by the way, praying in faith—believing—is our goal. Yet, you and I are not to allow our prayers to become an empty mantra. That is what Jesus was criticizing—the incantations, the chanting, the vain repetitions. Don't let that be your prayer, and that is hard to do, because you know what? We are all creatures of habit.

Now, do you know who is really challenged in this? Baptized men, especially, who are called upon for opening and closing prayers during weekly Sabbaths and Holy Days. And many of you are going to have that opportunity during this Feast. Now, if you have been in the church long enough, do you know what starts to happen? We start to repeat the same things when it is our turn, and I am not saying that this is all bad, but I am saying that it is not a bad thing to try to concentrate so that you do not allow the words to become so repetitious that you can just say them without thinking. That is very dangerous. So, avoid vain repetition, and not only in your private prayer, but when you are praying on behalf of the congregation, number one—as I have always emphasized—is to never use the word, "I." When you are doing an opening or closing prayer, you are praying on behalf of the entire assembly. There is no "I" in that. It is "we." Never, ever, ever, ever, ever, ever use the word "I" in an opening or closing prayer. It is not you, it is "we." And, then, make sure it is heartfelt, and not just something that you are saying to try to make everybody think you gave a good prayer.

There are a whole lot of things involved in a good prayer, and I am not getting into details on that, but also, please, please, please, don't give a sermonette. That is not the purpose of the prayer.

Now, I was sarcastic and disrespectful when I was a youth in the church, and my teenage friends and I would sit on the back row in Worldwide Church of God Sabbath services, and whenever there was one of those men who got up there and gave an opening or closing prayer that went on two minutes, three minutes, four minutes, five minutes or more, we would sit back and mumble to ourselves, "and God bless Mommy, and Daddy, and Grandma, and Grandpa." When is this going to end? The purpose of prayer on behalf of the congregation is to thank God for being in His presence, to ask His blessing upon the assembly, to ask His dismissal, if it is a closing prayer, and to be thoughtful—not repetitious—and certainly not like a Pharisee who is looking for attention or accolades from people.

Everybody is different. So don't get hung up on these things. One of the scariest things that some of the men have to do is to get up for the first time—or the second, or the third, or the fourth time—and give a prayer on behalf of the congregation. But it is an incredible opportunity to serve. And when you are heartfelt with it, it is something very, very valuable. So all of these things apply to prayer, whether it is private prayer or congregational prayer—opening or closing. 1 John 3:21:

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not [which means you are sincere and not a hypocrite. That is what it means.], then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him [Why? What is the condition to answered prayer?], because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Isn't it amazing how Commandment-keeping comes up, repetitively, in all of the admonitions of what to do to grow close to God, and how to please Him, and how to honor Him? And it always comes back to the Commandments. It always will, because it is the way that we express our love and our regard for Him and His plan. And remember, this Feast of Tabernacles pictures the coming of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to rule upon this earth, and you are being recruited, right now, to become a King and a Priest in that government and to administer the government of God—which means He is going to require that you and I agree with Him. You must love the Law, because you are going to be expected to enforce it. You must regard the things that God loves and love them, too. That is what we are all getting a chance to prove, and those are the ones He is going to reward for drawing near to Him in prayer, and He will answer them speedily when they are really showing honor and growing close to Him.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

Alright, back to Matthew 6 and verse 9. Now we have finally made it to what is called "the Lord's Prayer." I went through that initial setup because Jesus went through the initial setup, before getting to this point, in order to explain the context of prayer—the way to do it, the way not to do it, and how to think about it. And now we get to the substance of a good prayer. Matthew 6 and beginning in verse 9: "After this manner therefore pray ye." Now, what does the world do? They forget that phrase, "After this manner," and they just recite verses 9 through 13 from memory. And I had to memorize it at Imperial Schools on the Ambassador College campus, starting in 1968. It is one of the first pieces of memory work I remember we had to learn as first graders. We also had to learn the books of the Bible. We learned the Ten Commandments—the long form of them, by the way, in Exodus 20 and verses 1 through whatever, including, "and the Lord spake unto Moses, saying . . ."—the whole thing. Yeah, my life was hard. But it was good training. But this "Lord's Prayer" was one of those required memory works, and many so-called Christians also have it memorized. I'll bet that you all have it memorized. If you close your Bibles, right now, you can probably recite it:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Very familiar, isn't it? Is there anything more familiar in the Bible than the Lord's Prayer? Again, I'll bet that you all have it memorized. But do you know what it means? I am going to spend my sermons during this Feast of Tabernacles breaking it down, phrase by phrase, and I am going to explain to you what each of these elements really means. I think that many of them you know, but you might be surprised at what you may not have thought about. The world calls this "The Lord's Prayer." They recite it by rote. Do you think God's happy with that? Do you get down on your knees and say, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," and then do it over, and

over, and over, and over again, until your thirty minutes is up? No, it's not what He wants, because that is not what Jesus was saying. Again, verse 9 began by saying, "After this manner." He didn't say, "Recite this, word for word." Don't make this a vain repetition. He just told us *not* to get involved in vain repetitions.

So then, why do people turn around and recite this, mainly, and do the opposite of what He said to do? The world calls this "the Lord's Prayer," but that is not accurate. I learned, growing up in the Church of God, to call this "Christ's sample prayer." It is not "the Lord's Prayer," because Jesus did not pray this to His Father. He was saying this to His disciples, and He told them, "Pray *like* this—similar to this, in this manner." In essence, these are the elements that make up a good prayer. These are the bullet points which are good topics to include in your private and personal communication with your heavenly Father. The intent has always been for it to be very personalized—as personal as you are, a unique individual in this universe. That is how it should be with your heavenly Father, which means you are going to use different words than I use, and you are coming from a different place than I am, with my background, or my experiences. It is according to where we each are right now. But these things apply to us all, regardless of those distinctions.

Is there a "Lord's Prayer" in the Bible, just by the way? This isn't "the Lord's Prayer," but do you know where the real "Lord's Prayer" is? I'll bet some of you do. Isn't it found in John chapter 17? We are not going to go and read it, but remember, that was the prayer that God chose to record—the actual words of Jesus Christ as He was bowing before his Father in the garden of Gethsemane, just before He was arrested, after midnight, before He was tortured and killed. Now, that is what we call "the Lord's Prayer." So, if you would like a good explanation of how to apply this sample prayer, then use your Bible study and read John 17, and you can see how Jesus actually did it Himself when He prayed to His Father. That is where the real "Lord's Prayer" is found. So I am going to refer to this. Well, I may, through the course of this Feast, call it "The Lord's Prayer," so you will know what I mean. But if I am talking about Matthew 6, I am talking about "Christ's sample prayer," or the other term I might use is "the prayer template"—my term. It is a template—it is something that you can use as a sample to give you a guide for how to do it. It is a guide only.

Alright, back to Matthew 6 and verse 9. In the rest of the time that I have with you this evening, for this opening message, we are going to talk about the first phrase: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in

heaven, Hallowed be thy name." What does that mean? You need to be able to do more than just get on your knees and say, "Hallowed be Your name. Hallowed be Your name." What does it really mean to hallow the name of God, the Father?

The first thing I want to point out to you is that what Jesus is saying and confirming here, in giving His instructions, is that we primarily should be praying to the Father. That is a question that comes up sometimes, because some say, "Well, but can I pray to Jesus, too?" Mr. Armstrong did not say it is wrong to address a prayer to Jesus Christ. Okay, but I don't do that. I am just telling you that I was taught to pray to the Father. Do you know how I look at it? When I am praying, I believe that Jesus Christ is right there with the Father, and He is the one that told His disciples that if you have seen one, you have seen the other. There are two different individuals, and yet they are absolutely harmonious in their thinking and their orientation. They are one. I am not talking about some false, pagan Trinity thing. I am talking about unanimity of mind through the power of the same Spirit, which makes them perfectly simpatico. And Jesus Christ is sitting on the right hand of His Father in heaven. So, I don't know about you, but when I am praying in private, Jesus is there hearing my prayers. I think of Him more as that intercessor. He is the one who makes it possible for me to approach unto the Father.

But let's look at that in John 16, because here is the instruction. John 16 and verse 23: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing." He is describing to His disciples a change that is getting ready to take place because of this incredible sacrifice He is about to make, which is going to change everything for the human family.

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father [which He did]. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you [Jesus is saying, "I am not going to be standing in between you and the Father."]: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

He is describing a change in relationship that, for the first time, is going to make it possible for certain individuals—human beings—to actually approach unto the throne of God, the Father, through the Spirit, and commune directly with the Father, which had never happened in human history up to this date. The Father had no such contact with human beings. That was always done through Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. It was not the Father, it was the One who became Jesus Christ who was speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, with all of the prophets, and at the very beginning with Adam. That was Jesus Christ, not the Father. Here you are talking about the time when, for the first time in nearly 4000 years since the creation of Adam, other human beings besides Jesus Christ were going to have a chance to talk and to commune directly with God, the Father. It could have happened only by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His qualification to be our High Priest. And now He became an intercessor and opened that Way. Remember, that at Christ's death, the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom? Read that on your own in Matthew 27:51. Why did that happen? Why did God create that miracle—that physical miracle? It never would have happened physically. You know, if a human being had tried to tear and vandalize that curtain—a very, very heavy curtain—in the temple, it would have been ripped from bottom to top, because the top was way too high for a human being to reach. That curtain rent from top to bottom as a physical symbol of the fact that the barrier that kept human beings from the Holy of Holies—that special chamber picturing the very throne of God, with the Ark of the Covenant, and the golden mercy seat—would no longer be cut off from human beings, and they would be able to access the throne of God. Now, not just anybody who wants to can access it. It is going to have to be someone who is called, but among the called of God, and through baptism, and acceptance of that Way, and begetting of the Spirit, they were now going to be admitted into that sanctuary for the very first time.

But what does all of that have to do with it? I am trying to emphasize the value—the importance—of praying directly to the Father. It is an incredible gift that you have been given. So don't think that you are slighting Jesus Christ as if, "Well, I address all my prayers to the Father, and I feel like I am being disrespectful to Jesus." No, you are not. He is your intermediary. He is the one making it possible. He is right there with you. In my personal prayers, when I am addressing the Father, I am already including Jesus Christ in the conversation—that's the way I think about it.

Alright, so back to Matthew 6 and verse 9: "Our Father [that is who we are addressing] which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." What does it mean to hallow the name of the Father? Well, not to bore you with a lot of Greek definitions, but this word "hallowed" is the Greek word pronounced hag-ee-ahd-zoh—h-a-g-i-a-z-o—and it means to make holy, to consecrate, to venerate, to hallow, or to sanctify. Okay, how does that help us? I will summarize it by saying that when you or I address God, the Father, we should be saying that we are coming before Him to treat as Holy His name. When we say, "Hallowed be Thy name," it means we are treating as holy, or venerating, His name.

Is that all? Well, what is the antithesis of venerating the name of God? And yes, this has something to do with one of the Ten Commandments, which says, just summarizing: don't take God's name in vain. Alright, what is the clearest way that human beings take God's name in vain? By all of the curse words and other things that we allow out of our mouths. And do you know what the most common one is out here today? "Oh my God"—or "OMG." How many times do you hear it? How many times do you see it written? You know, now we are in a world of "texting," and it's OMG this, and OMG that, and people don't think anything about it. It rattles off their tongues as a habit. They don't even know what they are saying. It is just an expression. It is a way to kind of be dramatic. And it is highly disrespectful to God. It is taking His name in vain. I hope we are not involved in that.

Now, there are some of you who may be involved in a lot of habits with the use of words and phrases, and I have done some sermons and some letters to the church in past years which have caused a lot of consternation, because I have shown that a lot of the things that we say, that we think are innocent, are not innocent at all. So you may not be saying "Oh my God," but how many of you are still in the habit of saying "my goodness," just as one example? What does that mean? What is good? Well, Jesus is the one who said there is none good but God, so why do you think human beings even started saying that? How do you think you learned to say that? You copied it from other human beings—maybe your mother, your father, or both, or people that you went to school with. So when you learn to say "my goodness," you probably don't realize that it is just another word for saying "God," because God is the only one who is good. You might as well be saying, "Good God." And you wouldn't say that, would you? Because you know that is taking God's name in vain. So why are you saying, "Oh my goodness"? It

is the same thing. There is no difference. The same goes for many of the other things that we say, that are more acceptable in human society, but which are exactly in the same category with God.

Now, to make matters worse, what I am telling you is that those words that come out of our mouths, which we don't mean to be disrespectful, are only the beginning, because it is not just about controlling the words that come out of our mouths. Oh, well, that is a great start, but I am trying to get to the point of what God wants us to think about when we are praying, "Hallowed be Thy name." Are you just saying it, or do you mean it?

Leviticus 22. I want to give you just a couple of texts to show what God means by *hallowing* something—treating something as holy. Leviticus 22 and verse 32: "Neither shall ye profane my holy name." That is the opposite of showing respect to God and His name. He calls it profaning His name.

"[B]ut I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you." Now, isn't that interesting. God commands us to hallow Him, but it is not something He has not already done in showing honor to you and me. He says He has hallowed Israel—He has treated them specially, He has set them apart. Isn't that what He did with them, as a nation? He called them out, and He made them special, and treated them differently than all the other nations of the world, even though they were no better. But by virtue of the fact that God picked them and gave them promises, He hallowed them—He set them apart, gave them special favor, and treated them uniquely, respectfully, and differently than others. Now do you begin to see what the meaning of the word is? And, in essence, God is saying, "I just want you to do toward me as I have already done toward you, by calling you and promising to be your Father."

Ezekiel 20, verses 19 through 21. Ezekiel 20, beginning in verse 19: "I am the [Eternal] your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths." It's the same concept. It means to set apart—to make special—those days, both the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, like the one that we just began to keep at sunset tonight. He says "hallow my Sabbaths"—don't treat them like every other day of the week, or the year—elevate them, make them special. How are you going to do that? Well, we are going to see.

"And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the [Eternal] your God." Oh, how often does God say that those Sabbaths are *the* sign between Him and His people? Yet, there are a lot of people out there, even tonight, starting a Feast of Tabernacles, and there are a lot of sincere people out there who think they are doing the right thing, but it all hinges upon obedience to the Commandments. That is what He requires. And so I am praying for the day when many of those will finally see the truth about the false, corrupted doctrines that their ministers have foisted upon them. We have to be patient. They are God's children—they *are* God's children—He knows who they are, and He is working a perfect work in their lives. And so we should all be praying for the time when they will come to see and recognize the things that we have been privileged to see. But you don't see them because you are better, and neither do I.

I don't know why I am here. But I am glad. I am glad that I have been taught the Truth, including the right day of Pentecost. There is only one Pentecost. It is always on a Monday. And also all of the other doctrines which were taught by Mr. Herbert Armstrong to the whole church from the beginning of this era in the 20th century—the faith once delivered. That is the standard, and it involves Sabbaths and Holy Days.

And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.
Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me.

Isn't that what they always do? They always do—they always did, they always have—and we have lived through it. So, if history has repeated itself, and if this Bible was written for the last-day Church, which we believe we are all a part of, then you tell me how the Sabbaths have been corrupted in our time. And if you think that Pentecost is on a Sunday, that was not the original teaching as Jesus Christ revealed it through a chosen servant. It's just not.

Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths.

How? Somebody changed them. The majority—the prophecies say—walked away from them in the last days. The majority didn't hold on to the true Sabbaths, the majority of them fell away from the true Sabbaths. You tell me how. I tell you, Malachi 2—and I am not going to turn there—describes the corruption of Pentecost. It is the one particular Sabbath which took them away and separated them from their God because they turned to human scholarship as the source of knowledge, and not to the revelation of Jesus Christ.

"[T]hen I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness." And so we are in a spiritual wilderness right now, in this world, for God's reasons. He is allowing it to persist, but there is a day coming when He is going to gather them together. He promised that in John 10, and other places. These are beloved children, my dear friends. They are His children, so we are going to pray for them, and we are going to do our part, now, because of the knowledge that we have. That knowledge that you have is a responsibility. Are you using it? Are you manifesting more of the light of that Way so that you might be a tool by which God might help others in a day when He allows them to see it? We don't have time to waste. We don't have time to sit on our hands. With that knowledge comes responsibility, and the time of our lives is fleeting.

Remember also Isaiah 58. I read this whole chapter to you on Atonement, didn't I? Look with me again at Isaiah 58, verses 12 and 13, because God is describing how His people can come back into communion with Him again, instead of being separated and cast off. They feel that God is not answering their prayers—He is not responding when they fast. They think that what they have been doing is just useless, and He is telling them why, and how to fix it. Isaiah 58:12:

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places [a promise that at the return of Jesus Christ, someone is going to be a part of that first resurrection and is literally going to rebuild this earth into a paradise]: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Wouldn't you like to be a part of that Family? That is your opportunity. But what is the condition? How can you and I be a part of that Family that is going to rebuild this earth during the Millennium?

Verse 13: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath." What does that mean? It means to trample upon something—maybe not literally, but you understand the metaphor, don't you? You trample upon something that you don't care about—something that is not even worth picking up, let alone keeping clean. People just walk on it, and that is how God describes what His chosen people have been doing in their treatment of the Sabbaths.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight." That is hard to do. That must be learned—that must be cultivated over time by using the Spirit, because, by nature, we don't love the Sabbath. So, if you don't love the Sabbath yet, it is not the end of the world, and you are no worse off than a lot of other people sitting in this congregation, or under the hearing of my voice. Don't think that you are the only one who struggles. You are not. It is a lifelong struggle to come to love the things that God loves, and to hate the things that God hates. It is going to take the power of the Spirit to transform your mind. That is what it means to put on the mind of Jesus Christ and to walk in His footsteps. You are struggling to do that, I know, and so am I. So stay in the fight. Don't give up, don't get discouraged, and don't give in to the Deceiver who wants you to turn away, or to compromise, or just to walk away from it. Don't do it.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.

It is also about being honest with God concerning where we stand, as I have said. Psalm 17, verses 1 through 3, hurrying to finish this evening. Psalm 17 and beginning in verse 1—the prayer of David. He says: "Hear the right, O [Eternal]." And here, David was inspired to speak and to describe to us, the last-day Church, how to think about, and how to communicate with, our heavenly Father.

"Here the right, O [Eternal], attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer." You *should* go before God, humbly, respectfully, but confidently. You should, because He wants that communion with you, and He wants you to be bold. He wants you to be bold.

"[A]ttend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips." David is saying, "Father, I am coming to you, being honest. I am not lying. I am not putting on. I am not trying to deceive you. I know that is impossible. I am not deceiving myself. I am sincere in that I want to get this right. I don't know how to do it, and I make lots of mistakes, and I need your guidance. I need your help, but I am sincere in that I want to get this right." That is what it means not to pray "with feigned lips".

"Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal." He is saying, "O God, I am being weighed in the balance. You are the Judge. You know that I am here before you sincerely."

"Thou has proved mine heart." He acknowledges that, "Holy Father, you know what is in my heart, and my mind, and my thoughts. I am not hiding."

"[T]hou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing." What David is saying confidently, is that "I know I am sincere." He is not saying, "I know I am perfect," but that "I know I am sincere, and when you test that in me, I know that is what you are going to conclude."

"I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." He is not saying that he is successful one-hundred percent of the time. You know, the apostle in the New Testament said that a man who can control his tongue perfectly is a perfect man. And so we are not there yet, are we? "I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress." That is his goal. That is what he is working for, and with God's help, you see, he will get better—he will improve, he will become more like the example of Jesus Christ, with hard, hard work and persistence, not giving up.

You and I cannot hallow God, truly, if we are arguing about what is holy to begin with, and that is where I get in my little extra plug about the faith once delivered for the night. You must know what is holy and what is profane. You must know the difference. God is the one who taught it to us. You didn't figure it

out by your Bible study, and I didn't figure it out by my Bible study, either. We were taught it through a chosen servant to whom Jesus Christ purposefully gave it in the 20th century, because *He* laid the foundation of the Church—no man.

Now, my question to you is, what foundation did He lay? You and I are only called to build upon the foundation that was laid, not to reinterpret the foundation according to our own whims. Yes, because if you do that, or if I do that, then what we are doing, inadvertently, is rejecting God's revelation. We may be sincere, but if you or I turn to human scholarship to "figure out" the Truths, I tell you what is going to happen: You may get 99 out of one hundred correct, but at least in one of them you are going to make the mistake of calling something that is hallowed by God, profane. Or else, you are going to call something that He calls profane, hallowed. And that is a dangerous thing to do. *He* defines what is hallowed and what is profane, and we are required to accept that revelation, and then to use it, and build upon it, to change ourselves, not to try to change the doctrine.

1 Timothy 6 and verse 20. 1 Timothy 6 and 20: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." He didn't say, "Timothy, continue to grow in grace and knowledge by figuring out from your own Bible study, and your own prayers, some new thing that the church has never heard before." That is not what Paul told him. He said, "Keep that which is committed to thy trust"—something that he was taught already, and he says, "You hold on to that and don't you let anybody take it away from you."

And all you have to do is go back to the first part of Deuteronomy 13 where God is answering the question: "Yeah, but what if some prophet comes on the scene who is even able to do miracles, and he can really use a lot of fancy words? Boy, he sure seems legitimate." And what does God say? "I don't care what he looks like, I don't care how he sounds, and I don't even care if he can seem to do miracles, if he is telling you something that was not a part of the original instruction, then don't listen to it." And, in fact, to ancient Israel, He said, "You take that false prophet and you stone him to death. He is not speaking according to the Lord God."

Now, how are you and I going to apply that today, when every Tom, Dick and Harry who thinks he is a minister, thinks he is coming up with new truth, by

whatever means? Do you think that we are being held accountable to chase every new thing that comes up under the sun, and to figure out whether it might be true or not? The only thing I have to ask is, "Is it what was originally taught to the Church? No? Well, pfffft, no, thank you. *No, thank you.* That is not how Truth comes."

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." Oppositions of science. What is that? Scholarly interpretations based upon the supposed wisdom of those with the PhDs, and the supposed experience in the church—or otherwise—which supposedly gives them the credibility to tell us what truth and error is.

[A]voiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing [I would tell you, which many are professing today] have erred concerning the faith.

That Faith was something that was revealed purposefully by God to His Church, and He didn't make any mistakes in the doctrine. Oh yeah, there were a lot of human mistakes made in prophetic speculation, and in administration. But that is very different from the doctrine, which was the real foundation of the Church.

So, how are you going to hallow the name of God? You are going to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, with Jesus Christ at your right hand, I am bowing before You, seeking communion with You—seeking communication which I know I do not deserve, which is made possible only because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our High Priest, and in His name, I am bowing before You, asking that You will allow me to approach unto You. I desire to treat You as Holy. You deserve to be treated as Holy, because You are Holy—You are a Hallowed Being. I know I don't deserve it, and I know that I am very inadequate, but I want to learn to hallow Your name. Help me to hallow Your name." How about that for an approach? Use your own words, but the sentiment—the underlying element—you see, is so much more than just saying the words. What are you thinking when you get down upon your knees and bow before that great Being? Do you consider Him an awesome, glorious, real Being, invisible though He may be? He is real. He is your Master, He is your Maker, He is your loving Father, and He desires to have that relationship with you.

We hallow the name of the Father by accepting that which He has revealed to us through His Son, and understanding the difference between what He made holy, versus what He made profane. That is a key part of having real communion with Him.

So, during this Feast of Tabernacles, we are going to examine the rest of what the world calls "The Lord's Prayer"—each part of what I call, and the Church of God calls, "The Lord's Sample Prayer," and we are going to emphasize how this simple prayer is the blueprint that contains all of the elements actually needed for our salvation. We will begin on that tomorrow afternoon.