****

**Prayer: Keeping Your Muscles Fit**

By Dennis Fuqua with [*International Renewal Ministries*](http://prayersummits.net/)

Because you have just returned from a pretty intense journey, your “prayer muscles” have been used quite a bit and may even be a little sore.  You prayed about going on the trip.  You prayed before the trip.  And you prayed during the trip.  Just as your physical muscles need to be used in order to get strong, your spiritual muscles also need to be used to be spiritually fit.  Now the question is, “How can I keep spiritually fit after the trip?  How should I be praying now?”

Consider this:  it wasn’t long after Jesus’ disciples returned from a “short-term mission trip” (Luke 10:1-24) that they asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1).  Perhaps His answer to them provides the best answer for us as we consider how to continue to build prayer momentum.  Let’s take a look at His answer (we know it as the “Lord’s Prayer”) and see how it can help us pray.

We will use a version based upon Matthew 6 because it is a bit fuller.  And let me put it in a form that will show its natural structure.  You may be very familiar with this prayer, but I want you to read it over slowly and try to really mean each word you say/pray it.

Our Father, in heaven
1. Let Your name be holy
2. Let Your kingdom come     on earth as it is in heaven
3. Let Your will be done
=======================================
1. Give us this day our daily bread
2. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
3. Lead us not into temptation
4. Deliver us from the evil one
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are Yours forever!

I want to ask you to do some things with this prayer to help you understand it better.  There is one pronoun used three times in the first part of this prayer.  Circle each occurrence.  And there is one pronoun used four times in the second part of this prayer.  Again, circle each occurrence.  Did you get them?  Clearly there is a “your” half to this prayer and an “us” half.  There are three requests in the first half and four in the second half.

Now look at the words connected with the word “your.”  “Your name.”  “Your kingdom.”  “Your will.”  Effective prayer happens when we use this pattern.  Jesus is teaching us about, and inviting us to pray about the three big purposes of God.  1) That His name would be seen as holy here on earth like it is in heaven, 2) that His kingdom would come here like it is there, and 3) that His will would be accomplished here like it is in heaven.  When you think of the holiness of His name, think about Him being gloriously different from everything else.  When you think about the coming of His kingdom, think about His right to rule everyone and everything.  And when you think about the accomplishment of His will, think about everyone obeying what He clearly tells us in His word.

The four requests of the second half contain the four big needs any human has.  We need **provision** – so God invites us to pray that He would give us everything we need each day.  We need **reconciliation** with God and others – so God tells us to pray for forgiveness and grant forgiveness to everyone.  We need His **guidance** – so God wants us to pray for and receive His leadership.   And we need **protection** – so God tells us to pray and trust Him to be delivered from the evil one.

One more question.  According to this prayer, how often does Jesus want us to pray in this way?  That’s right… He wants us to pray it every time we have a “this day!”  He had in mind that this would be a regular, daily way to pray.

So, how do you keep your “prayer muscles” in shape?  Use this prayer as a model for your daily prayer both for yourself and for those you ministered to on your trip.  As you do, you can be confident that Jesus will hear and answer.

**For additional information on this topic:**

Additional practical resources on praying the Lord’s Prayer are available at the following link:
<http://livingprayerbook.web.officelive.com/Resources.aspx>