

## Polite Conversation

*by Jeannie St. John Taylor*

Have you ever thought about applying the rules of polite conversation to prayer? How do you feel when you chat with people who drone on and on about themselves and never stop talking long enough to hear what you have to say? Do you feel as though they care about you, or only about themselves?

I wonder if that's how we make God feel sometimes – as though we care only about what he can do for us, not about him.

While God *urges* us to ask him for things, prayer is about more than asking. Jesus reminded us of that in the Lord's prayer. When the disciples asked him how to pray, Jesus taught them a couple of the same rules of good behavior your mother used to drill into you.

1. Your mom said, "Address people by name, it makes them feel valued."

Jesus said to begin your prayer addressing God by name, "Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored." In other words, the first thing we should do in prayer is demonstrate that we know who God is and we value him. We should let him know we are thinking about him and that we care for him.

2. Your mom said, "Don't just talk about yourself. Show interest in the other person. Make them feel welcome."

Jesus told us to show an interest in God by focusing on him first when we pray. He told us to welcome God into our lives by saying, "May your Kingdom come. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven."

Your mother probably never told you precisely when, in a conversation, it was proper to talk about yourself – since most people don't need to be prompted to talk about themselves. But the Lord's prayer shows us when it is proper to talk about ourselves in prayer. As soon as Jesus prays for God's will to be done, he requests help, "Give us our food for today." Once we have shown respect to God, he doesn't mind if we go ahead and start asking for favors.

In fact, the entire second half of the Lord's prayer is devoted to asking God for favors. And more words are spent asking for things than are focused on God. That's because Daddy God wants us to ask for things. He loves to give gifts to us, his children.

So go ahead and spend your day asking for the things you and your family and friends need. Ask God to bless and protect the president and our troops. Pray for the needs you see on the news. Just don't do it before you've spend some time thinking about God and telling him how awesome you think he is.