

MEN'S TUESDAY SERIES

TEACH US TO PRAY

FALL 2025



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TEACH US TO PRAY

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SERIES SCHEDULE

Our Father

Session One, September 9th: Church

Session Two, September 16th: Small Groups



Your Kingdom Come

Session Three, September 23rd: Church

Session Four, September 30th: Small Groups



Give Us This Day

Session Five, October 7th: Church

Session Six, October 14th: Small Groups



Forgive Us

Session Seven, October 21st: Church

Session Eight, October 28th: Small Groups



Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Session Nine, November 4th: Church

Session Ten, November 11th: Small Groups

Matthew 6:5–15

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

INTRODUCTION

What would you expect a lesson from Jesus Himself on prayer to be like? What would the one who is both human and a member of the Trinity, who is the most comfortable in the Father's presence, who is all-wise and without sin, say about how to pray? What Jesus gave us was shockingly brief. He did not explain prayer in a series of intricate lessons. He actually explained very little at all, instead demonstrating a template for prayer that is short and sweet. We are left, with the help of the rest of Scripture, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and one another's help, to work out the rich meanings of the prayer.

This has traditionally been called "The Lord's Prayer" or "The Our Father" or even "The Disciples' Prayer", but over the course of this study you will make it your prayer. Each session will give you discussion questions as well as prayer prompts to be practiced during the week. Challenge yourself to use these even if you have a standard prayer routine. They will help you experience what you are studying.

Two Versions

There are two versions of this prayer in the gospels: one in Matthew and one in Luke. Matthew's is slightly longer and is the one we will look at in this study. Matthew's is part of the Sermon on the Mount, while Luke's comes later in Jesus' ministry and is prompted by the disciples asking Jesus to teach them to pray. This is then a prayer that Jesus taught on more than one occasion. The disciples had been present for the Sermon on the Mount, but had likely not remembered well-enough or possibly believed that there was more Jesus would teach them, beyond what the common crowds were given. Instead, Jesus repeated the prayer model to them, even simplifying it the second time (Luke 11:1-4).

Doxology

Matthew's version ends in a "doxology", a concluding statement declaring God's glory. "For yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever, amen." This part of the text is not in most of the earliest handwritten copies, or manuscripts, and does not appear in many English translations of Matthew. It was common at the time to end a prayer with a statement like this, and likely was added to some manuscripts for that reason. The doxology will not be included in this study, but that does not mean that it is not a true statement about God and His glory.

Eschatology

It is not uncommon to find interpretations that this is really Jesus' way of teaching His disciples to pray and prepare for the End Times. The idea is that His Kingdom is coming fully when Christ returns and we are to pray in anticipation of that. However, that is neither the context nor the full content of the prayer. Jesus gave it in the midst of a sermon on our needs and worries, our sinful state, and God's better ways. It focuses on more than the Kingdom and more than the future. We can pray this way with an eye to both our lives here-and-now and for the future.

Formula or Pattern

The fact that there are two versions of this prayer tells us that it was meant as a pattern for prayer but not as a formula that, if repeated word-for-word, keeps us religiously correct. Jesus told us to "pray like this" but not to pray exactly this. The Lord's prayer has historically been made into a magic incantation rather than a teaching on how to pray.

On the other hand, the fact that Jesus repeated this basic pattern shows that the wording is important and He is serious about us following this prayer in some form. In this study, we will look at the prayer closely and examine the words Jesus chose. Somewhere between simply reciting magic words and praying however we feel is best, is Jesus' pattern for prayer.

CHAPTER ONE

OUR FATHER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

The “Lord’s Prayer” is often referred to by only its opening words as “The Our Father”. With these two words Jesus responded to the disciples’ request for a lesson by sweeping them into heaven, making them follow Him into the throne room of God Almighty.

“Our”

Jesus several times addressed God the Father directly as His Father, but not here. Here He is teaching the disciples how to pray. His first lesson is that God is ours - we share Him. You do not have a monopoly on God’s attention or affection. You have no special, unique reason why He should love you, nor do you understand more about Him than many others do.

James tells us that true religion is to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). This is part of having God for our Father. In the Bible’s eyes, being a child entails being like your father. When God is our Father, we are like Him, and therefore unlike those who hate Him and His ways. However, Jesus teaches us also that thinking of

Our Father

oneself as God's favorite is to be far from His heart (see Luke 18:9-14). As long as our relationship with God is about being better than or separate from others more than about being connected to Him and His people, we are missing what Jesus says here. God is our Father, not yours alone. He is equally the Father of your most obnoxious spiritual sibling.

On the other hand, you have your unique relationship with God and He cherishes you and delights when you are in His presence. Jesus' words, "our Father", do not diminish that – they expand it. We can see two ways this opening phrase takes our relationship with God to a higher level. First, we find God in community. God is triune – three persons in eternally perfect relationship. Because we are made in His image, we are also fundamentally designed for eternally perfect relationship with Him and others. Our relationship with God is not separate from our relationship with others. We can see this across the Bible, especially in the commands of the Old Testament which seamlessly shift from God to neighbors, family, and enemies. This relationship is why Jesus summarized the whole law into His top two commandments – to love God and our neighbor.

Relationship with others is essential for getting to know our Father. As we grow in being His children, our illusions about Him are challenged by others while some of our beautiful suspicions are confirmed. We learn that He is good from others who have experienced His goodness. Some of our doubts of His grace are overcome when those

Our Father

who know Him well relay His heart to us. We learn to see God through the eyes of the community of believers as God binds individuals and entire groups together as one family (Eph. 3:15). It is our collective relationship with God that forms us as the Church. Whether locally with a few believers who challenge and encourage us, in whose experiences and personalities we see new aspects of God's character, or globally through the eyes and values of a culture different from our own, we explore God in community.

Second, we share a Father with Jesus Himself. Jesus is not simply teaching the disciples that they should see God as their shared Father, but that we are adopted into Jesus' relationship with the Father. Jesus is the only true begotten Son, but we are all welcomed in – formerly household slaves, now beloved children (Rom. 8:15). He is the only true firstborn with all the rights of inheritance, but we are given shared status as the “assembly of the firstborn” with the same rights under the Father (Heb. 12:23). God is your Father just as He is Jesus' Father.

“Father”

We should not miss the offensive power of calling God “Father.” God as Father was used as an analogy in the

Our Father

Old Testament rather than as a way of directly addressing God.¹

God is our Father in that He relates to us and is our creator, protector, provider, law-giver, and source of wisdom. This is His very nature – it will never change, or He would not be who He is. So the primary way Jesus tells us how to relate to God is as His children. Tim Keller points out that this is the very reason we can approach God at all and expect to be heard. While the pagans, mentioned just before Jesus lays out this model prayer, expected to be heard because of the repetition of their words, we have a far better reason: God is our Father and we are His children and for this alone we are always heard.²

This is behind the practice of praying in Jesus' name. We use this now as the "proper" ending to a prayer, but it really is a posture of prayer. We pray in Jesus' name and not ours because He is the Beloved Son, the Firstborn, the only Righteous One. We pray using His account and are welcomed into the Father's presence just as though we were Christ. His bringing us in to share a Father with Him defines how we pray and why.

¹ D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 169.

² Tim Keller, Gospel in Life Podcast, "Basis of Prayer: 'Our Father'" 2/19/2025.

“who is in heaven”

God is everywhere, of course (Ps. 139:7-12). We can pray to Him anywhere. But in some sense, He is separated from us. He is specially present in His throne room in heaven in a way that He is not present with us. God the Son came to be with us and will be again one day. But the Father is said to dwell in “unapproachable light” (1 Tim. 6:16). He is mysterious and somewhat frightening, and like Moses ascending into the clouds and thunder on Sinai to hear from Him, prayer takes us into God’s sacred presence. He is our Holy Father – both unimaginably powerful in holiness and intimately concerned with us.

In another sense, where God defines heaven. In prayer, we ascend into the same thunderous smoke as Moses, the same inexpressible vision of the throne as Ezekiel and Daniel. Prayer is our acceptance of the Father’s welcome extended through Christ. This is the reason that Paul says that as we experience God’s presence, we, like Moses, have the glowing faces that come from intimate encounter with His glory (2 Cor. 3:18). It is the relationship with our Father that inspires us to pray.

“hallowed be your name”

This is a rich phrase in the Lord’s prayer. It is a request bordering on a demand, often mistaken for a statement. In the Greek of the New Testament, the sense of the word “hallowed” is imperative. This means that Jesus is

Our Father

telling the Father to hallow – to make holy- His name. This phrase has usually been read as a statement of praise – telling God that His name is holy. However, like the rest of the prayer, this is a request. Jesus is teaching us to ask God the Father to cause His name to be held sacred.

As an imperative, the request is a strong one. An imperative is a verb of command. It is not the only one we will see in the Lord's prayer, but we might miss its force. It is the equivalent of telling the Almighty what to do. We pray this way often, probably without thinking much about it. Each time we say, "God, do this or that," we are praying with an imperative force. Jesus models that this is right, but we should learn not to do it lightly.

This prayer is that God would cause His name to be held rightly. We should make this request first regarding our own hearts. Before we pray that our family, neighbors, or enemies learn to exalt the Lord, we should ask that the Spirit humble us and draw us back to the Lord.

If you have righteous indignation toward those who would profane God's name and reputation, you are correct. David was incensed that a Philistine would mock God through His people. Jesus zealously overturned the tables of those who profaned His Father's House. But David and Jesus also knew where victory came from – it was God who would vindicate His reputation. Sinclair Ferguson has been quoted to say, "We best defend the Lord's glory by speaking first to Him about unbelieving men rather than speaking first about Him to unbelieving men." Those who do not know that God is holy do not know Him. They are slaves to

Our Father

sin and not free to obey God. We are right to be upset when our Father is maligned, but we turn first to Him, asking Him in prayer to cause His name to be held sacred. This means, ultimately, two things: that He would both invite in the sinner as He invited us, and that He would judge those who persist in rebelling against Him and oppressing others. In the end, every knee will bow to Christ, willingly or not (Phil. 2:9-11).

As Christ acts on our behalf, so we act on His. We represent God. What we do to hallow or profane His name – His reputation – is our first focus. Taking the Lord's name in vain goes beyond using His name to curse, it means bearing His identity dishonorably. By asking Him to hallow His name, we are asking that He would make us vessels of honor to represent Him well (Rom. 9:21; 2 Tim. 2:21). We are asking that He call people to Himself that they may bask in His goodness. We are asking that He overcome those who hate Him and destroy His people. We are asking that He free people from bondage. Ask that of Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to pray to God as “our Father”? If you are a father, how does that help you with this?
2. How fully do you relate to God as your Father? What holds you back?
3. In what ways does God being in heaven shape how we approach Him in prayer? In what ways does His being present in and among us shape our approach?
4. What are some possible specific meanings of “hallowed be your name”? What might you pray about in this?

Our Father

5. What are some reasons that Jesus teaches us to pray with “imperative force”?

6. What is one thing you can do differently this week to pray more in line with Jesus’ teaching here?

Prayer Prompts

- Spend a little time contemplating God as your Father. Ask Him to show you His love for you. Ask Him to train you to be His child.
- Try praying once starting each sentence with “you” rather than “I.” Use this to root your prayer in who God is. Reflect on the difference it makes.
- Write down some areas in your heart that God’s name needs to be glorified. Take them to the Lord, knowing He is gracious.
- Write down some areas in those around you, or the world at large, that need to honor His name. Pray for them and remember that God is the one who can cause His name to be hallowed.
- Ask the Lord to work in your heart and relationship with Him as you continue through this study.

CHAPTER TWO

YOUR KINGDOM COME

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

“your Kingdom come”

There are any number of themes in the Bible’s storyline of God redeeming a lost world and the Kingdom is certainly a key one. God does not simply rescue an individual, making them right with him. Nor does He stop at healing relationships between Himself and the sinner and between that sinner and his neighbors. God’s plan was always to rule with us. You were made for far more than salvation. Salvation is a means to an end, and anything less than that end is less than God’s full purpose for us. The Old Testament carries forward the story of the human kingdom designed to rule on God’s behalf and bring goodness to the whole world. But that kingdom repeatedly failed until it was eventually ended by God Himself. Jesus came as the only true and good King who, after He rose from the dead, said that all things have been put under his feet therefore we are to bring all peoples under His teaching. The Bible ends with the prediction of God’s perfect Kingdom

Your Kingdom Come

established forever with Him sitting at its center, arrayed by all peoples enjoying Him.

We cannot have a full description of the gospel without including the Kingdom of God being established on earth. If we were to look at Jesus' parables, we would find that many of them are given to describe a Kingdom that is at once foreign and familiar. It is so unlike any kingdom we know that Jesus has to give repeated analogies to help us better comprehend it. At the same time, it is so familiar in our souls that when we begin to get a glimpse of it, we can only feel that somehow we have lived in it before. It is the place for which we are homesick without yet having been there, a place underneath our nostalgia and fantasies. If we were to follow our deepest desires to their end, we would find that our hopes for peace, justice, abundance, relationship, and meaning are only fulfilled in God's perfect Kingdom plan.

As the gospel is too limited without some understanding of the Kingdom, so prayer is too limited when it ends at the boundaries of your own life. Jesus began His model prayer by focusing attention on God and His glory – the greatest expansion of focus possible. Then swiftly He moves only one level down to focus prayer on God's broad Kingdom. Essentially, this includes all of human history as it moves towards God's plan. Our prayers should likewise be rooted in who God is and focused on His work in our world. This makes our world seem at the same time larger and smaller. It becomes larger in that we pray

Your Kingdom Come

for people in places we may never have been. We become concerned for others far beyond our own experience. It becomes smaller when we are transformed by traveling through God's world in prayer. Just like flying to a distant continent makes the world feel not nearly as large as it is when looking at a map, praying with a Kingdom focus brings the whole world into access. We begin to see it from above like God does. Asking God to bring his Kingdom transforms not only the way I see the world; it transforms me.

There is a helpful theological term that explains much of the way redemption plays out in the Bible. We can say that many things in the Bible are “already/not-yet”. This means that something might be legally, representationally, or partially in place but not yet what it is fully intended to become. An example from our culture would be having a mortgage. When asked, we can say that we own a home because we do not rent it, but in reality we are far from fully owning the home because of the mortgage. We legally own it already, but do not yet fully own it outright. The Bible has many examples of this idea, and it is key to understanding the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom is, as we see here in the Lord's prayer, already in place fully in heaven. There are several throne room visions in the Old Testament prophets in which people glimpse God seated in His glory, ruling and reigning from heaven. However, God's plan is to bring His Kingdom rule to earth. Jesus says that the Kingdom of God is among

Your Kingdom Come

us and also says that it is coming in the future. It was among them, because Jesus was among them as its King. He had a small group of initial followers who He promised would be rulers with Him over Israel one day. As His followers expanded into the Church, Jesus said that we would rule with Him and judge the angels.

In the meantime, we live between Jesus's first coming to announce the Kingdom and his second coming to establish the Kingdom. Like Adam and Eve, we will rule with Him as His representatives on earth. We are like an occupying army in a fallen and sinful world that still rebels against the King. We know that when He fully comes into His rule we will be found on the right side of history, and those who would not let him conquer them will be judged. While we are here, we find ways to further establish His Kingdom on earth.

We must keep in mind that Jesus is modeling here a request to God the Father. Ultimately it is He who brings the Kingdom. We, His soldiers and subjects, live in and seek to extend God's reign, but only He has put all things under Christ's feet (Matthew 28:18). When we pray, we need to ask God to establish His rule on earth and have the humility to know that we can only take part in that, not bring it about. Prayer is our first and best move in bringing the Kingdom to earth.

“your will be done”

Theologian Graeme Goldsworthy has defined the Kingdom of God as God's people in God's place under God's authority.³ Asking for God's Kingdom to come must involve asking for His will to be done. While we know that one day Jesus will reign completely and forever on earth, we ask now for those glimpses of His Kingdom when that which is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise (Phil. 4:8) descends from heaven into our lives.

In contrast, our hearts are afflicted with the spirit of Babel. We pray like the ancient tower-builders, laboring hard to make a name for ourselves and establish our will and reign on earth. If God's Kingdom is about His will being done, our counterfeit kingdoms are about our own desires. God's Kingdom brings wholeness and richness as it draws His people together under His rule. Our kingdoms are lonely places. We crawl up on a throne too big for us and try to coerce all around into being our jesters, knights, laborers, nobles, and queens. We expect them to fulfil our desires and expectations. All of this only to find that they are busy building their own kingdoms. So we try to fulfill these roles ourselves, becoming lonely and ineffective

³ Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom: A Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Paternoster, 1994), 53–54.

Your Kingdom Come

pretenders to the throne. Praying for the Kingdom first requires submission to the true King.

There are three Hebrew words we should know to understand God's Kingdom. We might translate them as peace, righteousness, and justice, but the concepts overlap. Peace, in Hebrew is *shalom*, a word that includes the ideas of wholeness and well-being. Shalom is present when people are healthy, cared for, and flourishing. *Tzadekah*, or righteousness, is present when the people of the Kingdom are living in obedience to God's ways. It involves right relationships between people. *Mishpat*, or justice, is when God's people, particularly those in authority, are acting with fairness and right judgment. These three work in tandem so that we really cannot have any version of God's Kingdom without all of them. However, in our human wisdom, we often focus on and pray for one over the others. *Shalom* cannot be prayed for alone. Because of our sin, those in authority must work against wickedness (exercising *mishpat*) in order for there to be space for people to thrive in peace. But if we pray for only *mishpat*, we will tend to ask God to use His judgment and that of human governments against those we fear or hate. We will weaponize prayer so that it targets our enemies. If we pray only for *tzadekah*, we will ask God to make everybody behave themselves for no other reason than that it seems comfortable for us and simply the right thing for them to do. We will ask that God changes behavior over hearts. Praying that God's Kingdom comes in our lives, into our cities, and fully in the future, requires that we allow God to

Your Kingdom Come

expand our understanding of the Kingdom as we pray. It also requires submitting to His ways in our own lives before the lives of others.

“on earth as it is in heaven”

When we are young, we explore our world wide-eyed and eager. As we get older, we might become cynical and take a dim view of the world, focusing our efforts on only what is immediately around us. Some will become so distraught with this place that they cannot wait to leave it and be in heaven. While disillusionment with a fallen world is understandable, it can forget that Jesus came into our world to redeem it and will return to conquer it. Further, He will renew it to reign on it. Our prayer for the Kingdom should be that earth becomes a glimpse of heaven. In heaven, God's will is always done - all is right there. Jesus is teaching us to ask that God uses us to bring heaven down, just as He did. Ultimately, heaven is about God's presence and the church is His current presence on earth.

All of this may seem high and ideal, and in a sense it is. It may seem like an impossible expectation. How can we really be agents of God's Kingdom when our families don't follow our leadership, our co-workers have no integrity, we are increasingly disgusted in our world, and nothing seems to budge. This is why Jesus came – because we could not drag earth up to heaven, it had to descend. This is why He taught us to pray for the coming of the

Your Kingdom Come

Kingdom – because what is impossible for you is not for Him. Ask Him.

Discussion Questions

1. What aspects of Jesus coming into our world are most powerful to you?
2. In what ways do you seek your own kingdom rather than God's?
3. How difficult is it to submit your kingdom to God? What helps?
4. How does knowing God will establish the Kingdom fully one day change the way you see things now?

Your Kingdom Come

5. Are your prayers centered mostly around yourself, your world, or a combination?

6. What are some actions you could take to bring the Kingdom into your sphere of influence? What is something you will pray for to bring this about?

Prayer Prompts

- Confess areas your heart has tried to build your own Kingdom and ask the Lord to make things right.
- Take a few of the most distressing things you see in the world to the Lord. Entrust them to Him and ask Him to bring His Kingdom into these situations.
- Ask Him to give you a divine appointment with someone entrenched in the world and to use you as a light.
- Ask the Lord to teach you something of shalom, mishpat, and tzadekah.
- Pray for someone in church or civic authority. Include someone you respect and someone you do not.
- Pray for a specific injustice in the world that weighs heavy on your heart.

CHAPTER THREE

GIVE US THIS DAY

“Give us”

In the first session, we saw that Jesus teaches us to pray in such a way as to nearly command God. This may sound like the words of a spoiled child. There are, of course, places in the Bible where we see people cry out humbly and desperately to God. We do not need to take Jesus here to be doing away with that - He will later pray desperately and submissively to the Father before the crucifixion. But here there is again a certain forcefulness that He is teaching us. A spoiled child believes that a request is deserved, while a humble child can actually honor a parent with a bold request. There is a story of Alexander the Great that, whether true or fictional, helps us understand how we honor God with large requests. It is said that Alexander offered to pay for the wedding of the daughter of one of his generals. The general came back to Alexander with an outrageous price tag for the event. Alexander's other aides scolded the general for abusing Alexander's generosity. But Alexander stopped them, saying that by asking for so much that general honored him. His request implied that Alexander was both greatly wealthy and very generous. In the same way, our greatest requests, asked with humble confidence, honor the Lord.

Give Us This Day

Paul Miller and David Powlinson write, “If we ask nothing of God, we are left adrift in an evil world. Such a position may feel spiritual because it seems unselfish, but it is unbiblical because it separates the real world of our desires from God’s world. The kingdom can’t come because it is floating.”⁴ We must ask for big things of God; indeed He has told us to. If we are dependent on God for everything, than in some sense everything is a big request. The smallest grace of God is to us a great miracle.

Jesus also taught that our good Father desires to give us His good gifts (Matt. 7:7-11). The first lie in the Garden of Eden was that God is withholding something we ought to have, that God is not truly good enough to give us what we need. We must therefore take it for ourselves and in that way we will be like Him. Instead, Jesus tells us that we who are unlike Him, who are wicked, cannot give, much less take, what is best for us. Not asking God for our needs is closer to the spoiled child than it is to the honoring child. It is connected back to the first lie that says God cannot be trusted with our needs.

⁴ Paul E. Miller and David Powlison, *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2017), 106.

“this day our daily bread”

Here Jesus instructs us to boldly ask for simple and immediate needs. To those who first heard this from Him, daily bread would be very literal whereas we take it often more figuratively. Many -though not all- reading this today have more than a single day's wages and needs provided for us. We can pause at this point in the Lord's prayer and thank Him if that is the case in our lives. But it may be that you have experienced, or are now experiencing, a situation in which each day you must come to God asking for provision, for enough sales, delivery orders, or for the phone to ring with work for the day. Jesus sees this and, as a handyman whose father likely had died, and then as an itinerant rabbi, understood it in a way most cannot. After asking for the Kingdom to come, Jesus teaches the poor to ask the King for their needs.

If, for you, asking for your daily bread is more figurative, that is, your physical needs are met with some extra stored up, this part of the prayer is no less pertinent to you. We can expand the idea of daily bread in the physical sense to daily needs. When we come to this part of the prayer, we can ask ourselves what we need for today: safety, wisdom, strength, a solution to a difficult problem, etc. Bring all of these to the Lord. In the morning as you look out at your day, clearly state your need to Him. Try to focus on just today.

Give Us This Day

We are called to pray for big needs, knowing nothing is too difficult for God. But we also are invited to pray for small things. Bring your simple request to the Lord. Go ahead and pray something that would never make it on a public prayer list – God won't turn you away.

If you are a father, you know the power of one of your children asking you for something they need. You are compelled toward meeting these needs, but better than you anticipating the request and coming through unasked, you know that there is an intimacy when your child approaches you to ask. This is only a glimpse of how God sees you when you move toward Him with a request.

Discussion Questions

1. How ready are you to ask God for big requests or for small ones?
2. What is a daily need or two you can take to the Lord?
3. Why do you think Jesus would teach us about our needs after addressing God as our Father?

4. What are some differences between praying for daily needs and praying more generally or for the future?

5. What is a time you saw God come through on something you desperately needed from Him?

Prayer Prompts

- Practice praying for just the day at hand. Observe how this changes your prayer focus.
- Take a big request to the Lord. Be straightforward with what you are asking, but understand that He will do what is best.
- Practice praying for small things this week.
- Pray for the needs of others. Ask yourself what their daily needs may be – or ask them.

Give Us This Day

- Thank the Lord for supplying your needs and answering your prayers.

CHAPTER FOUR

FORGIVE US

It has long been said that the purpose of journalism is to afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted. This goes double for the gospel. This part of the Lord's prayer is the only phrase that Jesus revisits with commentary afterward. It must be of vital importance to Jesus and to how we stand before God in prayer.

“Forgive”

Guilt and shame over sin are innate – a part of our nature that we cannot shake no matter how we try to avoid them. Our culture has developed a simple fix to get around feelings of guilt. It simply tries to take things off the bad list and put them on the good list. The hope is that by calling things good that were once condemned, all will be well and people will be free. Of course, this does not deal with our guilt because it assumes we have none. N.T. Wright comments on this part of the prayer, saying,

Once you replace morality with the philosophy that says ‘if it feels good, do it’, there isn’t anything to forgive; if you still feel hurt by something, our culture suggests that you should simply retreat into your

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private world and pretend it didn't happen. In that sort of world, I don't need God to forgive me, and I don't need to forgive anybody else, either. Or, if people do still think about forgiveness, they seldom get beyond the small-scale private forgiveness of small-scale private sins. They hope God will forgive their peccadillos, and they try at least to smile benignly on their neighbours' follies. Instead of genuine forgiveness, our generation has been taught the vague notion of 'tolerance'. This is, at best, a low-grade parody of forgiveness. At worst, it's a way of sweeping the real issues in human life under the carpet.⁵

The Bible clearly tells us that if anyone says he is without sin, he is calling God a liar (1 John 1:10). In order to genuinely pray this part of Jesus' model prayer, we have to be honest about ourselves. We must come to terms with our sin – no easy thing.

What may be fairly easy is to ask God to forgive particular sins we could name quickly. We might go back over our day and identify things we have done that we

⁵ Tom Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1996), 50–51.

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know displease Him. While there is nothing wrong with this, discipleship with Christ involves following Him into the deeper recesses of our hearts. He will take us beyond our surface behavior into the darker motives underneath. We must ask ourselves why we have done what we have done. Somewhere in the shadows, we will find our hearts snarling at God's glory, wishing it were our own. We will find our eyes blind to His beauty, staring at ourselves instead. We are trying to pull Him off His throne because we do not trust Him to do the job. We likely do not even trust Him to forgive us and help us with our sin. This is why we need to pray for His forgiveness. Like a child coming home from the beach, finding more and more sand as he washes, we will continue to find that sin dwells in our hearts beyond what we realize. Confession and forgiveness do not end when we originally call to Him for salvation, but continue as more and more areas of our hearts are brought under His rule yet again.

But Jesus would not give us this part of the prayer unless there were an implicit promise that God will answer it. Jesus is telling us to pray for forgiveness because God will forgive. This is why we are both afflicted and comforted by the gospel. The Lord does not shy away from showing us our sin, but neither did Jesus shy away from the cross.

“us”

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Again here, we see that all the pronouns in the Lord's prayer are plural. It is always about the community, never about oneself alone. We could think here of all places that this would be an individual prayer. When we are talking about forgiveness for sin, would we not expect to represent only ourselves? But Jesus continues to speak collectively.

In fact, we do not even represent ourselves when it comes to sin. Instead, Jesus represents us as our High Priest and sacrifice (Heb. 7:27). Further, as we become like Him, we take on His roles and ministries, so that we also represent one another before the Father. This is not to say that we to pay the price for someone else's sin like Jesus did, but we can go before Him in prayer on behalf of sinners (compare with Jesus in 1 John 2:2 with our role in 1 John 5:16).

Further, we need to see our sins and the sins of our brothers and sisters in the Lord as connected. We represent one another and what we do will bring shame or honor to the name of the Church. Because Jesus did not distance Himself from us, we cannot distance ourselves from each other. As difficult as it may be for us to get used to, we should take notice that Jesus refers to sin as “ours” for a reason.

“our debts”

The word “debts” might be a little confusing. This is not referring to actual monetary debt, but generally to sin. However, debt is one of the ways that we can view sin. It is a debt we can never pay. Labor trafficking, one of the

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modern forms of slavery, traps people in a cycle of unpayable debt. They are forced to work to pay off debt incurred with an employer in order to pay for room and board or tools or food or transportation. People end up owing money in order to work and then owing money as a result of working. Sin is not very different in that we strive to overcome it and in doing so we believe that we are like God, powerful over sin and the ones who define right and wrong. This only incurs more sin on our part. We become its slaves forever, unless we are bound to Christ (Rom. 6:16-18). He frees us from being slaves, and adopts us as sons (Rom. 8:15). When you pray about sin, remember that you have a Savior.

“as we also have forgiven our debtors”

There are three ways to look at the meaning of this phrase, based on some technical linguistic matters that are beyond this study. This can be translated from Greek as, “as we also forgive” or “as we have forgiven.” And “as” here can mean “because, in the same way, or while.” We can briefly look at each interpretation.

- 1.) We are saved by our forgiving others. Our salvation is dependent on whether we forgive. This seems to be the simplest way to take Jesus’ words at face-value.
- 2.) We are restored after salvation. Jesus is talking about post-salvation confessions in which we come

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back to a right relationship with the Lord. If believers harbor unforgiveness toward others, we cannot currently be in a healthy relationship with Christ.

3.) We are not saved if we do not know God's forgiveness which we extend to others. Forgiving others is an outflow of being forgiven by God. If we do not forgive, it is evidence that we do not know God's forgiveness of us, which means we are not saved, which means we are not forgiven.

While the first interpretation seems like the plain meaning of Jesus' words, it does not line up with the rest of Scripture on how we are saved – by grace through faith. The second is not as far from the Bible's teaching and we do come back into right relationship with God after sliding away, Jesus seems to be speaking more strongly than about the day-to-day quality of relationship with His people. He seems to be speaking of justification and the forgiveness of sin overall – He certainly puts a heavy weight on this part of the prayer. The third interpretation seems most preferable.

Everything we do is in response to what we believe about God. This section of the Lord's prayer is incredibly counter-cultural, even counter-human nature. Everything around us and in us says that we should pay back what has been done to us. We should respect only those who respect us – we will never be taken advantage of, or we could not respect ourselves. At best, we forgive because of what it

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will do for us. We are told that if we remain bitter, the only person we are hurting is ourself. But this is forgiveness only for my good and not the reason Jesus tells us to forgive. Instead, our forgiving is always linked to the Father's forgiveness. We forgive because we are forgiven – how could we not (Matt. 18:21-35; Lk. 7:47; Eph. 4:32)? We forgive because we have been forgiven and we cannot assume we know God's forgiveness if we will not forgive.

You may have had major sins committed against you. God's justice never makes light of wrongs. In fact, over and over again in Scripture He reveals the full heinousness of human souls. Forgiveness does not mean minimizing things – it means setting aside our right to retribution, leaving judgment with God, and deciding to not count another's sins against them. It is knowing that you are seen like Jesus before the Father so that you can see the offender as you see yourself.

Discussion Questions

1. What is a time someone forgave you or did not give you the punishment you deserved? What did you learn?

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2. In what ways does knowing God as Father help you understand His forgiveness?

3. Look up these passages: Matt. 18:21-35; Lk. 7:47; Eph. 4:32. What insights do they give you about forgiveness?

4. How well do you receive and give forgiveness?

6. Who is one person in your life you need to extend forgiveness to? Is anything holding you back?

Prayer Prompts

- Thank God for His forgiveness for you.
- Ask Him to forgive the current state of your heart. Go beyond what you do to why you do it. What is beneath your sin, at the level of your relationship with God?
- Pray for the good of those whom you see as enemies.
- Ask God to heal you from the effects of others' sins.

CHAPTER FIVE

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

“Lead us not into temptation”

There may be areas of the Lord’s prayer that are foreign to us. The Kingdom can be a fuzzy idea that we have to grapple with. Daily bread may seem to some to be more of a metaphor than a literal reality. But not temptation. We share a common enemy, a shadow disguised as shimmering beauty. The book of Genesis tells us how we first walked into sin, leading the world under a debilitating curse. Adam and Eve had a moral neutrality, with the ability to obey or disobey. But a dark enemy with a simple lie was enough to push them over the edge.

The Bible describes two types of temptation, or rather two sources. We can be tempted by our own flesh (James 1:13-14), or by the devil and his demons.⁶ We should not underestimate either one – both are deadly. When you are being stalked by an evil power, you cannot drop your guard. Something is always lurking for us. On the other hand, it is not less alarming to know that we have a

⁶ James Montgomery Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 201-202.

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sinister enemy right here – always walking around with us. We wake up and go to sleep in the presence of evil - our own flesh haunts us.

The word “temptation” here can also be “testing.” James tells us that God does not tempt anyone, but will He test us? God famously tested Abraham (Gen. 22), so is this section of the prayer designed to ask God not to do the same to us? One way to look at this is that Jesus is referring not so much to individual temptations to sin, but to the ultimate testing or tribulation of judgement that would fall on Jesus Himself. He took Israel’s and our ultimate test, let it destroy Him, and passed through it.⁷ We can pray then with surety and thanks that we will not have to go through the same judgment. God does test us in a sense, but ultimately Jesus has passed our test and traded His grade with ours.

We should remember that even Jesus was tempted. Temptation is not in itself sin. In fact, we can see that He became a man so that He could be tempted and come through faithful and obedient. While He did not have a sinful fleshly nature to tempt Him, He was certainly tempted at one of His lowest physical states by the devil

⁷ “Aspiration: Lead Us” Gospel in Life, Tim Keller, 2/28/2025. Originally recorded 5/28/1999.

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himself (Luke 4). Jesus took on temptation without any failure or pressure valve. He was tempted to the fullest degree for us. More than this, while the Bible is clear that God does not lead us into temptation, God the Holy Spirit was the one who lead Jesus into the wilderness.⁸ But Jesus received a test we will not in order to pass the test we could not.

So why bother praying for God to not lead us into temptation if He does not tempt anyone? This is not to be read as implying that if we did not pray, God would lead us into temptation or testing. The prayer implies a request that God would lead us in the way we ought to go (Ps. 139:23-24). God will never lead us somewhere we should not be – that is what temptation does. If anything, the prayer is almost rhetorical – God will not do this, so we can confidently pray that He will do the opposite.

“but deliver us from evil.”

This can be translated from the original Greek as, “from the evil one” and sometimes is. Whichever way we look at it, this extends the request. Not only are we asking that God will not do something – lead us into temptation or testing – but that He will do something – deliver us. We not only need rescue from sin when we originally put our

⁸ Ibid.

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trust in Christ; we need rescue from the ongoing evil that surrounds and indwells us. As mentioned above, the devil is defeated in a sense yet he continues to prowl around like a hungry lion (1 Pt. 5:8), looking for the weak and sick.

Traditionally the Church has said that we have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Any and all of these are included in the “evil” we need to be delivered from. It is out there and in here, and our weapons are flimsy at best. Willpower, discipline, distraction, and habits all fall short. We need a Savior, and He is teaching us to call out for Him.

Evil sets up a counter-kingdom. God’s Kingdom is all about wholeness and flourishing; about justice, righteousness, and peace. The world, flesh, and devil are building a kingdom of selfishness, violence, and fear. When we pray to be delivered from evil, it goes beyond ourselves – remember that Jesus teaches us to pray “us” and not “me” here. It is a prayer that piggybacks on “your Kingdom come, your will be done.” We are asking for a change in our lives and those around us, even as evil swirls everywhere we go.

Doxology

As mentioned above, some early manuscripts of Matthew included a “doxology” at the end of the Lord’s prayer: “For yours is the Kingdom and the glory and the power forever, amen.” It is not included in all English

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versions because it is not found in enough of the early manuscripts to seem to be original to the text. But it is in some translations and would have been a common way to end a prayer in the Judaism of Jesus' time.⁹ While we are not including it here as its own section of the study, we can take a moment to look briefly at the doxology within this section.

If original to the prayer, this phrase is rooting our requests in God's nature of power and goodness. We ask these things because He is the Answer. We expect from Him because He is Goodness. We ask with a confident hope because He has already overcome the world within which we still scrabble and weep.

The doxology humbles us – after all, it is a statement of God's glory, in light of which we are invited not to burn, but to glow. We respond to God's glory with the humility to bow and make our requests. We also have the confidence to stand up and draw near to the Father (see Heb. 4:16). Ask God because He is greatly glorious. Ask because He is good. Do not ask because you think you are glorious.

⁹ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 141.

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The doxology takes us beyond the present. The power and the glory are God's forever. When we pray, we are dipping a ladle into the eternal. We ask the unchanging God to change things. We ask the God who sees everything all at once for guidance. We ask for things that one day will not matter like they do now and for things that will live on forever. The Lord knows that both are important for us, and He teaches us to pray for daily bread as well as the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The eternally powerful God is with us to answer us.

Therefore, pray like this.

Discussion Questions

1. When was a time that you felt swindled? What did you learn about temptation?

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2. When we think of temptation, we often consider areas like lust or greed. What are some more subtle areas we may overlook as temptations? Can you identify any in your life?
3. In what ways does God help us through temptation? (Look at 1 Cor. 10:12-13).
4. What differences does it make that Jesus was tempted and tried in our place?
5. In what ways does knowing God's glory and power affect the way you pray?

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6. What is the main area of growth in prayer that you are focusing on at the end of this study?

Prayer Prompts

- Confess areas you recognize evil in your own heart.
- Ask for protection from evil in all its sources – the world, your flesh, and the devil.
- Consider how Jesus was tempted in the same way you are and was obedient on your behalf.
- Present yourself to the Lord humbly – physically kneel if you can. Then try lifting your face toward heaven or stand in God’s presence, knowing you can come with confidence through His grace.

CONCLUSION

As we finish this study of the Lord's prayer, please keep in mind what was said at the beginning: the prayer is not meant to be magical wording that we need to stick to and repeat. On the other hand, Jesus taught it to His followers more than once for a reason. This is a very important template for prayer, but not a magic formula. This study is successful if you go forward with a better understanding of what is in this prayer and if it better shapes the way you pray. Often, our goal to improve in prayer is to pray more, but Jesus here prays very briefly. We know that He often prayed on His own for extended periods, but that is not what He is teaching here. He is not trying to push us to simply pray more, but to go deeper, be more dependent on God and connected to His people.

With Jesus, things are often simple but not easy. The Lord's prayer is almost shockingly simple when we first come to it. We probably would have expected much more in a prayer lesson from Jesus Himself. But in another way, it is rich with meaning, shifting between mundane matters and cosmic concerns.

Perhaps the primary thing to see in the prayer is how it takes us beyond ourselves in a vertical and a horizontal way. Vertically, it forces us to see our need for

the Lord's help. It is a confidently desperate request of Almighty God by His children. Horizontally, it is persistently communal, never saying "I" or "my", only "we", "us", and "our". Pray is indeed a sacredly intimate thing between one person and God, but it is never only that. We left being alone behind when we were baptized into the Church. Even when alone, we now pray as part of God's people – with and for spiritual siblings whose whispered pains and pleasures match our own.

May the Lord bless you as you draw near to Him.



Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.



Small Group Names and Contact Info

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Small Group Prayer Requests

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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MURRIETA MEN

FALL 2025