



The Lord's Prayer : Growth Group Studies HEAC Term 4 2016

Sermon Series	Date
Human sexuality - Marriage & Singleness	16 th October
Human sexuality - Identity, Attraction & Gender	23 rd October
Our Father in heaven	30 th October
Hallowed be your name	06 th November
Your kingdom come	13 th November
Give us today our daily bread	20 th November
Forgive us our sins	27 th November
Lead us not into temptation	04 th December

Study Series	Prayer Focus
Study 1 - Our Father in heaven	God's character
Study 2 - Hallowed be your name	God's name
Study 3 - Your kingdom come	God's kingdom
Study 4 - Your will be done	God's will
Study 5 - Give us today our daily bread	Our daily needs
Study 6 - Forgive us our sins	Our forgiveness
Study 7 - Lead us not into temptation	Our temptations

Introduction

Teach us to pray

Praying to God is one of the greatest privileges of the Christian life, and yet all Christians struggle with prayer. We know prayer is important and we do pray, but prayer doesn't come as easily to us as we know it should. We can all relate to the plea of Jesus' disciples when they asked him, "*Lord, teach us to pray*" (Luke 11:1).

Both a set prayer and a model prayer

Jesus must have rejoiced to be asked this question, and answered, "*When you pray, say...*". For the second time in his public ministry, Jesus gave his disciples the form of words that we call the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2-4, Matthew 6:9-13). The Lord's Prayer is both a set prayer (words to pray) and a model prayer (a pattern of prayer). Furthermore, it gives us great insight into our Heavenly Father and how we are to relate to him.

Praying to our Father

It is an incredible privilege to call God "*Our Father in heaven*". In the early church, visitors and those not yet fully instructed in the Christian faith were discouraged from saying the Lord's Prayer. Traditional instruction manuals in the Christian faith (catechisms) usually include an examination of the Apostles Creed (what to believe), the Ten Commandments (how to live), and the Lord's Prayer (how to pray).

Central to life

Our first impulse when we are in peril is often to call our Father—the one we trust to help us. But we should not only pray when we need help in an emergency. Prayer is central to the Christian life, as Martin Luther said, "*As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray*". Looking closely at the Lord's Prayer not only helps us deepen our prayer life but also helps us to orient our lives more completely to God's will.

A corporate prayer

As we look at the Lord's Prayer, we shall see how tightly it is connected with the coming of God's Kingdom in and through our own lives. The essential truth contained within this prayer is that the lives of all God's people are bound together through their relationship with God. You cannot pray the Lord's Prayer and even once say "*I*": the Lord's Prayer has no singular pronouns at all: "*me*", "*myself*" or "*I*". This is at odds with much current thinking, focusing on the individual self.

For our true needs

Jesus' model prayer certainly recognises our fundamental needs for food, clothing and security (including spiritual nourishment and protection), but rather than being individualistic, it recognises that these are the needs of the whole community—"*Give*

us...”; “forgive us...”; “lead us...”. Relationships matter. We are not islands, remote from each other. We are at one with other people in webs of relationships.

However, the Lord’s Prayer places all these real needs in a very different context. First, we learn to worship God, and to place ourselves and our whole lives at God’s disposal—*“may your Kingdom come”*. Then, recognising our dependence on God, we ask him for provision, pardon and protection.

Paradoxically, it is in worshipping God and in acknowledging our dependence on him in the context of our membership of God’s family, that we become most truly and most fully the people God created us to be. Thus, praying Jesus’ model prayer with all our being, we find ourselves undergoing a radical and dynamic shift—from a narrow, blind focus on self to liberating openness to God, and from concern only with our own immediate wellbeing to the joy of life in the community of all God’s people. We pray, and our life changes.

Do you wish to find out the really sublime? Repeat the Lord’s Prayer.

Napoleon Bonaparte

I say the Lord’s Prayer every day. It covers a lot of ground in our relation to the world.

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake

The Lord’s Prayer contains the sum total of religion and morals.

Arthur Wellesley

The third clause of the Lord’s Prayer is repeated daily by millions who have not the slightest intentions of letting any will be done except their own.

Aldous Huxley

Study 1 - Our Father In Heaven

In the Anglican Prayer Book the Minister sometimes introduces the Lord's Prayer with the words '*Now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are confident to say...*'. The word "confident" is worth thinking about. We do well not to pray the prayer lightly. It takes guts to pray it at all.

Frederick Buechner *Listening to your Life*

Do you tend to pray the Lord's Prayer:

- Rarely or not at all
- Quickly and just get it over with
- With hesitation and little confidence that God can or will intervene
- Confidently

Read Matthew 6:5-15

Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer as an antidote to meaningless prayer.

"But when you pray, don't be like"

- How did the hypocrites (the Pharisees) pray? v5
- How do the pagans pray? v7
- How can the Lord's Prayer become a classic example of how not to pray?
- What qualities of "*our Father in heaven*" do we see in:

v6

v8

v9

v14-15

- What is the importance of the fact that the Father to whom we pray is "*in heaven*"?

In v9 Jesus says: *“This is how you should pray”* meaning the Lord’s Prayer can be used both as a set prayer but also as a pattern for our prayers in general.

- We will look at each line of the prayer in detail in future weeks, but at this point, taking a bird’s eye view: what patterns does it contain?
- Can you see any similarities to the structure of the 10 commandments? (Ex 20)
- How might these patterns reshape our prayers both individually and as a church?

The address to God with which the prayer opens is full of meaning. It must have startled the disciples for in Judaism, calling God ‘Father’, was something one did not do. Jesus directs us, however, to do it – In other words, to seek access and welcome to God’s presence on the ground that we are children in his family and he looks on with a Father’s love.

J.I.Packer *I Want to Be a Christian*

Read Galatians 3:26-4:7

To call God *“Our Father”* is an incredible privilege.

- How is this so supremely appropriate?
- What are some of the privileges of being able to address God as Father?

Responding In Prayer

The special address *“Abba Father”* only occurs 3 times in the Bible (Gal 4:6, Rom 8:15, Mark 14:36). It particularly emphasises the special intimacy that is ours as Christians to approach our father, our heavenly *“Dad”*, especially in prayer. How does this affect the way we can draw near to God? (Heb 7:19, 10:22)

Curly Question

In the early church visitors and those not yet fully instructed in the Christian faith were discouraged from saying the Lord’s Prayer as well as sharing in the Lord’s Supper. On the basis of what you have read in Galatians, do you think they were right or not?

Study 2 - Hallowed Be Your Name

Were we left to ourselves, any praying we did would both start and end with ourselves, for our natural self centeredness knows no bounds. But Jesus' pattern of prayer tells us to start with God. So 'your' is the key word of the opening three petitions and the first request of all is 'hallowed (holy, sanctified) be your name' – Which is the biggest and most basic request of the whole prayer. Understand it and make it your own, and you have unlocked the secret of both prayer and life.

*J.I. Packer *I Want to Be a Christian**

What are the assumptions and conflict in these statements?

- *"God and me are mates" (Crocodile Dundee)*
- *"Jesus you are my best friend" (Popular Christian Song)*
- *God said to Moses "Do not come any closer, for the place you are standing is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5)*

Read Isaiah 6:1-8

- How does Isaiah describe God? (v1-4)

- How does Isaiah respond to God's holiness? (v5)

- Why is seeing God such a problem? (Ex 33:20, Judges 6:22-23, 13:22, cf Heb 10:19-25)

- How does God deal with Isaiah's sins? (v6-7)

- Having been forgiven by God, what privilege is given to Isaiah? (v8)

- Isaiah's responses are both amusing and moving. Can you relate in your own experience to similar responses?

Read Luke 5:1-11

- How does Peter react to Jesus? (v6-9)

- How does Jesus commission Peter? (v10-11)

Responding In Prayer

- Having thought about God's holiness and our unworthiness, how does this help us as we pray "*Hallowed be your name*"?

- What responses do we see in 1 Peter 1:13-16, 2:9-12?
 - What is the old way for us?

 - What is the new way for us as we follow a holy God?

 - What will result when we do?

- How is Jesus' name hallowed in Philippians 2:9-11?

Curly Question

Why does a holy God choose to use forgiven, sinful people like us as the primary agents for his message? Surely the angels in Isaiah 6:2 would do a better job!

Study 3 - Your Kingdom Come

In the Lord's Prayer, the word "*kingdom*" is used in two different ways.

1. "*Yours is the kingdom*" is a statement of reality (ie God is the king).
2. "*Your kingdom come*" is a prayer that something might happen.

God's kingship and his kingdom are different things.

The fact that the Lord is king in the sense of being sovereign over his world is assumed throughout the Bible and is therefore a fact of our world.

To pray God's kingdom may come is to pray that God's rule may grow in the lives of God's people and in our lives together as his church as we await Jesus' return.

Where has the Lord's Prayer been used in places outside of church that surprised you?

What features of God's kingship shine out? (Psalm 33:6-9, Rev 4:11)

Read Isaiah 11:1-9

Isaiah sees what the world will be like when God's ideal king is ruling in God's kingdom.

- What will God's new king be like? (v1-5)
- How different is this from so many of our leaders?
- What will God's new kingdom be like? (v6-11)
- What is the significance of the animal imagery?

Jesus is the king in God's kingdom. Jesus' first sermon opens with: "*The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news*" (Mark 1:15)

- What are the boundaries of God's kingdom and who can enter? (John 3:3-8)
- How does this highlight the importance of prayer for God's kingdom?

Read John 18:28-40

Jesus kingdom is not a place but rather a relationship. At Jesus' trial, Pilate struggles to understand what it means for Jesus to be king.

- When Jesus says "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (v36) what does he mean?
- What do Jesus' comments about "*truth*" tell us about the nature of his kingdom?
- How do we follow this sort of king?

Responding In Prayer

In one sense the kingdom is here now and Christians are in it. In another sense the kingdom remains in the future and awaits Christ's return. The prayer "*your kingdom come*" looks forward to that day.

- Can we see signs of God's kingdom coming around us and within us?
- How does this change our prayers?

Curly Question

If God's kingdom is yet to come and is not of this world, is it a mistake for Christians to be involved in political action or good works now, more than simply praying?

Study 4 - Your Will Be Done

The will of God is 'good, pleasing and perfect' (Romans 12:2) for it is the will of our Father in heaven who is infinite in knowledge, love and power. It is, therefore foolish to resist it, and wisdom to discern, desire and do it.

John Stott, Christian Counter Culture.

When someone is described as having “*a strong will*” what is usually meant?

When someone says “*It's God's will*” what is usually meant?

The Bible is full of wonderful passages that reinforce the point that “*We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to his purpose*” (Rom 8:28). Regardless of whether there is human cooperation or opposition, God's will will be done.

- How does this work out in Joseph's story? (Gen 45:1-8, 50:20)
- How does this work out in Jesus' crucifixion (John 10:14-18; Acts 2:22-24)

Read Matthew 26:36-46

Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane is crucial for our understanding of “*your will be done*”.

- What does Jesus mean when he prays “*My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me*” (v39)?
- “*Yet not as I will but as you will*” (v39). Does praying God's will be done always have to begin with denying our will or not?
- While Jesus prays the disciples sleep. What warning does he give? (v40-41)
- Was Jesus' prayer answered?

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" also helps our understanding of "your will be done".

- What was Paul praying? (v7-8)
- What was God's response to Paul? (v9)
- What can we learn from this incident when we pray?
- Was Paul's prayer answered?

Responding In Prayer

When we pray "*your will be done*" we could add in our minds "in and through me".

- How can we know when our prayers shift from seeking God's will to ours?
- What does prayer have to do with denying ourselves?
- When we pray "*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" how does this ending help our prayers?

Curly Question

If God's will cannot ultimately be frustrated and his purposes will be fulfilled, why do we need to pray at all? (Matt 6:8)

Study 5 - Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

In the second half of the Lord's Prayer the possessive adjective changes from "your" to "our", as we turn from God's affairs to our own.

Having focussed on God's name, kingdom and will, the Lord's Prayer turns attention to our meals. Is this a let down? Not at all: it is a genuine progression.

J.I. Packer *I Want to Be a Christian*

Some early Christians could not stomach that Jesus meant our first request to be for literal bread. So they favoured a spiritual interpretation of either the word of God or even the Lord's Supper (eg. Augustine and Jerome).

Do you feel uncomfortable asking/thanking God for small practical things?

For example:

- a parking spot
- a good night's sleep
- the weather
- the food we enjoy at ordinary meals (ie saying grace).

Read Proverbs 30:7-9

Christians have had a love-hate relationship with money and material possessions.

- What are the dangers of riches? (v9a)

- What are the dangers of poverty? (v9b)

- "Give me only my daily bread" (v8). What is the significance of "daily" in the Lord's Prayer?

Read Matthew 6:25-34

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus deals with our anxiety about material concerns. Three times Jesus commands us: “*Do not worry*” (6:25, 31, 34)

- What reasons does Jesus give?

v25b

v27

v34

Jesus also declares that, above all else, our Heavenly Father cares for us and he will look after our physical needs.

- What is the lesson of the birds in v26? Is Jesus advocating we drop out of life, and stop working, planning and investing?
- How does *worry* also reveal a lack of faith? (v30)
- Give examples of how people today “*run after all these things*” (v32).
- How are our life priorities to be different? (v33-34)?

Responding In Prayer

How does Jesus’ perspective on material concerns make a difference as we pray “*give us today our daily bread*”?

Curly Question

C.S. Lewis says Christians should only think about two times: *Today* and *Eternity*, and that the Devil doesn’t want you to think about either, only *Tomorrow*. Do you agree?

Dear Heavenly Father,

Forgive us for the many times that our worries about material concerns have paralysed our prayers and blinded our trust in you. Help us to seek first your kingdom and your righteousness and to trust you for our daily bread.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Study 6 - Forgive Us Our Sins

The Christian lives through forgiveness. This is what justification by faith is all about. We could have no life or hope with God at all, had God's Son not borne the penalty of our sins so that we might go free. But Christians fall short still and forgiveness is needed each day.

J.I. Packer *I Want to Be a Christian*

Do you get tired of confessing your sins to God?

Sin is presented in the Scriptures by a number of images. Here are 4:

1. Sin as falling short of the mark

Sin is "missing the target", the failure to attain God's good standard. Due to our fallen human nature even when we try to do good, (and let's face it, we often don't try that hard) we fall short of what is required *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23.*

2. Sin as stepping over a known boundary

Sin is also a disregard or violation of a known law. We trespass or transgress what God has said. Due to our fallen human nature, we have an inner disregard for God's ways. *"Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact sin is lawlessness" 1 John 3:4.*

3. Sin as unpaid debt

The Lord's Prayer describes sin as unpaid debts. Jesus' thought is that we owe God our total loyalty and zealous love all day and every day and our sin is basically a failure to pay. We have all run up a huge debt with God.

4. Sin as breaking of relationship deserving God's anger

In the Garden of Eden, Adam didn't merely fall short of God's standards or break God's command, nor incur a debt, he deliberately rejected God's expressed will. And he actively sought to set up his life as an alternative "kingdom". This is rebellion and personally offends God, impairs the relationship, and deserves his righteous anger.

- Which of the above is a surprise to you?
- How is sin often understood (or misunderstood)?
- Why should self-examination and confession of sin remain a constant refrain for Christians?

Throughout the Scripture we see God's compassionate, gracious and forgiving nature.

- From Exodus 34:5-8
 - What is "God's name"?
 - How does Moses respond to God's name?
- From Psalm 103:1-12
 - How does David describe God's love for us?
 - What are God's plans for our sins?
 - How does David respond?

Read Matthew 18:21-35

Only the forgiving are forgiven. Jesus makes this clear in the Lord's Prayer by immediately linking our prayer for forgiveness with our forgiveness of others.

- What is Peter really asking? (v21)
- What does Jesus' answer mean? (v22)
- The plea of the two servants is the same "*Be patient with me, and I will pay back everything*" (v26, 29). Why is the first debt forgiven and the second not?
- The first servant is dragged in front of the master and confronted (v32-34). What had this servant failed to understand?

Responding In Prayer

This is how my Heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart (v35). God's judgement on the unforgiving is severe.

- When we fail to forgive what have we forgotten about God/ourselves?
- Can you be an unforgiving Christian? If so, for how long?
- Is there someone you struggle to forgive? Pray for God's help to forgive them.

Curly Questions

- Since it's impossible to distinguish a sinner from their sin (ie who we are includes what we do), then how can we forgive someone who keeps sinning?
- When we forgive someone, must we also forget their sins?
- Can we forgive someone who doesn't want our forgiveness?
- Why is confession both necessary and unnecessary to keep praying?

Study 7 - And Lead Us Not Into Temptation

The Bible tells us that Jesus was tempted in every way, just as we are. Jesus was in every sense a man. At times he was hungry, thirsty and tired. He knew what it was like to be misunderstood, let down by friends, and to be abandoned and left alone. He was no stranger to human temptations to power, to compromise and to doubt God. The only difference is that he never gave in to temptation (Hebrews 4:15)

Why is Jesus familiarity with our human struggles and temptations so important to us as Christian people?

Read Matthew 4:1-11

At Jesus' baptism, a voice from heaven said: *"This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased"* (3:17).

Temptation 1:

- Describe the nature of this temptation in your own words? (v3)
- When are you subject to temptations?
- How does Jesus resist the Devil's temptation? (v4) What does this mean?
- What can we learn from this, especially in times of testing and temptation?

Temptation 2:

- Does the Devil quote Psalm 91:11-12 correctly? (v5-6)
- Does it surprise you that the Devil knows the Bible too?
- What does Jesus' response mean for us today? (v7)

Temptation 3:

- What exactly is Devil offering Jesus? (v9, cf 28:18)
- How are Peter's words in 16:21-23 the same temptation?
- How can we relate to this temptation of Jesus?
- Most of the Devil's attacks in our life are very subtle (temptations 1-2). But the Devil is not afraid of a direct assault at times too (temptation 3). Can you think of recent examples of both in your Christian life:
 - Subtle
 - Direct

Responding In Prayer

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

- What principles of resisting temptation do we learn from Jesus?
- What are your areas of testing and temptation today?
- Where are you putting God to the test?
- Pray for God's help in temptation.

Curly Question

How do we reconcile, *"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil"* with *"Consider it pure joy my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds"* (James 1:2)?

Appendix - Versions of the Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today 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 the evil one.

Luke 11:2-4

Father,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
And lead us not into temptation.

Modern version (adopted by the Church of England, 1977)

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be you name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive our those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory, are yours, now & forever. Amen

Traditional version (Anglican Book of Common Prayer, 1662)

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 trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer Points

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