

3H Bible Learning Student Notebook
An Uncommon Look at a Common Prayer
Session One
Prayer Attitudes
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I. Let's Get Started!

****** What sometimes turns you off when you hear someone pray? What excites you?

II. Discovery Time

Introduction

1. We want to talk to God and we want him to talk to us.

If we are at all serious about our Christian life there is a compelling desire within us to grow in our knowledge and experience of prayer. Daily a relentless tug pulls at our heart longing to know God, to love God, to engage in a meaningful two-way conversation with him.

2. Jesus' pattern for two-way conversations with God

It is this very yearning that prompts us to ask, as one of Jesus' disciples did, "Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)." Thankfully, **Jesus gave us what is most importantly a model or pattern for prayer, but what may also be used as a form to pray.** In Matthew 6:9, Jesus says, "Pray then like this." In Luke 11:2, Jesus says, "When you pray, say."

3. Three illustrations of false lifeless worship

Jesus gives three vivid illustrations of false worship in giving, praying and fasting. **First**, in 6:2, one view is that we see the trumpets of the Jerusalem Temple calling the citizen's together to contribute to some particularly urgent need and the Pharisee making a big show as he runs towards the Temple.² A second possibility is that we see a pompous Pharisee -with gold coins in hand and trumpets blaring in front of him - taking his offering for the poor to the Temple box.

Second, we see first a man leading the congregation in public prayer in the synagogue and second one standing on a street corner - both with one singular motive, the approval of men. One can hear the intensity and fervency of their voice, each word carefully calculated, each pitch properly resonated, and all accompanied with the appropriate body language. They have only one audience in mind, an earthly one.

This public display culminates in the **third** illustration of "gloomy" fasting (6:16). Some, as they fasted, were disfiguring their faces in such a way as to be noticed or pitied because of the "hardship they were enduring" by fasting. They

would put on old, torn and soiled clothing. They would stop bathing, go about with their hair unkempt, ashes sprinkled on their faces and even use "make up" to make them look pale and sickly.

4. Three improper attitudes in worship

a. Self promotion

In the first illustration, whether the trumpets are metaphorical or literal, giving is not to be accompanied by the obnoxious sound of the giver "tooting his own horn." It is giving thanks and praise to God through our gifts that must be the focus not the receiving of praise and adulation from men.

The second illustration is one of ostentatious praying (6:5). We have gone from play-acting and parading our gifts before men to play-acting and parading our prayers before men. Christ is not profaning public giving or public praying, but is exposing the self promotion behind it. Holy living is a purity of action that is the result of a purity of heart.

In the third illustration they are demeaning and degrading true fasting which allowed unhindered time for confession of sin, seeking God's will, disciplining the body, and using the food they would have eaten to give to others in need.

b. Hypocrisy

The meaning of Christ's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 cannot be understood without consideration of the wider context. It is a part of Christ's instruction found in the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5-7). Christ's message centers around the theme "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20)." **Their righteousness was an external display of polished rule keeping that covered up a prideful, wicked, self-serving heart.** Outwardly they were well-kept, whitewashed tombs, but inside there was nothing but death, decay and rotted bones. **What appeared to be righteousness on the outside was in fact hypocrisy and lawlessness on the inside (Matthew 23:25-28).** Jesus was and is looking for authenticity.

Jesus is giving instruction on the authentic Christian character that exemplifies believers. He calls for genuine non-hypocritical worship in our giving, praying and fasting (6:1-18). Repeatedly Jesus warns "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven... 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... when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward (6:1, 5, 16).

How often we are guilty of "**play-acting**" or "**putting on masks**" in our public demonstrations of worship. We can become obsessed with "**looking good**" and/or "**sounding good.**" When we get a peek at the genuine beauty of a life of holiness (such as Joseph, Job, Esther, or Ruth) we profane that vision by dreaming about

how others would think highly of us too if we were like that. We do the right thing, but for all the wrong reasons. It is not the applause of men we need, but the applause of heaven.

c. **Mindless mechanical repetitious prayer**

In verse seven, Jesus addresses a third problem we must avoid. This one is applied specifically to prayer. "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." The problem seen here as "heaping up empty phrases" has caused considerable discussion among scholars as to the precise meaning of the word. Zerwick and Grosvenor give its meaning as to "gabble" (rapid or incoherent speech).⁵ D.A. Carson, as does the NIV, describes this rare Greek word as "babbling."⁶ His understanding is that prayer should not consist of piled up phrases, idle repetitions and the ridiculous assumption that the probability of an answer is in proportion to the total number of words in the prayer. R. V. G. Tasker believes that it primarily is referring to "meaningless" as opposed to repetitive speech (following the leading of Tyndale's translation).⁷ R. H. Gundry (as does the ESV Study Bible) sees it as "meaningless and repetitive speech" as in the pagan practice of piling on one divine name after another in the hopes that one of these gods would hear their prayer.⁸ My own observation is that the ESV Study Bible has got it right. **"Jesus is prohibiting mindless, mechanical repetition, not the earnest repetition that flows from the imploring heart."**⁹ **I have found that it is just as easy to be mindless and repetitious in our extemporaneous prayers as it is to do so in formal recitation of written prayers.**

Christ's argument against mindless, mechanical repetition is "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Prayer is not about instructing, informing or impressing God. He knows our needs more fully and cares about them more deeply than we ever could. As Myron Augsburger writes, "prayer is relationship, not entreaty. Prayer is fellowship, not impression."¹⁰ Prayer is about an open intimate conversation with a caring and loving Father.

. *Group Work*

Answer the following questions:

1. What were the three improper attitudes in worship we studied? Give some modern day examples of such attitudes.

2. What are opposite attitudes that would characterize authentic worship?

3. Read and react to the following solutions Jesus gave to the problems. What stands out to you personally?

In striking contrast to these hypocrites, a godly Christian is repulsed by the idea of parading his gifts before men. As he stretches forth his right hand to give, his left hand is not conscious of what his right hand is doing (6:3). John MacArthur explains that this is possibly "a proverbial expression that simply referred to doing something spontaneously, with no special effort or show."³ John Stott adds, "the right hand is normally the active hand. So Jesus assumes we shall use it when handing over our gift. Then he adds that our left hand must not be watching... not only are we not to tell other people about our Christian giving; there is a sense in which we are not even to tell ourselves. We are not to be self-conscious in our giving, for our self-consciousness will readily deteriorate into self righteousness."⁴ **The idea, therefore, is that our giving is so private that we ourselves can scarcely remember what we have given -let alone anyone else!**

Just as our giving ought to be free of self promotion, so should our prayers be characterized by a humble and selfless attitude. Christ teaches, "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 (6:6). Christ is extolling the value of private prayer over public prayer. (He is not forbidding public prayer because both he and the early church engaged in it. See Matthew 14:19; 15:36 18:19, 20; Acts 1:24; 3:1; 4:24-30) **Not only will time in secret free us from the temptation to pray to the crowd instead of to God, but it will provide many other wonderful benefits.** We will be unburdened by noise and distractions. It will be easier to maintain our focus on the necessary object of our prayers - God. We may pray freely expressing the deepest and most private needs and joys of our hearts. We may shout with praise, sing in adoration, and weep in humble confession. This private place will give us the quiet needed to hear the voice of God. We will be alone, but wonderfully not alone, for God will hear our every word and know our every thought and will reward us accordingly.

In contrast to the "gloomy" fasting of the hypocrite, Jesus instructs "but when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father who is unseen; and your father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you (6:17- NIV)." Jesus is using the vocabulary of the day to encourage them to simply go about their normal hygiene. It is like us saying, "Wash your face and hair and put on your deodorant."

In other words don't do anything different that would draw attention to yourself and profane the very reasons for which you are fasting.

Lesson Wrap-Up

*At our next session we will be looking at Matthew 6:9. We will see that for a Christian family matters. We will discover some wonderful things about our relationship with "Our Father."

*Your **assignment for the next lesson** is to read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4. How are they different? Second, set aside some time to contemplate and examine your motives for prayer and why prayer is difficult at times for you.

Session Two Family Matters!

I. Let's Get Started!

****** Why do you think many churches recite the Lord's Prayer every week as part of their service?

II. Discovery Time

We come then to the Lord's model prayer itself (Matthew 6:9-13). But immediately a question arises:

A. Why pray the Lord's Prayer?

Throughout the centuries it has served at least two vital purposes:

1. First, it has a **unifying effect** as it is prayed in concert by the body of Christ. Every Sunday millions all over the world lift up their hearts in praying this prayer together to the one true God. We are reminded of the **sense of community** that this prayer demands. We begin with "Our Father" not "My Father." As we pray together, we are reminded that these petitions are not about my needs and the glory of my God, but about our needs and the glory of our God. **This prayer can help free us from the danger and emptiness of egocentric and self-absorbed praying to the joy and power of prayer centered on others.**

2. Second, Jesus' prayer provides us with a **pattern and priority** in our praying. It contains six petitions - all addressed to the Father. The first three focus on petitioning the Father concerning the priority and preeminence of his name, his kingdom and his will. The last three focus on the physical and spiritual needs of Christ's body. All of us are dependent upon God for daily sustenance, daily forgiveness and daily deliverance from temptation.

B. Prayer is all about relationships.

John MacArthur, reflecting on the works of other scholars, explains how this prayer exhibits the believer's relationship with God. In it we see the Father/child relationship ("Our Father"), the deity/worshipper relationship ("hallowed be thy name"), the sovereign/subject relationship ("thy Kingdom come"), the master/servant relationship ("thy will be done"), the benefactor/beneficiary relationship ("give us this day our daily bread"), the Savior/sinner relationship ("forgive us our trespasses"), and the guide/pilgrim relationship ("do not lead us into temptation").¹¹

C. Prayer is about focusing on God and his glory.

As Christ begins his teaching on prayer, we immediately discover that this is a doxological prayer. It focuses on the Father's glory. In contrast to the self-

centered Pharisees whose intended audience was the people listening around them, true prayer seeks only an audience with God. As David Lanier writes, "Notice our Lord's priority: his first concern is for the reputation of God the Father, for his kingdom to be established and for his will to be accomplished upon the earth exactly as it is now in heaven."¹² Do we begin our extemporaneous prayers with a focus on God's glory and God's reputation? Jesus did, and he is directing us to do so also.

****How do you begin your prayers? What do you focus on first?**

D. Getting to know the Father

"Our Father in heaven"

Jesus' first words directly address his and our Father in heaven. Jesus would have used the term "Abba" for Father since he spoke in Aramaic (the language of Palestine in his day). As N.T. Wright notes, recent conservative scholarship has discovered that there have been two inaccurate teachings concerning this word. They used to say that nobody before Jesus had called God "Father." Further, "Abba" has often been portrayed as exclusively a child's word meaning "daddy."¹³

Although Jews in the New Testament era preferred exalted titles for God like "Sovereign Lord," it was not beyond the vocabulary of that day to refer to him as such. Indeed, there are numerous examples in the Old Testament where God is referred to as "Father" (Deuteronomy 32:6; I Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 68:5; Psalm 103:13 Jeremiah 31:9). The number of times God is referred to as "Father" in the Gospels is more than double the number found in the remaining books of the New Testament. Second, the term "Abba" was used by both children and adults. Its meaning was not as informal as "daddy," but not as formal as "Father." Perhaps our term "papa" conveys the meaning.

1. Three truths immediately stand out as we think of God as "Our Father."

First, Jesus never suggested that his relationship to God the Father was identical to that of his disciples and us. Christ's relationship to the Father is that he is the preexistent, eternal and co-equal Son. He is "God in the flesh" who came with the express purpose to do the will of his Father and in so doing provide salvation for mankind. He is a unique (one-of-a-kind) Son (John 3:16). How remarkable then that Jesus would give us the privilege of also referring to God as our Father. Indeed Jesus, by his sinless life, atoning death and resurrection, provided the very means by which we could properly call God, Father.

Second, two profound contrasting realities are seen in the "Fatherhood of God." He is transcendent and immanent. **He is far above, rules over and is independent (transcendent) of his creation (Acts 17:24, 25).** There is no deficiency in him that causes him to need anything from us. He could have existed eternally without ever creating us. This was the prevailing view among the Jews of Jesus' day. They saw God as so exalted and so far above them that any kind of intimate communication with him was completely outside their thinking. His holiness was a terrifying holiness. As Phillip Keller writes: "Prior to the time of Jesus, God was regarded as someone remote and august in his demeanor. He sat in the high and holy place, a stern judge behind the hard, harsh bar of the Law. Only with fear and foreboding did any man dare to address himself to such a powerful potentate."¹⁴

But God is also immanent. That is, he has chosen to draw near to and be intricately involved with his creation. He is not some nebulous abstract deity far removed from and uninterested in us. The biblical narrative is the story of how God has involved himself with his creation, and particularly the people in it. God is a loving Father who is directly interested in you personally. This richness and warmth of personality is readily seen in modern day evangelism.

Yet, regrettably, it is the balance of teaching both of these realities that has been lost at times in the ancient and modern world. There must, at the same time, be a deep respect for God's awesome power, sovereignty and holiness, and yet a confidence in his compassion, grace and mercy.

Third, when believers come to saving faith they become a part of a family. We become a child of God. There is a sense in which God, as our Creator, is a Father to all of us, but membership in the body of Christ is exclusive to those who have repented of their sins and are trusting in Christ as their new-found Savior and Lord (see John 1:12; 3:16-18; Romans 8:12-17; 10:9,10). **He is in a very special sense, our Father.** As we pray, "Our Father," we are reminded both of his nature and the many graces that he bestows upon us as a family.

Group Work

Read the material below and then answer the questions.

1. He is a **loving** father.

God continuously seeks the highest good and eternally gives of himself to his children. He has a relentless selfless concern for our welfare. Consequently, we are privileged to praise and thank him daily for the great sacrifice that came in giving us his Son (Romans 5:8; John 3:16; Galatians 2:20; First John 4:10) and his endless thoughts and concerns for us (Psalm 103:13). Such thankfulness should prompt us to pray for grace in performing acts of love and obedience towards him and love and service to others (Matthew 22:37, 38; First John 5:3; 2:15; 4:11, 19).

2. He is a **gracious** father.

God has, in our salvation, extended undeserved favor toward us and withheld deserved punishment from us (Ephesians 2:8, 9). This grace continues daily in his

ongoing parental forgiveness and mercy toward us (Ephesians 1:5-8; First John 1:7, 9). In times of emotional, spiritual, physical, and economic hardship we can draw near to a merciful God who cares about our misery and distress (Hebrews 4:16). Yet we must not presume upon such grace, but prayerfully seek daily to extend the same grace to others.

3. He is a **faithful** father.

He speaks the truth and can be trusted. God does not make promises that he can't or will not keep (Titus 1:2; Psalm 145:13). He has unlimited power to make good on them (Matthew 19:26). He will provide our every need (Matthew 6:25-34). Further, even if we are rejected and abandoned by family, friends, or other believers, we know that our Heavenly Father will never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Such faithfulness to us should be an impetus to be faithful to him.

4. He is a **righteous** father.

God always does what is right and we can be sure that he will never show favoritism (Deuteronomy 32:4; Romans 2:11). Our response is a driving passion to work toward the goal of being holy as he is holy (First Peter 1:16). Indeed our petitions both corporately and individually should reflect that passion.

We have given only a few ways in which God is a perfect father toward us. For some of us, we are reminded of our wonderful earthly fathers who in a very limited way are an example of our Heavenly Father. For others, we can rejoice that God is a perfect father who can never be legitimately accused of being absent, weak-willed or passive. Nor is he vindictive, unapproachable, or unrighteous and unrelenting in his anger toward confessed sin. All of us together can, with resounding praise and a deep sense of awe and respect, call out to him who is "Our Father."

1. Since prayer is a conversation with God, what are some ways in which you could include the characteristics of God as your Father in your prayers? In what ways could you thank and praise him, etc.?

2. What are the benefits of having God as your Father?

3. How can this knowledge help us in praying for our earthly fathers and grandfathers?

Lesson Wrap-Up

*At our next session we will be looking at Matthew 6:9b. We will discover what it means to "hallow God's name." We will also discover some wonderful things about the Father's name.

*Your assignment for the next lesson is to come up with as many different names for God as you can find in Scripture and bring your list with you.

Session Three

Respecting Father

I. Let's Get Started!

****Why is swearing or taking God's name in vain a problem? Why do you think it's rude?**

II. Discovery Time (PP1-3)

"Hallowed be your name"

A. "God abuse"

This **first petition** begins where all true prayer and worship must begin. We hallow his name. We set God's name apart from all others and treat it as holy. It is our deepest desire that everyone in heaven and earth give God the honor, respect, glory and place in their hearts that his exalted name deserves and demands.

I scarcely doubt that any name has met with more dishonor and disdainful abuse as the name of God. Martyn Lloyd-Jones laments: "What unworthy ideas and notions this world has of God... listen to men arguing about God, and notice how glibly they use the term... it is indeed almost alarming to observe the way in which we all tend to use the name of God. We obviously do not realize that we are talking about the ever blessed, eternal, and absolute, almighty God. **There is a sense in which we should take our shoes off our feet whenever we use the name.**"¹⁵

B. "Hallowing God's name"

As we reflect upon this petition, an obvious question comes to mind. How do we "hallow" God's name? **We "hallow" God's name when:**

1. We have a **healthy fear and awe** for a God who is absolutely holy and repulsed by sin (Proverbs 23: 17; Colossians 3:22; First Peter 1:15, 16; Second Corinthians 7:1).

This becomes an antidote to a lackadaisical and trite attitude toward habitual sin in our lives. It will cause us to come before him with a submissive repentant heart that desires to turn from our sin to Jesus and to reflect his character in holy living.

It also triggers a deep respect when we enter into God's presence both in public and private prayer. There will be an inner trembling as we meditate upon his power and absolute Lordship over all the nations, the church and our individual lives.

2. **We would rather forget ourselves than forget God** in our prayers (Psalm 16:8).

His glory, honor and purposes become the first things that we think of in our daily communication with him (Psalm 115:1). We refuse to ignore (or pass quickly by)

his concerns to get on to our own. Such "rushed" reflection does not hallow his name. It does not treat his name as above every other name -including our own!

3. We live in **conformity and obedience to his will** (First Corinthians 10:31; First Peter 3:15; Matthew 5:16; 7:21).

When God is hallowed in our hearts, he will be hallowed in our lives. As we live in obedience, the Spirit's fruit will be seen in our day to day living. Others will see the testimony of our love, joy, peace, etc. As a result, we will bring honor to God in the words that they say about him and in their eventual commitment to him.

C. What's in a name?

God's name is a **vehicle of revelation** unveiling for us who he is. It is the **way in which his character and person is made known** to us. When we pray that God's name be "hallowed," we are praying that people would speak and act toward God in a way that is honoring to him and that accurately reflects his character as revealed through his name. It seems reasonable that Jesus is referring to God as "**Yahweh/Jehovah**" (LORD found in Exodus 3:14, 15) and the compound names in Scripture derived from this name. Yahweh most likely communicates God's self existence, independence, self-sufficiency, eternity, and unchanging character. As you look at the names and characteristics below they will remind you that there is no one in the universe like our God. He deserves to be revered! **How do these names and characteristics describe your own feelings toward God?**

God is Jehovah-M'Kaddesh. This name means "the God who sanctifies." A God separate from all that is evil requires that the people who follow Him be cleansed from all evil. (Leviticus 20:7, 8)

God is infinite. We cannot speak of measure, amount, size, or weight and at the same time be speaking of God, for He is beyond measurement. God has no beginning, no end, and no limits. (Romans 11:33)

God is omnipotent. God has power. Since God is also infinite, whatever He has must be without limit; therefore, God has limitless power. (Jeremiah 32:17, 18, 26, 27)

God is good. The goodness of God is what disposes Him to be kind, benevolent, and full of good will toward all creation. (Psalm 119:65-72)

God is love. God's love is so great that He gave His only Son to bring us into fellowship with Him. God's love not only encompasses the world, but embraces each of us personally and intimately. (First John 4:7-10)

God is Jehovah-jireh. This name means "the God who provides." Just as He provided yesterday, He will provide tomorrow. He grants deliverance from sin, the oil of joy for the ashes of sorrow, and eternal citizenship in His Kingdom. (Genesis

22:9-14)

God is Jehovah-shalom. This name means "the God of peace." God could never give to others a peace that exceeds understanding if He Himself were not perfect, unfailing peace. (Judges 6:16-24)

God is immutable. All God is He has always been. All that He has been and is, He will ever be. He cannot change because He is perfect and will remain perfect. (Psalm 102:25-28)

God is transcendent. We must not think of God as highest in an order of beings. This would be to grant Him eminence, even pre-eminence, but this is not enough. He is transcendent—existing far above and beyond the created universe. (Ps. 113:4, 5)

God is just. God rules with absolute justice. Not fooled by appearances, God is fair, equitable, and impartial in all of His judgments. (Psalm 75:1-7)

God is holy. God's holiness is not simply the best we know made infinitely better. God is absolutely pure and untainted. His holiness stands apart—unique and incomprehensible. He is without and free of sin. (Revelation 4:8-11)

God is Jehovah-rophe. This name means "Jehovah heals." God alone has the remedy for the healing of mankind. The Gospel is concerned with the physical, moral, and spiritual healing of all people. (Exodus 15:22-26)

God is self-sufficient. He is the One who contains all, who gives all that is given, but who Himself can receive nothing that He has not first given. (Acts 17:24-28)

God is omniscient. God knows all that can be known. His knowledge includes every possible thing that exists, has ever existed, or will ever exist. (Psalm 139:1-6)

God is omnipresent. God is everywhere—close to everything, next to everyone. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord." (Psalm 139:7-12)

God is merciful. God's compassion is infinite and inexhaustible. In the mercy of His provision in Christ, He took upon Himself the judgment that was due us. He waits and works now for all people everywhere to turn to Him, not wanting any to be lost. He withholds from us deserved punishment. (Deuteronomy 4:29-31)

God is sovereign. God is in control of our lives. His sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation. To be sovereign, God must be all-knowing and all-powerful. (1 Chronicles 29:11-13)

God is Jehovah-nissi. This name means "God our banner." He fights for us! We may go from triumph to triumph and say, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57; Exodus 17:8-15)

God is wise. All God's acts are done in infinite wisdom. He rightly applies his infinite knowledge. He always acts for our good to conform us to Christ. Our good and His glory are inextricably bound together. (Proverbs 3:19, 20)

God is faithful. Our hope for the future rests upon God's faithfulness. Because He is faithful, His covenants will stand and His promises will be honored. (Psalm 89:1-8)

God is wrathful. God's wrath is never capricious, self-indulgent, or irritable, as human anger often is. Instead, it is a right and necessary reaction to objective moral evil. (Nahum 1:2-8)

God is full of grace. Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to grant merit where it is undeserved and to forgive debt that cannot be repaid. (Ephesians 1:5-8)

God is our Comforter. Jesus called the Holy Spirit the "Comforter." Paul writes that the Lord is "the God of all comfort." (Second Corinthians 1:3, 4)

God is El-Shaddai. This name means "God Almighty." It is best understood as God who is all-sufficient and all-bountiful—the source of all blessings, fullness, and fruitfulness. (Genesis 49:22-26)

God is the Church's head. God the Son, Jesus, is the head of the Church. The head—as the part of the body that sees, hears, thinks, and decides—gives the orders that the rest of the body lives by. (Ephesians 1:22, 23)

God is our intercessor. Knowing our temptations, God the Son intercedes for us. He opens the doors for us to boldly ask Him for mercy. Thus, God is both the starting point and ending point of true prayer. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

God is Adonai. This name means "Master" or "Lord." God as Adonai calls all God's people to acknowledge themselves as His servants, recognizing His right to command them as the Lord of their lives. (2 Samuel 7:18-20)

God is Elohim. This name means "Strength" or "Power." He is transcendent, mighty, and strong. Elohim is the great name of God, signifying supreme power, sovereignty, and a covenant relationship that He is ever faithful to keep. (Genesis 17:7,8)

We could not move on without saying that Jesus Christ, being God in the flesh, was the clearest revelation of God's name. Christ, in his prayer in John 17, summarizes his life's work and ministry as proclaiming and revealing God's person and character. "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world" (John 17:6). They heard God's wisdom in his teachings, saw God's sovereignty and power in his miracles and resurrection, and felt God's sacrificial love in his death. They had rubbed elbows with the "Living Word" of God.

Group Work

*Go through the list of the names of God and pick out two or three that are the most meaningful to you.*You will want to look up the references in your Bible.

*Then discuss how these names could be used in your prayer life (ex. How can I apply "the Lord is my shepherd" to myself and others as I pray?) *You may also want to think of some popular praise courses that use the different names of God and talk about them.

Lesson Wrap-Up

*In our next session we will be looking at Matthew 6:10a. We will discover what it means to pray, "Your kingdom come." What is it and how does it come?

*Your assignment is to be using the "names of God" in their prayer life this week. Also bring a description of what you think a perfect king and a perfect kingdom would look like.

Session Four

Kingdom Concerns

I. Let's Get Started!

**What is your idea of what a perfect king is and what a perfect kingdom would be like?

II. Discovery Time (PP1-3)

"Your kingdom come"

A. What is the kingdom?

1. Put simply, **the kingdom is the divine rule and reign of God.** In a general sense the kingdom of God has existed since the beginning of creation. Before God created the earth God ruled over the angels in heaven. In the Old Testament, or old covenant, the kingdom expressed itself as the theocracy of Israel. In the new covenant age, or the present, Christ rules and reigns over his church. In the future he will rule for 1000 years over the earth and on into eternity over the new heavens and new earth.

In order to understand this part of the prayer, we must understand what Jesus meant by the "kingdom." As J. Ramsey Michaels observes, Jesus surprised his listeners in teaching that the kingdom was "both spiritual and national, both universal and ethnic."¹⁷ Jesus taught a presence of the kingdom initiated with his first coming. In his first recorded sermon, given at Nazareth, Jesus cited a messianic prophecy from Isaiah (61:1, 2) and then declared that "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). Isaiah foretold that the ministries of the Messiah would include preaching the gospel to the poor, proclaiming freedom for prisoners, giving sight to the blind, releasing the oppressed, and proclaiming the time of God's favor. If we interpret the references to freeing the prisoners and oppressed metaphorically (as in the sense of the forgiveness of sins), all these ministries were later fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus (e.g., Luke 7:22).

Jesus uses his preaching of the Gospel as evidence that the kingdom had in some sense arrived (Matthew 11:5) and was forcefully advancing (cf. Luke 16:16 with Matthew 11:12). Along with his preaching, Christ's miracles were evidence of the presence of the kingdom as well as his teaching that it could now be entered (Matthew 11:5; 12:28; cf. Luke 11:20; Matthew 23:13). His ministry parables also described the working of the kingdom during this age (Matthew 13). The kingdom had actually invaded human history. The salvation blessings prophesied of the kingdom age were now present.

2. How has it "already" come?

The church then is the present form or manifestation of God's kingdom in our time. It is the "already" aspect of the kingdom as present in Jesus who **rules and reigns in our hearts through his Holy Spirit and is seated as king at the right hand of God**. There is then a real sense in which the kingdom is here (Matthew 12:28; Romans 14:17). Believers have begun to experience something of what God's final kingdom reign will be like (the powers of the age to come). They experience a measure of victory over sin as the result of Christ freeing us from the mastery of Satan over our lives (Romans 6:14; 14:17; Colossians 1:13), power over demonic opposition (Luke 10:17), over disease (Luke 10:9) and the fullness or outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:16-21; Romans 8:9-16; Ephesians 1:13, 14). As the Church proclaims the good news of the kingdom, people come into the church and begin to experience the blessing of God's rule in their lives.

3. How has it "not yet" come?

But there is also a profound sense in which the kingdom is "not yet" or has not been fully realized. It is both present (in part) and will be present in the future (in its totality). It has been inaugurated but not consummated. It is true that Jesus reigns at the right hand of God, but all things have not yet been fully subjected to him until his universal reign over all the earth for a thousand years (Revelation 19-20 and Hebrews 2:5-9). God will ultimately fulfill both the spiritual and material promises made to Abraham and David. We have not seen anything yet compared to what we will see when our Lord finally appears in all his glory, power, and authority at his Second Coming. Our present glimpses of glory will be replaced with a full-blown realization and experience of it.

Group Work

**Read, discuss and then answer the following:

B. What then are we asking for when we pray that Christ's kingdom may come?

1. Certainly we are asking for the **advancement of the gospel message** seeking that many will enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We are praying for the **growth of the church** both numerically and spiritually. We desire that many will surrender to Christ's power and authority as their new-found Lord and King. Further we seek the transformation of life that this full surrender brings. We long to see the character of the King evidenced in the sons and daughters of the King (**We want to see people become like Christ. What does it mean to be Christ-like?**).

2. But there is also a clearly eschatological ring to this petition. We are praying that the kingdom might be consummated and seen in its full blown glory and power at Christ's return. **We long for his righteous millennial reign and the**

new heavens and new earth that will follow it. We long for the final and full removal of sin from God's creation and with it all death, warfare, disease, disobedience, failure and broken relationships. We long for the "face-to-face" eternal fellowship with our Lord and with the saints of all the ages. We long for uninterrupted worship with complete purity of motive and unhindered fullness of expression. We long for the pristine beauty and dazzling brilliance of the renewed creation (Revelation 21 and 22). We long to be "home." This is our prayer!

******* As you look at the above material, what is your part and the church's part in bringing the kingdom to others now and hastening the future coming of the Kingdom?

Lesson Wrap-Up

*At our next session we will be looking at Matthew 6:10b. We will discover what it means to pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven "

*Your assignment is to think about what it would be like if you and others did God's will on earth exactly like it is done in heaven. What problems would that fix? What kind of world would it create?

Session Five Doing God's Will

I. Let's Get Started!

**What feelings or thoughts come to mind when someone mentions doing God's will?

II. Discovery Time (PP1-3)

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

As we come to this third petition we begin to realize that what Jesus is encouraging us to pray is that life on earth may increasingly approximate and reflect life in heaven. What we desire is that God's "good, pleasing and perfect" will (Romans 12:2) be done now on earth and that ultimately it will be fully accomplished on earth in the same way as it is now accomplished in heaven.¹⁸ For the angels and redeemed in heaven, their top priority and concern is God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will.

A. How then is God's will done in heaven?

1. It is done with pure motives.

Absent are the concerns and hypocrisy of selfish agendas and self promotion. There is no wish to manipulate God for his will is seen as it is - perfect and best for all his creation. In the midst of such glory gone is the tension between "my will" and "God's will." There is one compelling desire, "not my will, but yours be done."

2. It is done immediately and completely.

There is not some deliberation about whether it is the best thing nor is there any difficulty in understanding what is being asked or what must be done. God's commands are not done in part, but to perfection. Instant, full and complete obedience is the norm.

But what about God's will increasingly being reflected in what I do, how do I know God's will?

B. How can I fulfill my responsibility to do my part in seeing God's will accomplished on earth as it is in heaven?

1. Our prayers must be focused upon God's will not ours.

This will most probably mean a dramatic shift in your priority and focus in prayer. Warren Wiersbe quotes Phillips Brooks, who said, "The purpose of prayer is not to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth." Prayer is not about telling God what to do, but finding out what God wants us to do and then

asking him to do it.¹⁹ First John 5:14, 15 makes it very clear that we can have confidence that when we pray within the revealed will of God, he will both hear us and grant our requests.

2. It must become our highest priority.

In the words of our Savior, "My (Our) food is to do the will of him who sent me (us) and to finish his work (John 4:34). As Chris Tiegreen writes, "It wasn't a matter of gritting his teeth and getting it done so he could go about his other business. There was no other business. This was his food - his life, his breath, his passion. Doing the Father's will was the entire preoccupation of his life."²³

John 20:21 tells us that Christ is sending us out in the same way that the Father sent him. His food is our food. His love and preoccupation to the father's will is to be ours. Consequently it is only fitting that we ask, "Is God's will your food? Do you seek to accomplish his will as a bonus to pursuing your own, or is his the only one you really care about? The single-mindedness of being passionate about his will is liberating. Crave his will alone."²⁴

3. We will know God's will as we get to know God's character through his Word.

James Montgomery Boice remarks, "We may know the will of God by coming to know the Word of God, and we know the Word of God only as we study it and the Holy Spirit throws his divine light upon its pages."²⁰ Yes, it will mean that you will need to take the time and trouble to find it out. You will need to listen for the still small voice of the Spirit as he speaks to you from the pages of Scripture. This will mean daily time alone with God and time spent listening before asking.

As you spend more time in Scripture you will begin to have a deeper knowledge of the character of your Father. As my children grew up and got to know me, the better they knew what to ask me. There were some things they would never ask for because they knew that I would not grant their wishes. I could not as their father give or allow something that would hurt them. Nor would I encourage or allow them to do something which was sinful. As you get to know your Heavenly Father better, you will increasingly know what it is that he wants you to do and what you should ask. God's will always conforms to his character and the teachings of Scripture. Therefore, you cannot have a surface or distant relationship with God and expect to know his will.

However, there are many times in life when we cannot clearly discern what God's will is. We may not be sure, because no promise or command of Scripture directly applies, whether it is God's will that we get the job we've applied for, or win an athletic contest, be chosen to hold office in government or the church, and so on. In these cases we should continue to ask God for wisdom and the ability to apply some of the general principles of Scripture to our situation and our prayers. We may pray, "I have come asking, but if I am wrong in asking this and if this is not pleasing to you, then do what is best in your sight. I want your will and your will alone."

I must pause, before going on, to say that often it is quite clear what the will of God is in many different situations. My greatest problem has not been with knowing God's will, but doing the will of God that I already know. Such things as saying no to sin (Galatians 5:16-21, 24-25), being baptized, fellowshiping with fellow believers, being a witness through word and deed, obeying God's commandments, bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)etc., are all a part of doing God's will on earth. We need not try to discover if it is God's will in these cases, but simply surrender our wills to his.

**Dallas Willard's thought-provoking book, *Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*, is a must read for all those who would like to know more about recognizing the voice of God.²¹ Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, has also given thoughtful insight into what God wants us to pray and how we can pray effectively.²²

4. We can accomplish God's will only by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

God never asks us to do something without giving us the ability and enablement to do it. As we pray for God's will to be done on earth, we are in effect praying and asking that the Holy Spirit would accomplish it through our lives and the lives of others. This request is made with the full realization of our human weakness and complete dependency upon supernatural power and grace. It is an invitation for the Holy Spirit to transform our lives into a vibrant, brilliant testimony of what it means to see God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.

Group Work

Please answer and discuss the following questions:

1. What are some reasons why we might resist praying, "Your will be done?"

2. What are the benefits for us and other believers when we obey God's will? How have you benefited from obeying God or his leaders? (Look at Deut. 28:11; 4:40; Josh. 1:8; Prov. 10:27; Mal. 3:8-10)

3. Why might our prayers not be answered? (Look up Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9; Isa. 1:15-18; James 4:3; 1:5-8 for some reasons.)

Lesson Wrap-Up

*In our next session we will be looking at Matthew 6:11. We will discover what it means to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

*Your assignment is to think about what it means to be hungry and to do some research on the internet for some articles and statistics about world hunger.

Session Six

Daily Bread

I. Let's Get Started!

**What do you think Jesus means by "daily bread?"

II. Discovery Time

"Give us this day our daily bread."

A. Basic Human Needs

In this section we move from our concerns for the Father's glory to our own concerns. These next three requests cover three very basic human needs - the need for physical sustenance, for forgiveness and for deliverance from evil. The first three petitions stand alone, but these last three are all connected by "and". The sense is that we need all three of these things equally. We cannot get along without any of them. But, as N.T. Wright cautions, the danger in these requests is that we come here too soon. It is tempting to flippantly race through the first part of the prayer so that we can get to our "shopping list" at the end of it.²⁵

B. What is "daily bread?"

The bread in view probably refers to all daily physical necessities. Bread has this larger significance in the Bible (cf. Prov. 30:8; Mark 3:20; Acts 6:1; 2; Second Thess. 3:12; James 2:15). Again, this is a prayer for our needs and not our greeds. This day by day provision is a constant reminder that we are daily totally dependent upon God for food, nourishment and a healthy body. Certainly this request would have had much more urgency in the culture of Jesus' day where many lived from hand to mouth. A few days without food (due to illness or not receiving their daily pay) would have had immediate consequences. *It has the same urgency in many cultures today.

**How do we normally provide for our needs (See Second Thessalonians 3:10-12)? What part does God have in it (Deuteronomy 8:18)?

**Read the following from Psalm 37:3-4, 10-11, 25. What does David tell us about daily needs?

2. **Discuss** what your small group and/or youth group can do about praying for and providing for believers/missionaries in need of "daily bread" in some specific place in the world? **Go global!**

3. Where could you volunteer some of your time in the coming weeks at a local homeless shelter or food bank?

Lesson Wrap-Up

*In our next session we will be looking at Matthew 6:12. We will discover what it means to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

*Your assignment is to think about "forgiveness." What sins cause you to feel the need for forgiveness from God? Who do you need to forgive?

Session Seven Eliminating Debt

I. Let's Get Started!

**What do you think Jesus means by "debts?"

**What character trait do you find intolerable in other people?

**For what past action do you need to believe or feel that you have been forgiven by God? (You need not say this out loud.)

II. Discovery Time (PP7-3)

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

We must begin by seeing this fifth petition in the larger context of Matthew 6:1-21. "The point here is one of the proper attitude. Unless one is in a forgiving mood in the sense of Matthew 6:14, 15, he or she is not going to ask for or receive divine forgiveness."²⁶ This leads to a number of important questions:

1) What do we mean by debts?

The term "debts" refers to "what is owed to God" or sins. Sin is seen as a moral or spiritual debt owed to God that must be paid.²⁷ Daily, through acts of omission or commission we commit sins that deserve to be punished and must be paid for.

2) What is the exact nature of the forgiveness spoken of here?

Jesus is referring to "parental" or "family" forgiveness. It is the daily forgiveness needed to restore fellowship and intimacy with our Father after we have sinned (First John 1:9). We are declaring our hatred of our sin and our desire to turn from it and walk in obedience to the God that we love and who has made us a member of his family. Jesus is not referring to the judicial forgiveness or justifying grace that we all received at the moment of salvation. As to our justification, God the righteous Judge has forgiven all of our sins once and for all based upon Christ paying our penalty for that sin on the cross (Romans 5:1, 9; 8:1; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

3) What is the consequence of not forgiving our debtors?

Christ makes it very clear though that to have an unforgiving attitude toward someone is a serious offense (see 14, 15). We cannot live in fellowship and intimacy with God if we refuse to forgive others. An unforgiving spirit creates a barrier between us and God. Those whom the Lord loves he disciplines and we will surely feel his chastening hand (Hebrews 12:5, 6). Indeed a person who persistently has an unforgiving heart demonstrates that he does not have a genuine relationship with Christ. As Stott remarks:

"God forgives only the penitent and one of the chief evidences of true penitence is a forgiving spirit. Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offense against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling. If on the other hand, we have an exaggerated view of the offenses of others, it proves that we have minimized our own."²⁸

4) How is this prayer to be understood in the context of a corporate prayer?

Again, Jesus is not simply saying "forgive me my debts as I forgive my debtors." This ought to be a global cry on the part of all of us who are members of Christ's body the church. We need to pray that each one of us would have a forgiving attitude and that God would restore fallen sisters and brothers. There is no room for us to cheerfully join forces against other members of Christ's family. It must be the badge of the believing community to forgive those who offend them since daily they are reminded of the weight of the sins that have been forgiven them.

Group Work

1. Read the following passages and discover seven reasons why you should forgive others (Matthew 5:7, 43-45; Ephesians 4:32 and First John 2:6; Proverbs 19:11, Second Corinthians 2:10, 11; Psalms 66:18 and Matthew 5:23, 24; First Corinthians 11:30; Matthew 6:14, 15).

2. How do you know when someone has truly forgiven another person?

Lesson Wrap-Up

*At our next session we will be looking at Matthew 6:13. We will discover what it means to pray, "And he does not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

*Your assignment is to think about someone you need to forgive and begin to forgive them first in your heart and then by going to them personally, if needed. Study Matthew 18:15-20 in order to discover the process of settling a dispute between you and another believer.

Session Eight

Divine Deliverance

I. Let's Get Started!

** What are some of the biggest challenges that Christians face in living the Christian life?

**What do we need delivered from?

II. Discovery Time

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

A. Do we need to ask God not to tempt us?

This sixth petition has been puzzling for many throughout the centuries. Why should we ask God to not lead us into temptation when he would never do such a thing in the first place? None of us can make the accusation when he is tempted that he is being tempted by God, "for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one" (see James 1: 13, 14).

B. What then does temptation mean?

Perhaps it is helpful to understand that the word used for "temptation" has two different meanings. At times it does mean solicitation to do evil, but it is also used to mean "a testing."

C. What does it mean to be tested? (Does every trial have to turn into a temptation?)

We do know that **God uses "tests" to reveal or grow a person's character.** He allows or places us in circumstances and trials to test (that is prove) the genuineness of our faith (First Peter 1:6, 7). James 1:2-4 says, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." When genuine faith is tested, it is strengthened, and the outcome is reinforced stability of character. Consequently, an untested faith is a weak faith, compared with one who has passed through a searching test and emerged victorious (see Genesis 22:1ff; Matthew 4:1-14).

So, whatever is specifically meant by the petition, "lead us not into temptation," it is highly unlikely that it means "Do not let our faith be tested." Perhaps First Corinthians 10:13 is instructive here. "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape,

that you may be able to endure it." **This verse could well be regarded as an expansion of our problem petition which helps unpack its meaning.** This seems to have been the thinking behind those who wrote the fifth century Eastern *Liturgy of St. James*. The celebrant, after reciting the Lord's Prayer, goes on:

Yes, O Lord our God,
Lead us not into temptation which we are not able to bear,
But with the temptation grant us also the way out,
So that we may be able to remain steadfast;
And deliver us from evil.

F.F. Bruce comments:

This implies something like the following as the intention of our petition. We know that our faith needs to be tested if it is to grow strong; indeed, the conditions of life in this world make it inevitable that our faith must be tested. But some tests are so severe that our faith could not stand up to the strain; therefore we pray not to be brought into tests of such severity. If our faith gave way under the strain, that might involve us in moral disaster; it would also bring discredit on the name of the God whom we call our Father.²⁹

D. Conclusion

1. **For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**

*This final sentence is not included in most translations since it is not found in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts. But it is found in the Majority Text, and is most certainly in agreement with the rest of Scripture and fitting to be used as a conclusion to this prayer.

This sentence brings closure to the prayer as a whole in humble recognition of the Father's 1) right to establish the kingdom, 2) power to bring the petition to pass, and 3) eternal glory. Not only does this final observation bring the prayer full circle to worshipful acknowledgement of the Father's glory, it echoes David's prayer (First Chronicles 29:11-13) of total dependence on the will of the Father and that all resources are his and should be used for his glory.³⁰

2. Three vital truths

As we conclude this prayer we are reminded of three very important points. First, this is a prayer about **relationships**. It has little meaning or power unless we have a right relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ. We begin with the relationship of God as our Father. We must also have right relationships with each other as believers in the family of God. This is a prayer about the glory of "our" God and "our" needs as his children.

Second, it is a prayer that emphasizes **responsibility**. We are to hallow God's name, hasten God's kingdom, and obey God's will. This is a prayer of ultimate submission and humble loving servitude. It cannot be glibly or mindlessly uttered, for to do so is arrogant and sinful. This model prayer helps give us tools to fulfill

the responsibility of pursuing a deeper and more meaningful prayer life. It is the architectural outline that God uses to construct our "house of prayer."

Third, once we have entered into **relationship** with God and realize our responsibility before God, our requests take on new meaning and unleash new power. They flow out of a "body focus" and a deep desire to see God's purposes and God's plans fulfilled in the church and in the world. May God make us more like him and less like ourselves! Amen.

Group Work

1. Read Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 and discuss how Jesus handled temptation.

2. How could you pray this petition for others?

3. What are some truths that you have learned about prayer from the "Lord's Prayer?"

Lesson Wrap-Up

*We have studied a model or pattern that you can use every day in your prayer life. It will help you to begin your prayers properly with your focus and priority being upon God first and then giving attention to your concerns and others concerns in both your local church and the church around the world. We have also tried to help you see the value of praying it as Christ's body together. We hope this helps you develop a meaningful daily conversation with God.

*Your assignment is to begin or continue to use this prayer each day as a pattern by which to structure your prayer life. This will be a fulfilling life-long task.

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