

Bible Studies

The Lord's Prayer



Read Luke 11:1-4

Both Luke and Matthew record this teaching of Jesus. More accurately we should call it *'the disciples prayer'* as they were the ones to pray it. Matthew places it in a teaching Jesus gave, which is sometimes called the *Sermon on the Mount*, Matthew 5-7 Luke puts it in response to a request one of the disciples made.

What was the request?

Why do you think the disciple asked this?

One reason is given and one is implied. John the Baptist obviously taught prayer as a priority. It also says that Jesus was praying in a certain place. Therefore we assume that the disciples knew how important prayer was, they had seen it in the life of Jesus and John's disciples, and they knew it was missing in their own lives. They were missing out because they did not know how to pray.

This also tells us something else. Prayer is a learned activity. Many of us struggle with prayer, because we are not very good at it we conclude *'it's not my ministry'*, *'it is for others but not for me'*.

How would you answer a statement like that?

How will you miss out if you don't know how to pray?

Just like the disciples we need to acknowledge our inability and ask Jesus to teach us. The reason that Jesus gave this example of a prayer, was not so that we could institutionalise it as a liturgy, but in order that we would learn how to pray. This prayer was never intended to be recited, it was intended to be a learning aid.

At first reading what strikes you about the prayer Jesus taught?

It is short and simple. It contains the basic things that we need to pray. It is a template prayer which enables us to structure our prayer life. So let's see what Jesus teaches us about prayer.



Read Matthew 6:5-8

How should we not pray?

What was wrong with the way the Pharisee's prayed?

What does Jesus mean when He says go into your room and close the door?

The Pharisees were praying to men not to God! Prayer does not have to be public to be effective. The KJV calls this room a *closet*, thus the term, *'prayer closet'*, entered christianise.



Is Jesus speaking literally?

What does this mean for us?

Where might you choose to pray?

Did you notice that it says your fathers *sees* what is done in secret, not *hears*. God is not just listening to what we pray, but observing the fact that we do pray. Praying is more than words, it is also listening, it is an attitude before God.

Does prayer have to be out loud? Genesis 24v45

The kind of prayer that Jesus describes here is solitary and preparatory, (it happens in quiet before you face a problem.)

What other kinds for prayer are there?

How else are we not to pray?

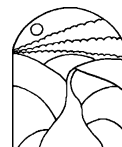
If we are not to pray like the Pharisees we are also not to pray like the pagans.

How did the pagans pray wrong?

What does this mean for us?

It is not the length of prayer that is important, or finding the right words or formula that will force God to answer. It is about a relationship with God.

We do have set formulas in prayer, we pray in the Name of Jesus, John 15v16, we say Amen. Jesus told us to pray *'Our Father'*. But these are not the things that are going to get our prayers answered. Prayer is about relationship with God.



**Do you think our eloquence changes the effectiveness of our prayer?
Do you think the length of our prayers is the important factor?**

Sometimes we need to be persistent in prayer. Luke 18v1-5. We need to keep praying until we receive an answer. But we must remember it is not for our many words that God hears us. Jesus had only criticism for those who made a show of long prayers. Mark 12v40

What do you think is important in prayer?



Read Luke 18v9-14 (also consider the Lord's prayer passage)
Contrast the way we should pray with the way the Pharisees prayed



Read 1 Kings 18v26-29 (also consider the Lord's prayer passage)
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If God already knows what we need why do we have to pray?

This has been long debated and there are lots of answers. We do after all expect our children to ask for the things we plan to give them. It's polite. More fundamentally God has chosen to work in co-operation with us. Sometimes He acts sovereignly, without reference to us. He may heal when we have not asked for healing, just because it is His will and He is God. But mostly He works with us. He has not sent angels to fulfil the great commission, He sends us. We need to co-operate with God in prayer.

What happens if you do not pray? James 4v2

Do you think God wants us to come to Him with our needs?

Who did Jesus tell us to pray to?

If God knows what we need, what attitude should we have to prayer?

According to this passage what result does praying have?

It clearly says that when we pray God will reward us. The Pharisees, even when they pray wrong, got a reward! (recognition from men) When we pray we receive recognition from God.

What do you think this reward is?



**How does prayer increase our confidence?
How does prayer establish a relationship with God?
How does it prepare you for problems that you face?**

If you face a situation, having prayed for it, your attitude is going to be different. You are going to have faith that God is going to move. Therefore you are going to have confidence. Fear is going to be minimised. Because we have prayed, we are more likely to be aware of God's presence and sensitive to His leading.

Prayer not only changes the situation it also changes us! We are different because we have prayed and we see things differently.



**Why do you think that Christians are generally so bad at praying?
What do you think praying requires?**

**What are we going to miss out on if we do not pray regularly?
What do you think the goal of prayer should be?**

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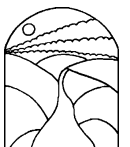
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What do you think this reward is?

Our prayers get answered.

A relationship with God gets established.

We have confidence for the situations we face.

There is power in our lives

is going to build our faith.

It is going to build us spiritually.

You are going to hear from God.

We are going to have spiritual insight.



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Our Prayer



Our Father in Heaven

There are many prayers recorded in Scripture, most of them start by saying 'O Lord,' 'O Lord Almighty', 'Ah Sovereign Lord' or 'O My God'. Dan 9v4, Isa 37v16, Jer 32v17, Ezra 9v6; Salutations are a part of language, but these are more, they tell us how the people concerned understood God.

What do the above salutations emphasis?

Jesus, by contrast, frequently opened His prayers with the word 'father'. Matthew 11v25, 26v39, Luke 23v34. He taught us to do the same.

What does the phrase 'Our Father in heaven' emphasis?

Our, emphasises community. Father emphasises relationship and compassion. In heaven emphasises power, glory and authority.

How does Jesus want us to approach God when we pray?

Do you think this is intended to build our faith?

This opening line is intended to put us in perspective with God. Think for a moment of God in all His glory. Now think of you with all your failings. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to open the way between God and us. Heb 10v20. When we say 'father', we are entering God's presence. We have His full attention and what we pray is heard in heaven. Rev 8v3. This line is as much about understanding who God is and who we are than it is about praying.



Hallowed be Your name. Hallowed means holy or honoured.

What should mark our prayers? Philippians 4v6, Ephesians 5v19

When you read the prayers of the OT, they frequently start with worship to God.

Why do you think our prayer should start with worship?

There are many reasons; it builds faith, it gets our eyes off our problems and onto God. It stops our prayers being need orientated instead of God orientated. It helps put us in the right frame of mind for prayer. It also gives us a chance to become spiritually alert and able to hear from God. It enables us to leave behind the pressures of the day. The list could go on. But above all it is right for us to worship God and God is pleased with our worship.

Do you think worship attracts God's attention?

Do you think worship makes God more likely to answer our prayers?

God is always attentive to us and you cannot bribe God, or manipulate Him.

If we only come to God with requests, what kind of attitude does it show to Him?



Your kingdom Come

When we pray for God's kingdom to come, what are we praying for?

A simple definition of the Kingdom of God is, where ever Jesus is reigning.

How does God's kingdom come in our lives?

How does God's kingdom come in the world around us?

What practical application does it have for us to pray this?

When we pray this we are committing ourselves to work as an agent of the kingdom.

What part do we have to play in God's kingdom coming?



Your will be done

This sounds a bit vague. There is a danger that we will misinterpret it to mean that all we have to do is pray for God's will to be done and everything will just work out.

Where might God's will need to be done? Who is going to do it?

When we pray this we are committing ourselves to do God's will. This line means, '*Father may I know what your will is and may I have the strength to do it.*'

How is God's will done in heaven? How is it going to be done on earth?

Jesus prayed this prayer Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane '*yet not my will, but yours be done.*' Luke 22v42 For Jesus, this prayer was a submission to the will for God. It should be for us also.

What happens if we cannot submit our will to God when we pray?

Sometimes, when we do not know what to pray all we can say is 'Father your will be done.'

Is it significant that the first things we pray for are God's kingdom and His will?

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well Mat 6v33



Give us today our daily bread

This has a physical and spiritual application.

On a physical level what is our daily bread?

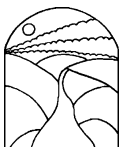
Our daily bread is the simple, everyday things that we need to live; food, clothes shelter.

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What attitude does Matthew 6v25-34 say we should have to these things?

We are not to worry about them, but we are to pray for them.

What relationship do you think praying and worrying have?

Do you think it is wrong or selfish to ask God for our needs?

When it comes down to it, it is God who supplies our needs. We must remember this

On a spiritual level what is our daily bread? Matthew 4v4

Just like we need vitamins, carbohydrates and fibre in our diet, we need spiritual nutrition too.

What will happen if we do not get our spiritual daily bread?

Where are we going to get our spiritual daily bread?

Why does it need to be daily bread?



Forgive us our debts

The word debts here means sins. When you read the OT prayers you will find many of them had to do with confession, repentance and forgiveness.

Why do you think repentance and forgiveness need to be part of our prayer life?

What happens if we do not confess our sin? Psalm 66v18

It seems that the Lord's prayer is a daily prayer. The things it describes, are things we need to do on a daily bases.

What is God's promise to those who ask for forgiveness? 1 John 1v9



As we have forgiven our debtors

What do you think this means?

Jesus expanded on this at the end of the prayer. It is very important.

Read Mat 6v14-15 What happens if we do not forgive those who sin against us?

Jesus taught extensively on this subject in Matthew 18, the parable of unmerciful servant. If we expect God to forgive the very serious things that we do against Him, how can we not forgive the much smaller things other do to us. It show a misunderstanding of and contempt for God's grace. It puts us in a position where we are not able to appropriate God's forgiveness.

What effect is not forgiving others likely to have on our prayers?



Lead us not into temptation

This verse has caused a problem for generations of Christians. **Why?** James 1v13
It seems strange to ask God not to do something He has promised He won't do!

Temptations here does not necessarily mean to sin, the same word is used for test. So you could translate this, '*do not test our faith.*' It could also mean suffering or trial.

Can we avoid the testing of our faith? 1 Peter 1v6-7, James 1v12

Can we avoid suffering and trials?

These things actually help us, they make us stronger. There is a line where if they are too intense, instead of making us stronger, they destroy us. In our trials, God's aim is to strengthen us, the enemy wants to destroy us.

This verse is best understood by comparing it with something Paul wrote;

Read 1 Corinthians 10v13

Perhaps what we are praying for here, is that we will not be tempted beyond our limits.

How did Jesus pray this prayer? Luke 22v32

What connection is their between prayer and temptation? Matthew 26v41

The real key to this prayer is found in the last part of 1 Cor 10v13. God has promised us *a way out so that we can stand up under it*, We need to ask God for strength in time of temptation, and for the wisdom to find the way out. Prayer is vital in overcoming temptation.



Deliver us from evil. (Or deliver us from the evil one.)

Why do you think we need to pray this?

Did Jesus pray this? John 17v15

What evil might we need to be delivered from?

What does the enemy want to do to us? John 10v10

The truth is we are in a battle, the enemy wants to obstruct us, divert us and destroy us. We must triumph over him. We need God's protection, we cannot take it for granted, we need to ask for it. I wonder how often we come under attack from the enemy because we have not asked God for protection?

Our key weapon against the evil one is prayer. Spiritual warfare is sometimes called prayer warfare, binding and loosing, taking authority, using the name of Jesus, resisting the enemy are all done in prayer. Paul's classic passage on standing firm against the enemy is found in Ephesians 6, the armour of light.

How does Paul conclude this passage? Ephesians 6v18

These are the basic things we should cover in our prayers, both for ourselves and others.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.