



Teach us
to pray.

**Studies for Life Groups
on The Lord's Prayer**

Introduction

The purpose of this sermon series and these studies is to help us understand how to pray, particularly if we are very new at it. We often encourage each other to pray more frequently and passionately in order to grow in our faith, but how can we do this? Jesus's disciples had the same question, and one day they came to Jesus and asked him, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1).

Prayer is a topic with many facets and can be studied over the course of our lifetimes. However, there are some areas of prayer and attitudes to prayer that are foundational for Christians. In response to his disciples' request, Jesus gave them a short prayer that brings these basic areas together, known as 'The Lord's Prayer' (because it was given by the Lord Jesus). These studies will be based on the version found in the Gospel of Matthew, in Matt 6:5-15. An alternate version (somewhat shorter) is in Luke 11:1-4.

Each of the six studies takes one of the lines of the Lord's Prayer and reflects on what it teaches us about the nature of prayer, and about the God we are praying to. We will expand the discussion by looking at a number of other readings from Matthew where Jesus teaches about the topics contained in the prayer. Each week your group will be encouraged to reflect on how the Lord's Prayer challenges your own prayer practices, and to create your own prayers.

N.B. You may notice that the version of the Lord's Prayer in the Bible reading is shorter than the one that we use in church each week. From the time of the early church it has been common in services to end the prayer with the closing phrase 'for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours', even though this is not in the biblical version.

Study 1: Our Father in Heaven

Matthew 6:5-15

1. What is prayer? Have each group member spend one minute creating their own definition and then share it with the group.
2. Why do we pray?
3. What are the different types of prayer that you are aware of?
4. How do you 'do' prayer in your own life at the moment?
5. The Bible reading containing the Lord's Prayer comes from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), where Jesus lays out his teaching on the simple religion of the heart that God desires, as opposed to superficial obedience to religious rules. How do the 'hypocrites' pray and what is the problem with that?
6. Why do the 'pagans' pray with many words, 'babbling' to God? Why is this inappropriate?
7. Look throughout the passage and find out all the things that Jesus says about the nature and character of 'the Father'. How are our prayers affected by who God is and what he is like?
8. Why should we pray if God already knows what we need (v8)?
9. How might a conscious knowledge of God as your Father change the way that you pray?
10. Create a group prayer addressing God as Father.

Study 2: Hallowed Be Your Name

Matthew 6:9-13

1. What are some of the important attributes of God that you know?
2. What is the most common thing that you ask God for?
3. Do you feel confident in approaching God with your prayers?
Why/why not?
4. What are we asking or stating when we say 'hallowed be Your Name'?
5. Why is this one of the first parts of the prayer?
6. The Lord's Prayer has two main sections – three clauses about God, worship of him, and his purposes, then three asking for our needs to be met. Why is it structured in this order?
7. Read Isaiah 6:1-8. What does it mean for God to be 'holy'?
8. Why might we be tempted to minimise God's holiness?
9. How might our prayers reflect the reality of God's holiness?
10. Create a group prayer based on the holiness of God.

Study 3: Your Kingdom Come

Matthew 4:12-25

1. What are some of the things that happen in the world that you wish that God would fix and 'put to rights'?
2. The 'kingdom of heaven' or 'kingdom of God', which Jesus often talks about in the Gospels, is about the reality of God being in control in the world. What would it look like for God's kingdom to 'come'?
3. Do you think that the kingdom of God is something that is coming in the future, or something that is present in our lives now?
4. From the reading in Matthew 4, what are the signs of the coming of the Kingdom? Which of these signs have you seen in your own experience?
5. What does Jesus say is the appropriate response to the coming of God's kingdom?
6. Do you pray for God's kingdom to come? What do you pray for when you do this?
7. What in the way that you live reflects the Christian hope in God's control over the world and history?
8. How might the prayer for 'your kingdom come' change the way that you pray in your daily prayers?
9. Create a group prayer based around the kingdom of God.

Study 4: Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

Matthew 6:9-13 & 25-34

1. What kinds of things do you regularly ask God for?
2. Is worry about food, drink, clothes, and money a significant part of your life? If not, what do you have a tendency to worry about?
3. Verse 25 begins with 'therefore'. Look back to verses 19-24 – what reason is given not to worry? What other reasons are there in the rest of the passage vv25-34?
4. Why does the Lord's Prayer only focus on asking for 'daily' bread? What are the possible dangers of having more than we need?
5. Why does Jesus say in v33 that we should seek the kingdom and righteousness first?
6. Are the promises and assurances in vv25-34 about having our needs provided by God actually realistic?
7. How might a strong confidence in the provision of God for the things that you need change the way that you pray?
8. Identify the 'daily bread' that each member of the group needs to pray for at the moment. Pray for each other that God would provide what you need.

Study 5: Forgive Us Our Sins

Matthew 6:9-15 & 18:21-35

1. Is confession a part of your regular prayers (apart from the confessions in our church services)?
2. Do you identify with Peter's questions about the limits of forgiveness in 18:21-22? How often do you think that you should forgive someone? What is Jesus's answer (look at Genesis 4:4 for an interesting contrast)?
3. Why are sins characterised as 'debts' in the Lord's Prayer?
4. Based on the parable, what is God's attitude to our debts to him?
5. Why does the parable and the Lord's Prayer make our continuing experience of forgiveness by God to be based on our own forgiving of other people? Does this contradict the 'free grace' of God and the fact that we are forgiven because of Jesus's death on the Cross?
6. What things do you find hard to forgive?
7. Why do we need to ask God for forgiveness on a regular basis?
8. Spend time in quiet asking God to bring to mind things that you should seek forgiveness for, or things that you are holding on to that others have done to you.
9. Create a group prayer of confession and forgiveness.

Study 6: Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Matthew 4:1-11 & 6:9-13

1. Do you feel that God is 'leading' you throughout your life? Give specific examples.
2. Why would we ask for God not to lead us into temptation?
3. What is the value in our faith being 'tested', or undergoing periods of temptation or trial?
4. The last line in the Lord's Prayer asks for deliverance from either the 'evil one' or just from 'evil', depending on how you translate it. What kinds of evil do we need to be delivered from?
5. What kinds of temptations did Jesus experience from Satan in the wilderness? How did he overcome them?
6. What particular trials/temptations/tests are you going through at the moment? What help do we need to overcome them?
7. Create a group prayer asking for help and guidance in our trials.
8. What have you learnt about prayer by studying the Lord's Prayer? How can you put that into practice into the future?
9. Read Psalm 23 together as a closing meditation.