

*Our Father, Who is in heaven; Hallowed be Your name;*

*Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

the *Lord's* prayer

*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*

*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

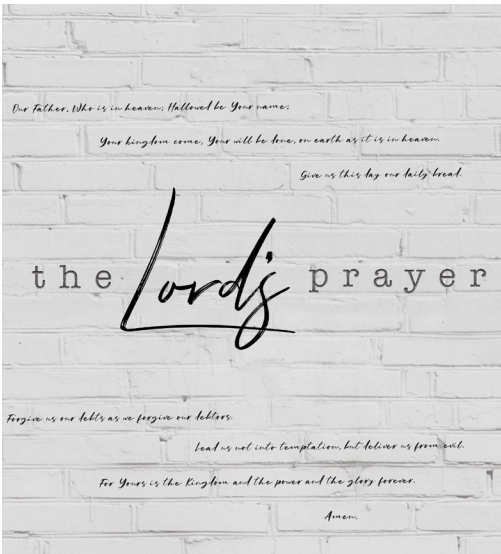
*For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever.*

*Amen.*

# Sermon Growth Guide

**July 10, 2022**

**Teach Us to Pray**



# Sermon Growth Guide

**July 10, 2022**

**The Lord's Prayer - Teach Us to Pray**

**Matthew 6:5-13**

**Key Verse:** Matthew 6:9

“This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.’”

**Big Idea:** Prayer is where we grow close to the Father and where we are shaped into Christ's likeness.

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## Foundations

This is the first week of our new series, **The Lord's Prayer**.

Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. Maybe the disciples were hoping Jesus would teach them how to say the right words to make prayer work. Maybe they are thinking of prayer as a magic incantation. Maybe they just want to know how Jesus does it because they see Him at it all the time and see how it impacts His life. Either way, they know there's something significant about prayer.

Jesus begins His instruction to them by determining that prayer is not a way to show off in front of your religious friends, it's not a formula, it's not a magic spell. Rather, prayer is an opportunity to spend time with Our Father in heaven, who already knows what we truly need!

When we spend time with anyone, we are shaped by them. At its best, prayer is not a carefully crafted petition but time spent in intimacy with a loving Father. Jesus says, pray like this: “Our Father.” This is the beginning of a loving and intimate conversation.

Throughout this series, there's an invitation for you to crawl into the lap of your Father in heaven and let Him hear what is on your heart. Don't miss it!

## Understanding God's Word

Together, read Matthew 6:5-13

Do you have a tendency to fall into one of the prayer pitfalls that Jesus identifies? What is that like?

In what ways does Jesus' framework for prayer mirror your typical prayers? How is it different?

## Applying God's Word

There is an open invitation before you to draw close to the Father in prayer.

How has your prayer life ebbed and flowed throughout the years? When have you been at high points or low points?

Are you spending enough time with God lately to be shaped by Him?

## Witnessing God's Word

Most people in our culture have positive experiences of prayer or being prayed for. One easy way to begin a spiritual conversation with someone is to ask whether you can pray for them about an issue they've brought up.

Is there someone in your life that you could intentionally offer to pray for in the coming week?

I'm Greg, one of the pastors here. I get to do a bunch of things: Young Adults, Worship, First-Time Guests... One of my favorite things is working with a course we run called "Alpha." Alpha is intended to be a place for people who are exploring faith or asking questions about the basics of Christianity to have honest conversations. We spend the first few weeks asking: "Could God Exist?" "Who is Jesus?" "Why did Jesus Die?" "How Can I Have Faith?" And then we come to two weeks on "What is Prayer?" and "What is the Bible?"

The Bible week is almost always awkward. People often don't want to talk about the Bible, people often don't understand the Bible, people are often really skeptical about the Bible, select verses from the Bible have sometimes been used in the past to attack people coming to Alpha. On the other hand, the conversations on the prayer week are usually amazing! It seems that almost every person in our culture has an experience of praying, and it's usually really positive! I heard a statistic this week that 1 in 5 atheists still engage in some kind of prayer on a daily basis... Superstition? Habit? The self-described agnostics, skeptics, and atheists engaged at Alpha are almost always interested in talking about prayer! I think it's because there's something deep inside each person that longs to connect with our creator. Some part of us that longs to know God. We may try to beat it back or deny this, but I think our souls just know better.

One of the defining aspects of Christianity is the emphasis we place on having a relationship with the creator of the universe. We make the startling claim that we actually commune with the Lord of Creation. That we are filled with God's Spirit and have an open line of communication with the King of the Heavens and Earth! And every follower of Jesus knows this personally! We know what it is to draw close to the one who sustains all of creation and to experience His presence.

But sometimes it seems that we almost forget or lose this. Time passes and we aren't as intentional about drawing close to the Lord. Life gets turbulent and we question whether or not time with the

Lord is worth anything at all. Life gets busy and time with God becomes harder to prioritize. Or, maybe you've been around the church for a while and don't know how to get started into a life of closeness with God, and at this point you're just too embarrassed to ask! Here's the deal: the practice of prayer is how we know and converse with God. Prayer is how we have a relationship with the Father, how we make our needs known, how we experience intimacy with God, and it's also a space in which we are formed and shaped into Christ's likeness.

Jesus' followers, the disciples, knew how to pray. They'd been schooled in Jewish prayers and observed the religious customs and practices that were expected of them, but there was something different about Jesus. The disciples witnessed Jesus stealing away over and over again to spend extra time in prayer. It was like he was obsessed with getting away from groups of people to be alone with God. They longed to understand what it was that made Jesus, Jesus-y, and they must have suspected that His practice of prayer could offer insight into this. In Luke's gospel, the disciples come right out and ask Jesus to teach them to pray, but in our Scripture today, Matthew 6:5-13, Jesus offers this insight as part of a larger block of teaching. Jesus says, "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

"This, then, is how you should pray:

"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

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*Amen.*

## THE LORD'S PRAYER • Matthew 6:5-13 • Greg Hartnett • July 10, 2022

temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:5-13).

This passage comes as part of Jesus' teaching on practicing spiritual disciplines in secret. In this chapter, He talks about three practices central to Jewish religious observation: Almsgiving (generosity), praying, and fasting. Jesus says that these things don't exist to impress others. Rather, these are practices by which we draw close to the Lord and in which the Holy Spirit shapes and forms us.

Jesus starts His instruction on prayer by describing what prayer is not. He says, "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:5-6).

So, the first thing we see is that Prayer isn't a way for you to show off in front of your religious friends!

Jesus says, "when you pray..." don't go out on the street corners to get noticed! This was apparently a problem in Jesus' day. Some Jews would go out in public to pray because they wanted to be seen by their neighbors as devout in order to increase their social status with their Jewish peers.

Is this a problem today? Well, not in the same way. We have street-corner preachers, but I don't see a lot of street-corner pray-ers out there...

When I was in high school, "See You at the Pole" was an initiative for Christian teenagers to rally around the flagpole at their school each September to spend time praying for fellow students, the administration, coaches, and teachers. It was also a chance to identify the other Christians in your school so that you could encourage one another in the coming school year. I don't think that these kinds of prayer gatherings are exactly what Jesus has in mind, though it was certainly possible to go into SYATP or today to go into some similar prayer meeting with selfish motives, to be seen, to be heard...

Jesus' instruction to His followers is to find a private space to pray. I've spoken with a lot of people about having a "prayer chair" or something like that in their home. A specific place where they go each day to pray, and that's all that they use the chair for. It helps them carve out space in their mind and helps them get into a posture of prayer more quickly.

Some people have little prayer closets that they'll design. Pinterest has lots of examples that include sticky notes, bean bags, essential oils... some people get really serious about creating these kinds of spaces.

But, long before Pinterest, Jesus instructs His followers to do this. I learned in my studies this week that in Jesus' day, the only room on a poor Palestinian farm that could be locked was the supply closet. Jesus tells people to go to a really unholy/messy place with tools/feed/etc.

Let's not miss this: Before Jesus, the Holy of Holies was the special place that God communed with His people. It was only in the most sacred center of the Tabernacle/Temple that God's presence interacted with humanity on a consistent basis.

Now, with Jesus, any room with a lock becomes a space to facilitate this kind of communion with the Lord. In Jesus, God draws close to His people, and we are invited into this relationship in prayer!

Jesus goes on: "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:7-8).

So, second, we learn that: Prayer isn't a formula, it's a conversation!

The pagans, the non-Jews in Jesus' day, taught that the gods would only take you seriously if you exhausted yourself before the deity to prove your sincerity. The Roman philosopher Seneca, who lived at the time of Jesus, encouraged people to, "Fatigue the gods" with their prayers. The Roman poet, Martial, who was also active in the first century, wrote about prayer, "Let each one wear himself out with his petitions."

At the heart of this is the thought that

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*Amen.*

one might compel a deity to look upon them favorably, to respond to their requests, if they uttered the right words in the right order, or if they spoke the right number of words. This approach views prayer more like a magical incantation than a conversational relationship.

I think that sometimes we're still tempted to think of prayer like this.

We wouldn't say it out loud, but what's going on in the back of our minds is, "If I can just say the right things, or if I can just keep after it long enough, surely God will do what I want Him to!"

Within Christianity there are varying suggestions about how to approach prayer. At best, these kinds of prayer disciplines and prayer practices can serve to train the mind and the heart. Establishing a fixed-hour prayer practice can ensure that we don't ignore or forget to spend time with God. But, at worst, these kinds of practices reinforce a sense that we can make God give us what we want if we recite the proper formula or words of the spell at the proper time.

Jesus teaches us something different. Jesus calls His followers to simplicity, for the Father already knows what we need! One scholar wrote regarding this verse, "Prayer is not an intelligence briefing FOR God; it is intelligent conversation WITH God.—Dale Bruner" In prayer, we draw close to the Father, bringing our hearts, our souls, our burdens, our needs, and we are met with love.

After explaining how His followers should approach prayer differently from their contemporaries, Jesus begins sketching a vision for what prayer is supposed to look like.

But even in following Jesus' model, we can sometimes be tempted to approach this prayer as an incantation, a magic formula. OR, today, maybe we see it as more of an obligatory speedbump in our liturgy, an irrelevant relic.

To combat that in this series, we're going to begin using the updated language of the NIV rather than the King James Version from the 1600s in worship ("Your" rather than "Thee/Thy") The hope here is that in updating our language, we might be challenged to pray this prayer in a fresh way together!

So, let's start into Jesus's model for prayer: "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

V9 - In the Old Testament, the people have many names for God: El Shaddai, Adonai, Yahweh, Jehovah, Elohim, etc. But that's not where Jesus starts. He offers an alternative... Father.

Our 3-year-old, Levi is simply adorable right now. He's a cuddler and he gives these tight, squishy little hugs. And one of my favorite things he says right now is, "Oh yes, thank you Dada!" in a very serious manner. If I get him a glass of water, "Oh! Thank you Dada!" If I help tie his little shoes, "Thank you Dada!" My heart melts every time...

The word Jesus uses for Father in this prayer is probably the Aramaic word "abba" which is like dada/daddy/papa as my little Levi uses it. But, unlike "daddy" in our context, abba would be used throughout adulthood. It is both a term of intimacy, love, affection while also carrying a sense of authority and strength. Jesus invites His followers to a personal relationship with the Father, one that is loving and carries authority. This can be a wonderful realization, but the idea of "Father" is also hard for many of us. Many of us have very bad examples of what a "father" is. Rather than being a term of endearment and affection, for many, "Father" brings up memories of anger, distance, abuse, loss, absence, etc. For many of us, our fathers weren't or aren't safe people. This is on my mind a lot right now as our kids are in their formative years. What's the image of "father" that our kids are currently developing? Absent most evenings? Disciplinarian? A man addicted to his phone? May it not be so!

Regardless of our experience with our earthly fathers, this is the image Jesus gives us of God. He is our good Father. And, beyond just offering a nice sentiment, Jesus makes a startling theological declaration in this verse. We know that Jesus' relationship to the Father is unique, that Jesus alone is THE Son. So, when Jesus invites His followers to call His Father, "Our Father," He is bringing us into a special relationship with God! Without a lot of fanfare,

*Our Father,  
Who is in heaven;  
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Your will be done,  
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*Forgive us our debts  
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*Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.*

*For Yours is the Kingdom  
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the glory forever.*

*Amen.*

Jesus announces that His followers are adopted into the family of God! You and I are adopted into the family of God! Jesus offers His followers a home, a new family, a place to belong. This is good news!

We're not going to try to cover the entire prayer this morning. In the weeks ahead we'll dig into the content of the prayer that Jesus teaches, but I want to go back and make sure we don't miss something in verse eight: "Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8). If God already knows what we're going to say, what's the point of prayer? In my experience, it's the way we have intimacy and relationship with God, but also, prayer often serves as a kind of forge in which we are SHAPED and FORMED.

There's a common idea out there that you are essentially the amalgamation of the five people you spend the most time with, and there's a bit of research to back this up. It seems that if your five best friends smoke, you're much more likely to smoke. If your five best friends are fitness junkies, you're more likely to spend a good amount of time at the gym.

Pastor Andy Stanley often says, "Show me your friends and I'll show you the quality and direction of your life." That was practically a mantra for me when I was in Youth Ministry! I was constantly asking teenagers, "Who are you spending time with? Are they encouraging you to become more or less like Jesus? More or less like the person you want to be?"

One of my favorite definitions of friendship is "wasting time together." Isn't that true? Walking aimlessly, drinking coffee together, throwing a frisbee, shooting pool, etc. Just being together. The invitation we have in prayer is to spend time with God. Are you "wasting time" with Him? I know... can you say time spent with the Lord is "wasted?" of course not, but you get the idea...

In Scripture, Jesus calls His followers, "friends." Are you spending enough time with the Lord that He can get to work influencing you?

See, when we spend time with the Father in prayer, when we have honest, private conversations with the Lord, when we speak plainly, naturally, with emotion, and then sit to listen for God's still small voice in our hearts, the Holy Spirit works on us... forms us... shapes us.

I love country radio. Some of that is because it's just so layered and complex!! I mean... You know you can even listen to country music backwards, right? It's great! When you do that, you get your house back, your wife back, your dog back, your truck back. What an incredible art form! Anyway... This song came out like 15 years ago, long before I had kids and I always thought it was kind of cute. It's called, "Watching You" by Rodney Atkins and it tells the story about a father and his 4-year-old son.

They're driving around town in dad's truck eating fast food when dad slams on the brakes for a red light. The son's fries go flying and out of his mouth comes a 4-letter-word... you know. Later in the song, the dad observes his 4-year-old at bedtime and sees him get out of bed, rest on his knees, and begin praying to God like he's talking to a friend.

After each of these instances, the dad asks: Son, where'd you learn to talk like that? Pray like that?

And this eloquent, lyrically-inclined 4-year-old says, "I've been watching you dad, ain't that cool

*I'm your buckaroo, I wanna be like you  
And eat all my food and grow as tall as  
you are*

*We like fixing things and holding  
mama's hand*

*Yeah we're just alike, ain't we dad  
I wanna do everything you do  
So, I've been watching you."*

This song comes on the radio a few weeks ago, and I was wrecked. I lost it. I'm just bawling in my truck! My then

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*Amen.*

4-year-old Judah was in his car seat like, "Are you okay dad?!" "YES SON!!!" Time with the Lord, prayer, shapes us. We are sons and daughters of the King over all creation. That is who you are!!! In prayer, we're invited to rest in the father-ness of God and our child-ness. In prayer, we grow in the confidence of the love of our Father. In prayer, we're reminded of whose we are, and therefore who we are. And then, after laying our burdens at the feet of the Father, after making our requests known, we go out into the world, Re-shaped, Re-formed, with fresh God-shaped lenses that challenge us to view situations and others differently.

The disciples knew that there was something special about Jesus' way of praying, and they learned that it had a lot to do with coming before a loving Father. Don't you desire the kind of intimacy/relationship with the Lord that Jesus offers? Can't you imagine the sense of joy, peace, and security that would come with a rich relationship with the creator and sustainer of all things?

Friends, this is beginning of a new series. We're going to spend the rest of the summer thinking about prayer and really digging deep into the model for prayer that Jesus taught his followers. And we're doing this because we know that prayer is essential for our souls! We cannot live the full life God has for us if we are not connecting into the source, being with the Lord on a consistent basis. It's how we know God, and it is how we are formed.

So, here's the invitation over the next six weeks (You'll want to write this down): Pray!

If this is new for you, or if it's been a while since you've given much thought to your prayer life, commit to taking five minutes in the morning or evening. Sit in a quiet place at the same time each day, set a five-minute timer on your phone, talk to God, then pause to listen. If you get stuck, use the Lord's Prayer in these verses to guide you.

For those of you who have an established prayer practice, consider integrating the Lord's Prayer into your prayer time over the next six weeks. Use

it as a framework and see what fruit comes of it.

Dear ones, there's something deep inside each of us that longs to connect with our creator. A part of us that longs to know our Father. This is the invitation before us. Let's not miss it.

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