

PRAYER THAT WORKS

MODEL PRAYING

Study

6

Model Praying

- Review last lesson's homework
- The prayer Jesus gave
- A.C.T.S.
- The benefits of pattern praying
- Keeping a prayer list

THE PRAYER JESUS GAVE

We generally refer to the prayer which Jesus gave His disciples as "The Lord's Prayer." The disciples had been with Jesus only for a short time and already they had observed Him in almost constant prayer. But Christ seemed to pray with a passion and confidence which the disciples had not seen in any of their religious leaders.

1. In one sense, *prayer is simple* - but in another sense *prayer is not a simple exercise*. Read Luke 11:1. How does this reveal that *prayer is not necessarily a simple exercise*?

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Speaker wants to scrap Lord's Prayer

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Government and Opposition parties have poured cold water on a call by House of Representatives Speaker Harry Jenkins to abandon the daily Lord's Prayer recital in Federal Parliament. Speaker of the House of Representatives, Harry Jenkins, has called for a public debate about whether the daily prayer should be rewritten or replaced, *The Herald-Sun* reports. His call has been met with protests from the Australian Christian Lobby and expressions of support for the prayer from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull. A spokeswoman for Kevin Rudd said the Prime Minister viewed the prayer as an important tradition that should not be broken.

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If prayer was only simple, then it is curious that the Disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray.

2. How does Matthew 6:7 show us that Jesus never intended for the “Lord’s Prayer” to be repeated mindlessly?
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It is of course possible to take a ‘model prayer’ and make it a *heartfelt* prayer. But this probably takes much practice and a great amount of reflection about what is being prayed. Perhaps our ability to reflect on the Lord’s Prayer might be aided by considering it more closely.

OUR FATHER

3. According to the Apostle Peter, referring to God as “Father” in our prayers involves living a certain way. How are we to live if call upon God as our Father? (1Peter 1:17)
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4. How did Jesus say we should live if we call God in heaven “our father” based on Matthew 5:16?
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Some people unfortunately have had a bad experience with their earthly father. A father is supposed to be a *provider*, *protector*, and *priest*. God is the Ultimate expression of what a father really is. Each of these aspects of God’s fatherhood (*provide/protector/priest*) is extolled in the Lord’s Prayer.

5. What encouraging things did Christ reveal about our Heavenly Father in Matthew 6:6, 8, 26, 32; 7:11?
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When we pray, we do not pray to some impersonal energy force—we pray to our Heavenly Father who loves us dearly and wants the very best for us. We can pray with confidence that the father-heart of God longs for our best welfare. God, our heavenly Father, knows what we need even before we ask.

IN HEAVEN

Some people have the idea that heaven is somewhere within our universe. As difficult as it is to understand, heaven is not somewhere within our universe! Rather, heaven is a spiritual dimension that is intimately connected with our dimensions of space and time. If we could see the spiritual realm we might be able to see that there are *three realms of heaven*. The first realm of the heavens is physical. It is the sky above us (Psalm 19:1; 2Peter 3:12). The second realm, referred to in Scripture as “the heavenlies” or “principalities”, is where demons operate (Eph. 3:10; 6:12).

6. How did Paul refer to the realm in which God immediately dwells? (2Corinthians 12:2)
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When the Old Covenant was brought to an end, Satan’s access to our Heavenly Father, in the Third Heaven (also referred to as “Heaven”), ceased (Revelation 12:9-10). When Christ walked the earth, the Jews of that day refused to take the name of God on their lips. Instead, they replaced the word “God” with the nearest word that expressed who God was: *Heaven*. This is why Matthew, writing his Gospel to a Jewish audience, chose to record Christ’s statements about “the kingdom of God” as “the kingdom of *Heaven*” (compare Matthew 5:3 with Luke 6:20).

But Christ taught His disciples to pray to the God who rules from the realm of Heaven. They were not to pray to *Heaven*, but to the God who *dwells in Heaven*. In Revelation 4:6 it symbolically describes Heaven as “Throne” of God, which is surrounded by “sea” as calm as “glass” or “crystal”. This speaks of the infinite peace that is associated with the very presence of God. When we pray to our

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Father in Heaven we are praying to the God who is seated on the Throne and is surrounded by infinite peace. Don't think of "heaven" as being located in a galaxy far far away, but rather as a dimension that is right here but *unseen*. Remember the episode in Acts 7 when Stephen was being stoned to death? The Lord opened his eyes and he saw heaven right where he was. He saw God on the Throne and Christ standing at the Father's right hand. Consider this the next time you address God in prayer.

7. How does Romans 8:15 reveal the benefit of having God as our Heavenly Father?
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HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

Using the Lord's Prayer as a model, we are instructed to open our prayer by addressing the One we are praying to. We are not praying to Heaven, or to any of the occupants of Heaven (such as "saints") but to the *One* who rules from Heaven. In the ancient Hebrew culture, a name carries a meaning more than a mere identifying tag - it captured the character of that person. When God wanted His people to understand an aspect of His character, He would identify Himself with a particular name and often include a title as a suffix to that name.

| Name of God | Meaning | Example |
|---------------|---|--------------------------------|
| El | Mighty | Genesis 14:18 |
| Elohim | Mighty Ones | Genesis 1:1 |
| YHWH (Yahweh) | I AM <small>(Covenant name of God)</small> | Genesis 2:4-5 (Exodus 3:14) |
| Adonai | Lord | Psalm 40:17 |
| El-Shaddai | Lord Almighty | Psalm 91:1 |

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God is also given titles to describe His relationship with His people, such as-

| Titles of God | Meaning | Example |
|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Yahweh Shalom | The LORD is peace | Judges 6:24 |
| Yahweh Jireh | The LORD provides | Gen. 22:13-14 |
| Yahweh Rapha | The LORD heals | Exodus 15:26 |
| Yahweh Rohi | The LORD is my Shepherd | Psalm 23:1 |

God is also described with various terms and metaphors, such as-

- BRANCH.....Jeremiah 33:15
- BREAD OF GOD.....John 6:33
- BREAD OF LIFE.....John 6:35
- BRIDEGROOM.....Isaiah 62:56
- BRIGHT MORNING STAR.....Revelation 22:16
- CHIEF SHEPHERD.....1 Peter 5:4
- CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL.....Luke 2:25
- CONSUMING FIRE.....Deut. 4:24, Heb. 12:29
- CORNERSTONE.....Isaiah 28:16
- COUNSELOR.....Isaiah 9:6
- DESIRED OF ALL NATIONS.....Haggai 2:7
- DOOR.....John 10:7
- FIRSTFRUITS.....1 Cor. 15:20-23
- GOOD SHEPHERD.....John 10:11
- GREAT HIGH PRIEST.....Hebrews 4:14
- HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL.....Isaiah 49:7
- LAMB OF GOD.....John 1:29

To “hallow” is to *regard as holy*. When we pray, we should adore God as He is revealed to us in His various names and regard His name as the sum of all He is (Psalm 34:3; 138:2).

YOUR KINGDOM COME

The Kingdom of God is the rule of God over the whole earth. It contrasted with the rule of God over Israel. It was the message of many of the prophets that a day was coming when all nations would acknowledge God as their King (Psalm 67:2; 72:11, 17; Isaiah 66:18; Jeremiah 3:17; Malachi 3:12). The prophetic ‘promise’ that the Kingdom of God would one day come was a hope that every Jew held with an expectation that its arrival would rid them of the abominable Roman oppressors (note Mark 15:43). Jesus centred much of His teaching on the Kingdom of God, which Matthew deliberately refers to as *the Kingdom of Heaven*. But perhaps to the bewilderment of His audience, Christ taught that this Kingdom was not to be thought of as a *physical* Kingdom.

8. What does Luke 17:20-21 reveal about the Kingdom of God that Christ taught?
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Even today there are some Christians who don’t realise what Jesus was saying about the nature of the Kingdom of God. He didn’t speak of it being a Kingdom that was two thousand years away! He used such expressions as- *the kingdom of God has come upon you* (Matthew 12:28), *the kingdom of God is at hand* (Mark 1:15), *the kingdom of God has come near to you* (Luke 10:9), *the kingdom of God has come near* (Luke 10:11). Added to this, Jesus plainly told His disciples that many of them would “see” the Kingdom of God come (Matthew 16:28).

Put simply, the Kingdom of God is where God is King! When we pray today for *Your Kingdom come* we should be praying for God to be the King of our lives and for Him to help us to submit to Him.

When the Old Testament was brought to an end in 70AD, the Kingdom of Christ had then come.

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YOUR WILL BE DONE

Human nature causes us to deteriorate our spiritual life. At the core of the Christian's spiritual life is their utter devotion to God and His will. The more we move away from that core, which is all too easy to do, the less truly spiritual we become. This is why we should continually pray for God's will to be done in us.

9. Read Philippians 2:12-13. What is it that enables us to do the will of God?
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10. What do you think the main reason is for believers not conforming to the will of God?
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Each day, as you pray through this model prayer, ensure that you do not fail to omit asking for God to have His will done in your life.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Some believers claim that it is unspiritual to ask God for material things. But in the model prayer which Christ gave His followers He included this very material phrase. We are told by Christ to ask God to meet our daily physical needs.

11. What promise from God can we take heart from in Philippians 4:19 that should encourage us to pray to God for our needs to be met?
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12. What are three urgent physical/material needs that you would like God to meet?
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FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS

Some preachers teach that once you become a Christian (by having your sins forgiven) you never need to ask God to forgive you of your sins again. But this model prayer includes the prayer for God to forgive us for our sins. It takes humility to acknowledge that we are guilty of sin. It takes even more humility to ask God for forgiveness.

13. What does the Scripture promise for those who humble themselves before God? (James 4:6)
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14. Can the believer legitimately pray Psalm 51 today?
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Interestingly, this is the only aspect of this model prayer which Christ immediately elaborates on.

15. How are we to respond to God's forgiveness according to Matthew 6:12, 14?
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We do forgive others *in order to be forgiven by God*. Rather, we can forgive others because we have been forgiven.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

This model prayer leads the believer to pray for a deeper respect for sin in much the same way we should respect poison, the edges of high cliffs, and swimming with sharks. If you respect sin, you will recognise how dangerous it is. The first step into sin is *yielding to temptation*.

16. Apart from Prayer, what else did Jesus say His followers should do regarding the dangers of temptation? (Matt. 26:41)
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17. What promise about temptation does First Corinthians 10:13?

DELIVER US FROM EVIL

The forces of evil are at work against the believer. Even Jesus had to overcome the onslaught of the Evil One (Matt. 4).

18. Note Luke 22:31-32. What affect does prayer have on the believer's protection from evil? What does this tell us about how Jesus treats followers who fail Him?

Pray that God will keep you from the Evil One.

YOURS IS THE KINGDOM, THE POWER, AND THE GLORY

Acknowledging God is the essence of worship. In the model prayer which Jesus gave, He rounded off this prayer by leading His followers to acknowledge God as the Ruler of their lives ("Yours is the 'Kingdom'"), the source of strength to do anything ("Yours is the 'power'") and the reason for living ("Yours is the 'glory'").

19. What are three things you can thank God for?

If you spent just a few minutes each day praying through these model prayer aspects you will deepen your prayer life and discover that enduring in prayer is easier when you pray along the lines of a model prayer.

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SPEND AN HOUR IN PRAYER



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A.C.T.S.

There is a popular model prayer based on the acronym - A.C.T.S.

- A** Adore: praise and worship God
- C** Confess: your sins to God and ask for forgiveness
- T** Thank: acknowledge your blessings to God
- S** Supplications: present your requests to God

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THE BENEFIT OF PATTERN PRAYING

20. What benefits can you see that there might be in praying according to a pattern or model?

We still do. Most of us struggle with prayers. We forget to pray, and when we remember, we hurry through prayers with hollow words. Our minds drift; our thoughts scatter like a covey of quail. Why is this? Prayer requires minimal effort. No location is prescribed. No particular clothing is required. No title or office is stipulated. You'd think we were wrestling a greased pig.

Max Lucado, "Out Live Your Life", page 140

21. What might the possible disadvantage(s) be?

KEEPING A PRAYER LIST

Our passionate prayers move the heart of God. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). Prayer does not change God's nature; who he is will never be altered. Prayer does, however, impact the flow of history. God has wired his world for power, but he calls on us to flip the switch.

Max Lucado, "Out Live Your Life", page 138

Some day, it would be a valuable spiritual exercise to write a prayer list. You might choose to categories your prayer points under the following categories listed over the page. This prayer list might be something which you pray through once a month either in one sitting or by taking one of the four sections and praying one section per week.

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22. Complete 5 prayer points under each of these categories-

FAMILY

FRIENDS

CHURCH

MY DREAMS

Your homework for our next Bible study meeting is to do the following-

1. Pray through a model prayer each day until our next Bible Study.
2. Attempt to pray one day without ceasing.
3. Pray through your Prayer List at least once before our next meeting.
4. Note any answers to your prayers to report in our next meeting.

Amen.