



Prayer was important to Jesus. Luke tells us, “[He] often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16).” Before choosing his disciples, he prayed all night (Luke 6:12). His disciples must have realized how vital prayer was for Jesus because they asked him, “Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1).”

I am sure the conversation was more involved than the few lines preserved for us in the gospels, but Jesus’ answer is strikingly uncomplicated. While we tend to view prayer as an unwieldy spiritual discipline, Jesus invites us into a gentle conversation with our heavenly Father.

Jesus introduces us to prayer with a warning. “Don’t try to impress each other.” “Don’t even try to try to impress God.” Then he reassures us, “Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” “[He] knows what you need before you even ask him (my paraphrase of Matthew 6:5-8).”

He follows with a framework for prayer, we’ve come to know as the “Lord’s Prayer.” It might better be described as “The Disciples Prayer” or “A Model Prayer.” Jesus tells us,

“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 temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (Matthew 6:9-13).’”

We are tempted to think, “There has to be more!” But Jesus’ model is as simple as it is elegant. Sure, there’s a lot more we can bring to prayer, but Jesus’ prayer radically reshapes the way we think about prayer. It is a prayer for the children of God, a prayer for the people of God, and, most importantly, a prayer that begins and ends with God.

A PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN OF GOD (v. 9)

We should never lose sight of what a remarkable privilege it is to know God as Father. The Old Testament frequently describes God as a father, but it is rare for someone to address God as “Father” or even think of him as their Father. The Lord’s Prayer invites us to move beyond the metaphor and actually know God as Father. Most scholars believe the word Jesus has in mind is “Abba”—a term of deep affection and endearment.

VERSE 9: Our Father in heaven...

1. The New Testament speaks of Jesus as God’s “One and Only Son (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9),” and describes believers as those who have been “adopted into sonship (Romans 8:15, 23; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5).” Why do you think the New Testament writers make this distinction?
2. What are some of the unique privileges Jesus enjoys as the “One and Only Son?”
3. What are some of the unique privileges we enjoy as those who have been “adopted into Sonship?”
4. How do we come into those privileges?
5. How does knowing God as “Our Father” change the way we pray?

A PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD (vv. 9, 11-13)

The rhythm of “The Lord’s Prayer” is not so much “me and mine” as it is “our and us.” While Jesus warns his disciples not to pray to impress one another, he nevertheless invites them to pray with one another and to pray with each other in mind.

VERSES 9, 11-13: “Our Father 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 temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

1. Why do you think Jesus chooses the language of “our and us” rather than “me and mine?”
2. Our culture is by and large individualistic. We often think of our relationship with the Lord as personal and private. How can individualism be destructive to our walk with Christ?

3. Why is biblical community important?
4. What are some of the things that make living in community difficult?
5. How does praying with other believers in mind change the way we pray?
6. How does praying with other believers change the way we pray?
7. What are some practical steps we can take to cultivate biblical community?

A PRAYER THAT BEGINS AND ENDS WITH GOD (vv. 9-10; 11-13)

The Lord’s Prayer falls neatly into two halves. We begin with God’s name, kingdom, and will. Then we move seamlessly into our daily needs. One might say the prayer starts in heaven and ends up on earth.

VERSES 9-10: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

VERSES 11-13: Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ “

1. Why do you think Jesus chooses to turn our attention to God’s name, kingdom, and will before focussing on our daily needs?
2. What happens when we focus on our needs without reminding ourselves of God’s grandeur and glory?
3. How does focusing on God’s name, kingdom, and will change the way we think about our needs?
4. What are the particular needs Jesus wants us to bring before the Father?
5. Which of these are we prone to neglect? Why?
6. What are some ways the Lord’s Prayer can and should reshape the way we pray?