we Pray 2026: Life Group Prayer Series

The Lord's Prayer, Session 1

Participant Handout

Background and Context of the Lord's Prayer

- The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 is part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches His followers how we are to live (to a very high ethical standard); the teaching on prayer is part of how we should live.
- Jesus provides a teaching on prayer (Matthew 6:5-8) immediately before the Lord's Prayer in which He states that we should not pray hypocritically (trying to impress others with our prayers), nor should we "babble" (repeat words without thinking about them)
- Jesus does NOT teach that we should not pray publicly (Jesus did), nor does He teach that we should not repeat prayers.
- As Michael Wilkins notes in his commentary, Jesus teaches the disciples (and us) to pray "to express their desires, their needs, and their dependence on their heavenly Father."[1]
- There is another version in Luke 11:1-4 which has much of the same wording, though it is a little bit shorter. In the Luke version, the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray like He does. In the Matthew version, it is part of Jesus' larger teachings in the sermon.
- The prayer has two parts, the first focused on three petitions, or requests, to God and emphasize His grandeur, and the second set of petitions which focus on our everyday lives. It consists of six petitions to God (some commentaries list seven instead of six).
- As we will see, the prayer contains the most essential elements of Jesus' teachings (which are noted in the sessions as "Basic Christian Beliefs").
- This prayer is a model or example prayer, and Jesus does not suggest it should be the only prayer we pray. The ideas it contains help us to pray better and help to grow as disciples.
- The "traditional" ending (For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever): many biblical manuscripts do not contain the ending, so many translations do not either. We will consider the ending more in Session 3.

The Opening Lines of the Prayer (verse 9)

Jesus begins the prayer with this direction for the disciples: "This, then, is how you should pray:"

- The "you" is plural, so He is addressing all the disciples as a group, and not as individuals.
- Because the prayer is modeled for all believers, and is given in the plural, it often gets recited in worship services or other group settings (and Life Groups!).

The Introduction:

- Jesus begins the prayer addressing God.
- Jesus begins with "our," a plural pronoun which immediately puts it in the context of all believers. It is not just about us as individuals, but we are praying to God about all disciples, about the whole church, about God's kingdom.
- By using similar language to His own (Jesus called God "my Father"), Jesus invites us to share in His own prayer life which showed a vibrant and living connection to His Father.
- By telling us to call God "Father," Jesus invites us into His relationship with His Father, reminding us that we are children of God who have the privilege of calling God "Father."

[1] Wilkins, Michael. The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 274.

Jesus could have had us address God any number of ways (ruler, king, sovereign, etc.) but instead we call God Father. We are a member of His family.

- If we are all God's children, then as believers we are all siblings. Fellow believers are our brothers and sisters, the closest of relations.
- Our status as God's children in one family reflects the very nature of God, who is three in one. God is one, but is a plurality of three; we are children in one family, but are plurality of all believers. We are a sibling with apostles like Peter, James, John, Paul, and with the believer sitting next to us.
- Jesus also included God's location, in heaven, where He is sitting on His throne. When we pray this prayer, we come before the very throne of God.
- Jesus is NOT suggesting that God is not omnipresent (present everywhere all the time), but by including heaven lifts our souls up to God
- In Jesus' day, Jews often prayed looking up to God in heaven, so this would have been a typical way for the disciples to understand God's location.
- *Basic Christian Belief*: God is our Father who loves us unconditionally, and we can come before His throne in heaven in prayer.

The First Petition

- To be "holy" is to be separate from that which is sinful or impure. God is completely without sin, completely pure, and is therefore completely holy.
- The Bible consistently affirms that God is holy. Of all of God's attributes, this is the only one that is repeated three times (Rev. 4:8 "'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty,' who was, and is, and is to come," also Isaiah 6:3 "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory"), so it is logical that Jesus would include this first in the prayer. God's holiness is fundamental, and Jesus builds the prayer on that foundation.
- When asked, Jesus answered that the greatest commandment was "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Mark 12:29-31). Jesus put our reverence for God first. When we are reverent before God and acknowledge His perfection, we honor Him and His name and make Him and His name holy.
- The 10 Commandments: The first four commandments are about God, and commandment #3 (Exodus 20:7) reminds us not to misuse/take in vain the name of God. Misusing the name of God diminishes it, making it less holy because we are making it impure.
- Praying the way Jesus taught us brings glory to God, and hallows His name.
- *Basic Christian Belief*: Jesus reminds us that only God is holy, because only God is perfect, sinless, endlessly forgiving, endlessly loving, etc. The holiness of God is one of the foundations of Christian belief.