

# LESSON 7: TALKING TO GOD

## BIG IDEA

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 walks us through how to pray. The Lord's Prayer is not the only way to pray, but it provides a guideline for how we can pray effectively. Many of us have repeated the Lord's Prayer by memory or read it word for word as a more general prayer, but it is also valuable as an outline for our prayer life. The Lord's Prayer is simple, beautiful, and powerful. If we draw out the principles in His prayer, we can use them to help us develop our own prayer life.

## DISCUSSION

- What are some potential distractions that get in the way of spending time in prayer?
- God responds to the prayers of His people, and His answers sometimes surprise us. Share a time when God answered your prayer.
- Complete this exercise. Matthew 7 explains prayer like knocking on a door. Imagine the following:
  - Close your eyes. Imagine yourself about to go through a door with God on the other side. As you stand at the door preparing to enter the room...
    - How are you feeling?
    - God knows you are coming. How is he feeling?
    - Do you see a door(s)? If so, describe it.
    - Go through the door. What does the room look like? Where is God in the room? What is he doing?
    - How does the room feel now that you're with Him in the room?
    - Where are you in the room when you get settled?
    - Who talks first? What do they say?

## TEACHING

*Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." (Lk 11:1)*

*Pray then like this: "Our Father 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, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matt 6:9-13)*

Like us, the disciples knew how to pray. Many of Jesus' followers were raised in Jewish homes and had been around prayer and worship. They had heard prayer and had prayed many times, but they had not prayed like Jesus. There was something about the way Jesus prayed that stood out to them and compelled them to ask for help. Humility isn't just a great posture for prayer. Humility is the foundation of prayer. We pray in dependence and in need. We are talking to our Father, who is faithful, powerful, and good.

Jesus didn't correct the disciples when they asked for help. He didn't say they were doing it wrong, and He didn't shame them. He simply taught them. Rabbinic teaching was typically topical. The intent was to present broad strokes and allow the listener to make the application. The prayer Jesus taught was not necessarily meant to be repeated word for word or serve as a magical recipe. It is simply topical categories of prayer.

## Jesus teaching us: His prayer, our example.

### Connect with God relationally.

"Our Father in heaven"

*For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:15)*

When you pray, remember your identity: We are sons and daughters, heirs of the Most High God, who offers Himself to us as our Father. You don't pray to come to a King who is distant and disconnected from you. You don't need to grovel or make sure you have it all together before you pray. You are entering the presence of your Father, who anticipates your arrival and the time you will spend together.

Tip: Pray out loud. God knows our thoughts, but I believe He loves to hear our voice.

### Worship His Name.

"Hallowed be Your Name"

*The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe. (Prov 18:10)*

There is something about the name of God. The mere mention of His name has power! Jesus uses the word "hallowed," which means "holy and consecrated". God's name is set apart; there is no one like Him. When we pray, we begin by connecting with God, but then we acknowledge that our God is special. God is powerful, Holy, and worthy of our worship and trust!

Tip: Use worship music for extended prayer times. Don't worry about your vocal ability. God is blessed by your heart, not your singing ability.

### Pray His agenda first.

"Your Kingdom come Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Mt 6:33)*

I would rather pray for His will than mine. Because we know God loves us, and because we know He is holy, good, and powerful, we submit ourselves to His best plans and perspectives. Often, we think of prayer as a laundry list of our requests and desires, which God will affirm or deny. However, prayer is aligning yourself with God and his will.

**Tip: Find a posture that helps- pacing, kneeling, standing.** God doesn't care about your posture or position. This practice is simply to find what allows us to focus on God, undistracted. Some of us need to fidget and move, and some of us need to be still and quiet. Experiment with what works for you. Give yourself the space to have different postures in different seasons.

## Depend on Him for everything.

"Give us this day our daily bread"

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. (Ps 121:1-2)*

Prayer is doing more than we can see because God is doing more than we know. We don't bring our needs to God because He doesn't know what they are. We bring our needs to God to say we trust Him with what we need. Remember that God can do what we need, but be sure to trust His version of what we truly need. Scripture teaches us that we are prone to ask for the wrong things based on our perspectives and definitions of need. Make your requests boldly and with dependence that God knows best.

**Tip: As you ask God for your needs, be sure to thank God for your blessings.** Our needs can overwhelm us. Practicing gratitude puts our needs in perspective and reminds us of God's faithfulness.

## Get your heart right with God and people.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

Forgiveness can be the greatest key to freedom in our lives. The Gospel is that God forgives us AND sets us free. The foundation of both is confession. The Apostle John teaches us one of the most comforting truths of our faith: when we confess our sins, God forgives us. The payment of our sins was made by Jesus. Confession simply agrees with God about our sin and brings it into the light of God's grace.

**Tip: Ask God for forgiveness, then tell a friend for freedom.** The book of James teaches us to confess our sins to one another so we can be healed. As you pray, be sensitive to God's Spirit about the conversations you need to have with people in your life.

## Engage in spiritual warfare.

"And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one"

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, (Eph 6:12, 18)*

Prayer is communion with God and confrontation with the enemy. We need the blessing and the protection that comes from being in the presence of and communion with God.

But, as Christians, we are also called to wage war. This war is not against other people, but against spiritual darkness. Part of our defense and attack in spiritual warfare is prayer. We are covered by the name, authority, and power of our Savior, while at the same time pushing back on the plans and purposes of the enemy through prayer.

**Tip: Pray across time.** Pray against regret in the past. Pray for what you face, your circumstances, and your needs with gratitude in the present. Pray toward the future and all God has for you in it. Pray them all in the name of Jesus, believing in God's redemptive purposes for you.

## Express faith in God's ability.

"For yours is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever."

*'Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. (Jer 32:17)*

*And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Rev 5:13)*

A great joy of prayer is knowing the punchline. We know God wins! Pray victoriously and with great anticipation and hope.

**Tip: Worship every time you pray.** It is easy for prayer to become about you. Make sure every time you pray, it involves talking to God about God. Tell Him who He is, has been, and will continue to be in your life. Tell Him you love Him. Tell Him what you are grateful for. Pray to make much of Jesus!

## DIG DEEPER

- Is prayer your first response or your last resort?
- What does your prayer life look like? Are you in constant communication with God or praying only when you need something?
- Has your prayer life changed since starting this Small Group? If so, how?

## COMMON QUESTIONS

### Does God heal the sick?

Yes, God is still the Great Physician. Healing the sick is illustrated in the life and ministry of Jesus, and included in the commission of Jesus to His disciples. Healing is also one of the gifts of the Spirit. For some examples, check out Matthew 8:16-17, Acts 8:6-7, and especially James 5:14-16.

### Why doesn't God answer all of our prayers?

He does! Sometimes, we get stuck on the idea that "yes" is the only answer that counts. God may answer with "not right now," or "I have something better for you." Often, when we look back over time, we are able to see how God was moving and realize He knew better

than we did and removed an opportunity, or closed a door, that ended up leading us to more joy, freedom, and life.

### How often should we pray?

1 Thessalonians 5 gives us an answer. It says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Essentially, pray anytime there's an opportunity — no matter where you are or what you're doing. Use every occasion, every season, and every possible moment to pray. It doesn't have to be formal. Make talking with God a part of your everyday habits.

### What is God's will?

It is the Father's will to see the lost saved and to see the saved become whole, healthy, and successful in all areas of life — spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, and financially. He wills that we be equipped, and the equipped be sent out to spread the Gospel to the nations.

## NEXT STEPS

Begin familiarizing yourself with the tools in the Pray First Guide. Plan your prayer time by establishing a time and place that you can see yourself using daily.

## RESOURCES

Prayer by Tim Keller  
How to Pray by CS Lewis  
Prayer by AW Tozer  
Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools by Tyler Stanton  
A Praying Life by Paul Miller  
A Hunger for God by John Piper  
Praying with Paul by DA Carson  
Prayer, Does it Make Any Difference by Philip Yancey  
Be Thou My Vision by Jonathan Gibson

# MEMORY VERSE

*Pray then like this: "Our Father 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, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (Matt 6:9-13)*

# DAILY SCRIPTURE AND JOURNALING

## Day One

*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe. (Prov 18:10)*

Journal: Where do you feel the least safe?

## Day Two

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Mt 6:33)*

Journal: Where is direction most needed in your life and relationships?

## Day Three

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (Ps 121:1-2)*

Journal: How do you distinguish between your role in life versus the Lord's role in your life?

## Day Four

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1Jn 1:9)*

Journal: What could be an example of where you have "rightly handled the word of truth?"

## Day Five

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12)*

Journal: What is an example of a teaching or principle from Scripture that has dramatically impacted your life?

# PRAYER FOCUS

In addition to praying for the specific requests from your group, ask God to help your group members fully surrender anything they need to release to God. Pray that they would have a healthy, vibrant daily prayer life.