

# The Lord's Prayer

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Preacher: Adam Penwright

[ 0 : 00 ] Thanks, James. Good morning, everyone. We're in the middle of this three-week series on this! passage, which is Jesus teaching on prayer. And so this morning, we're going to look at what is known as the Lord's Prayer. So particularly those verses 9 to 13. And it's important that we think about prayer because we need to know what is the right way to pray to God. People all over the world pray, and people of all different kind of religions and flavors pray. But they might not know how to pray, or who they're even praying to. We'd love to reach out to God, or something spiritual, or to the divine.

What is the right way to pray? Well, listen to Jesus. He's the right person to teach us how to pray. Jesus came from God so that we might know God. And so as Jesus teaches about prayer, we're hearing what God wants us to know about how to pray to him. And yet, if you're anything like me, the challenge with studying a passage like the Lord's Prayer is that it is so, so familiar to us. The over-familiarity of the words can mean that they lose any punch to us. Here's a suggestion for this morning. I want you to think about the Lord's Prayer a little bit like a national anthem. Because it is Jesus' example of how to pray, but it's more than just that. Like a national anthem, the Lord's Prayer symbolizes and expresses the core things about Jesus' kingdom. Like the national anthem expresses what a country is supposed to stand for. The Lord's Prayer teaches us how to pray, but it also refocuses us onto the core things about following Jesus and believing in him.

[ 1 : 56 ] Jesus intends that when we pray it, these would be the things that we're continually reminded of, that we're reshaped by every time. And so as we study the Lord's Prayer, come and see how fundamental it is and how revolutionary it is.

There should be three points on the handout if you are somebody who'd like to take notes. The first is, Jesus teaches us to pray to our Father in heaven. From verse 9, Jesus says, This then is how you should pray, Our Father in heaven.

How you communicate to someone depends massively on who that person is. How you email the director of the company you work for, and how you text a friend, or how you text your mum, probably all vary to one another.

And who is it that we pray to, and how should we speak to them? Whereas Matthew records it, Jesus just uses the ordinary word for someone's Father. And Jesus uses this word extensively in his teaching.

And yet, it's extraordinary to speak to the creator of the universe as Father. What confidence can someone have to address God as Father?

[ 3 : 13 ] Before an almighty God, we are tiny, dare I say, pathetic creatures. Worse than that, we're creatures who have ignored and rejected him.

So with what arrogance, or rashness, can we claim the idea that we are children of God, able to call him our Father? Well, Jesus didn't die and rise again for nothing, but rather so that he would totally transform our relationship with God.

Because of Jesus' death in our place, we have been forgiven of our sins. We're adopted by God in love, so that we, ordinary, even sinful people, can call him Father.

Imagine a child who's waiting to be adopted. Perhaps they've been waiting with council services for quite a long time. They might come to know that some people are planning to adopt them.

They might even come to know that their names are Michelle and John who are planning to adopt them. But it's a whole nother thing when that child gets to call them mum and dad.

[ 4 : 22 ] It's a new, amazing, intimate relationship that they have. And that is possible for us because of Jesus.

We can pray to God, not just as dear God or dear Lord, but to our Father. And it's also why, you may have noticed, Christians often end prayers by saying, in Jesus' name.

We remind ourselves and declare that we can come before God as our Father in Jesus' name because of what Jesus has done. How should we pray to God then?

Well, if we're trusting in Jesus, it's to our Father. That means we can have great confidence before him. If we're ever afraid to come before God, perhaps afraid that our sin will bar us, that we've done things too shameful, or afraid that God won't want to hear from us, remember that it is to our perfect and kind Father that we speak.

It's the same Father who Jesus represents in his parable of the prodigal son. The Father who runs towards his son with open arms, embracing him, not waiting for an apology, but getting there first with love and grace.

[ 5 : 41 ] In any situation, there's no one better to speak to than our Father. But it's not just that. Look at Jesus' address. We speak to our Father in heaven.

We are invited to speak to the one enthroned in heaven who is totally powerful, totally knowledgeable, above all things, totally good. I don't know about you, but I'm not very good at actually praying.

Sometimes I think that my, the things that I'd like to pray about are too small for God to care about, or the things I want to pray about are too big for God to actually be able to answer them.

But the reality is that because of Jesus, we can pray to God as our Father in heaven. Nothing is too small for his concern. Nothing is too big for his power.

As Jesus gives us this prayer to learn, the Lord's Prayer, the first thing that he wants us to refocus on is who it is that we're praying to. Through Jesus, we pray to our Father in heaven.

[ 6 : 47 ] And that serves as kind of the introduction or the address as the Lord's Prayer. And then we have six requests in the rest of it, which you quite easily group into two groups of three.

So that's what we've done with the headings on the sheet. You'll see that the first three focus on God's glory. And then the second three move towards our good. And here are the first three petitions that Jesus gives us, which focus on God's glory.

Firstly, he says, hallowed be your name. In this, we're praying that God's name would be hallowed. That means that his name would be honoured or revered or set apart.

It's a bit like saying, we want Jesus to be famous. But it's more than that, because we're praying that God's name or his reputation would be recognised by all for how awesome and praiseworthy he is.

It's a little bit like, a little bit like, if a technology product has Steve Jobs' name on it, or a piece of music was written by Mozart, you'd know because of the name, ah, that's going to be quality.

[ 7 : 54 ] In a similar-ish, although not that similar kind of way, as we pray for God's name to be hallowed, we're longing that God would have the reputation to be known by all as the one who is totally awesome and praiseworthy.

In a world where God is often mocked, we're praying that God's name would be hallowed. He is the creator of all. He is the only saviour.

He is wholly good, and he has no rival in any of those ways. It is right that God is worshipped by all. We're praying that his name would be hallowed.

Second, for God's glory, we pray that God's kingdom would come. And perhaps you'll notice, all three of these first three petitions, they're all very similar to one another.

In Greek, my wife tells me, because she can read Greek better than I can, they even rhyme. But they come together so that we kind of have a fullness and the impact of the three of them all together.

[ 8 : 56 ] As we pray that God's kingdom would come, we long to see evil cast out and see people experience true good and see people live in obedience to God.

And when Jesus comes, he preaches that the kingdom is coming near. And it starts with him as the kingdom comes. And we pray that it would continue to spread and to have impact.

That more and more, evil would be cast out. That people will experience true good and live in obedience to God. We're praying unashamedly that people would convert to Christianity as they enter the kingdom.

That evil would be cast out. That they would experience the true goodness and live in obedience to God. We pray that for those who we know.

I'm sure as you pray the Lord's Prayer, you think of people who you know for whom you love them to enter God's kingdom. And we pray that in every corner of the world, the church would grow, that God's kingdom would continue to come.

[10:00] Do you notice with these three first requests, we're not really looking to ourselves at all. Instead, we're asking that God would be glorified.

We're praying that his name would be hallowed, not our own. We're praying that his kingdom would come, not our own. We're praying that his will would be done, not our own.

Jesus' prayer forces us, it reorients ourselves. It humbles us to deny ourselves and put him first. And we must do that.

As we pray this prayer, we long for God to be glorified. That third clause, for God's glory, Jesus says, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What are we asking for as we pray this? As I said, in God's kingdom, we see evil cast out, true goodness experienced, and people live in obedience to him.

[10:56] We would see his will be done in his kingdom. That is, God's word being obeyed, his values being lived out.

I don't know if you've ever come across this, but the Anglican church globally, in 1984, said they want to focus on having five marks of mission.

They're five ways in which we long to see God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I think they're fairly helpful because they kind of show the breadth of what this might look like for God's will to be done.

And they are to see evangelism, discipleship, love of one another, a just society, and care for all creation.

As we pray for God's will to be done, we're praying that those kind of things would be done. And on earth as it is in heaven, we're praying that people would live on earth a bit more like the angels do in heaven.

[11:58] Psalm 103 says that the angels are those who do God's bidding and obey his word. So we're praying that people would do God's will a little bit like the angels do.

In all of these first three things, we're praying that God would be glorified. And Jesus wants us to remember and refocus ourselves on that. That we do love God and want his ways.

Even if they might at times go against our instincts or what we think is natural to us. We pray to God that his will would be done, that he would be glorified.

And we say, Lord, we're ready to jump headfirst into that. And as we pray for God's will to be done, not our own, Jesus knows the reality of that more than we ever will.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus cries out to God, begging for if there is any way for the pain of the cross to be removed. But you know what Jesus longs for even more than that?

[13:02] That his father's will would be done. Jesus prays with us to his father, your will be done.

So, so far, how has Jesus taught us to pray? Well, the fundamental things that he wants us to remember, that we speak to God as our heavenly father and that we start by praying for God's glory before we turn to our own needs.

And it's important, we don't do this to impress him. We don't kind of big him up to persuade him to listen to us or persuade him to like us. But rather, because we have that incredible intimacy through Jesus, because we get to speak to him as our father, we've begun to experience his kindness.

And so we long for him to be glorified. And then, in the last three positions, we look to our own lives, to our own good. The first three, as I said, kind of focus on the glory of God.

The second set of three, I guess we continue to seek the glory of God, but particularly for goodness in our own lives. And part of the challenge of the Lord's Prayer is what it is that Jesus prays for with these petitions.

He intends us to pray for three things that we most deeply need. Now, that doesn't forbid us from ever praying about anything else. But Jesus wants us to focus on our deepest needs, these things that we really, really need.

[14:27] Firstly, we pray that God would give us today our daily bread. That is, God would give us our daily, practical, basic necessities, such as bread, or rice, or corn, if you're from a different part of the world.

I mentioned earlier that the Lord's Prayer can be hard for us to study because it's so familiar to us. I think there's another challenge with this line. It's that if we're being honest, we think we probably

don't need to pray it.

if you think, I have a kitchen cupboard with all kinds of food and there's Tesco just around the corner, we can kind of lose the punch of what the Lord's Prayer is about.

It goes from being perhaps like a national anthem of a country you love and feel passionately about to kind of a dreary old song you've heard a hundred times that you're not really that interested in. It's helpful, I think, to remember that both in Jesus' time and in our time today, there are some for whom the request of daily bread is a real live thing.

[ 15 : 34 ] It'll be a cause of real anxiety. And perhaps you wonder where your next meal is coming from. And partly as we pray this, we pray it with and for the whole church.

Notice the whole prayer is not about me, rather it's about us. Give us our daily bread as we pray with and for the whole church. We then ought to be moved with compassion and generosity towards those who are more anxious about these things.

But as well, it's true that both in our time today and actually in Jesus' time, there would have been plenty of people who would have had plans for where food was coming from today and the next few days.

And lots of people would have known or expected to know where their food was coming from. But it's kind of regardless of that, Jesus wants us to take on this attitude of humble dependence.

We reorient ourselves as if we do not have anything. As we pray this prayer, we continuously set ourselves into a position of humble, total dependence on God.

[ 16 : 43 ] And hopefully, you know the story of Israelites travelling through the wilderness in the Old Testament. So often when Jesus is teaching, he almost remixes something from the Old Testament, giving us something new and important, but kind of full of references and ideas from the Old Testament.

And hopefully, you know the story of Israelite wandering through the wilderness and they're hungry. But God provides daily bread for them called manna. And as he gives it, he gives just enough for one day at a time.

In a similar kind of way, Jesus invites us into a daily, humble dependence on God. At notice, being a godly Christian, someone who prays like Jesus does, doesn't mean that we transcend physical or mental things.

Rather, we trust God with them and seek God's glory in them. God doesn't want us to pray some super-duple spiritual prayers where we don't care at all about ourselves or think about things like food or a roof over our heads.

But rather, he invites us to bring those ordinary things to him because we do wholly depend on him. So first, in our most fundamental needs, we have our kind of basic physical necessities.

[ 18 : 00 ] And second, we should pray for our pardon. As you know the line, forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And Jesus uses that language of debt. When you commit an offence against someone, you need to make a repayment back to them. And so, we owe a payment towards God, one that we could never pay back unless we are released from it by his kindness.

And Jesus, in his death, gives us that once-for-all ransom payment. For our debt to God. We should ask God for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer because it is so foundational to the Christian faith.

Remember, this prayer, a little like a national anthem, if you humor me in that, it kind of gives us, refocuses us on the fundamental and revolutionary things that Jesus is all about.

It's what Jesus wants us to be continually reminded of as we're his disciples. But, as we ask God for forgiveness, it's not just a once-for-all thing, a one-time thing, sorry, but we pray it continuously.

[ 19 : 08 ] It's important we understand that's not because we're in danger of losing God's forgiveness. If we have asked for forgiveness and trusted in Christ, we're declared by God to be right before him.

It's a declarative act of God. It's not a gradual or wavering process, but it's good for us to keep confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness.

Think about it like this. You know, I'm married to Emma and therefore, we have a committed relationship. Does my marriage to Emma stop if I ever offend her?

No. I'm glad for that. But does Emma love it when I offend her? Also, no. It's good for me to apologise to her and say sorry and us be reconciled in that.

In the same way, does God stop loving you when you sin? No. But does God love it when you sin? Also, no.

[ 20 : 12 ] Therefore, it's good for us to apologise to him, ask for his forgiveness and kind of be restored in joy with him again. And Jesus goes on in the Lord's Prayer to touch on how our forgiveness with God connects with how we bend out forgiveness to others.

But I'll leave that for next week because that's what we're focusing on. Then we have this final petition. The sixth overall and the third in our kind of second half. Jesus teaches us to pray, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

This petition is a cry for protection that God would protect us and prevent us from any temptation that is too great for us to bear. Sometimes, things might really test our faith.

Sometimes, tests can be good. They can be a way of proving our faith or growing it. But this plea is to God that he would shield us from anything that is too great for us.

Things that would threaten us and could lead us into sin. Temptations come from every area of life, don't they? They come from within us. They come from around us.

[ 21 : 23 ] Temptation can come from the things that seem good. From wealth, from power, from honour, from beauty. And the goodness in those things can kind of be twisted into a trick where the sweetness of them actually leads us away from God.

Or temptation can come in times of adversity where despair and loss and shame lead us to perhaps a hatred of God or a recklessness or anything to pursue a kind of sinful escape.

Instead, we pray to God that he would guard us from temptation, equipping us with spiritual armour if you want to think of it like that, that he would help us against the violent assaults of the evil one.

We pray to God, please do not let us fall to these things. Please sustain us and encourage us. We cannot do this by ourselves. Temptation is fierce.

The evil one is threatening. But we have the strength and help of God. Because he is our father, he is willing to help. And because he is our father in heaven, he's totally able to help.

[ 22 : 34 ] We can ask for God's help in our struggle against temptation. So we have in the Lord's Prayer, he's six petitions, three kind of focused on God's glory and three beginning to look to our own good.

And it's Jesus' foundational example of prayer as he teaches us how to pray. We have this address to God, our father in heaven, and then six kind of fundamental requests.

A couple of questions we might have before we just finish there. One of those, you might be asking, doesn't this prayer have an ending which we have not talked about? Well, you're right, it does have an ending which is often prayed and we will actually pray later today.

But in the oldest and most reliable records of Jesus' teaching in Matthew and actually in Luke 2, the prayer just ends here. But the things that it says in the ending, for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever, those things are true and good.

And actually, the church have prayed those things at the end of the Lord's Prayer for every century. So, they're good things to pray for and you're totally allowed to pray them.

[ 23 : 47 ] It reminds us as we pray them that we can have confidence in God whom we ask because the power, the kingdom, and the glory belong to him. But if you would rather stick more precisely to these six lines that Jesus says, you're also welcome to do that.

The other question that we might have is how should we actually pray the Lord's Prayer? Do we need to pray it a certain amount of times per week or per day? Or is it even possible to pray it too much?

I think firstly, Jesus intends this prayer to be an example for us. And so we should learn from it the kind of things to pray about and what we should pray about. And therefore, you might use it as a model where you kind of take the patterns and topics of it and let those shape your prayer.

And perhaps when you pray with your kids or as you pray in the morning, you could take each line of the Lord's Prayer and pray for a few minutes or a few sentences off the back of it, how it particularly relates to your life at the moment.

But I also think Jesus intended us to just pray this prayer. As we pray it together as a church family, it kind of goes into our memory and it will shape more and more the things that we care about and the things that we do pray about.

[ 25 : 09 ] And if you think of it, again, like a national anthem, a national anthem, a good national anthem, teaches you about the values and the ethos of the country. And as you sing a national

anthem with others, you kind of, you learn it, you internalize it and it will begin to shape you.

The Lord's Prayer, I think, is similar. And right from the very early church, praying this prayer has been a pattern of prayer. In a document written by early Christians two or three generations after Jesus, they recommended praying the Lord's Prayer three times per day.

Now, of course, as we heard last week, we mustn't let our praying turn into hypocritical performance or a kind of meaningless babble. But that doesn't mean we can't pray with these words.

We can pray them and really mean them and they're good for us to pray together. And this is Jesus' example prayer, so we should learn from it. And it reminds us what Jesus' kingdom is really all about.

And lastly, a really wonderful thing about this prayer, not only does it challenge us and teach us, but as we pray, we can have such confidence. As we pray about these kind of things, we can have such confidence.

[ 26 : 28 ] confidence. And because Jesus, God's own Son, told us to pray about these things, that means we can have confidence that God wants us to pray about them and that he will answer it.

God cannot lie, so if he asks us to pray for these things, we can have real confidence that he will hear it and answer it. We're going to take a couple of minutes' silence in which I invite you to look through the words of the Lord's Prayer as you find in the Bibles in front of you.

And perhaps you might like to read each line in your own mind and pray a little bit off the back of each line. We're going to take a couple of minutes to do that and then we're going to say it all together out loud.

Thank you. Thank you.