

# The Disciple's Prayer

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Preacher: Taylor Hollingsworth

[ 0 : 00 ] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! This is Matthew chapter 6 verses 9-13. This is the Word of God.

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. May God bless the preaching, the hearing of His Word.

[ 1 : 05 ] Sometimes I dream that He is me. You've got to see that's how I dream to be.

I dream I move, I dream I groove. Does anybody know it? Like Mike. If I could be like Mike.

These, if you aren't familiar, are the iconic words to the famous 1991 Gatorade commercial featuring basketball legend Michael Jordan.

The commercial is filled with all these kind of classic highlights from some of Jordan's best games in the early days. But it also has several of these shots of Jordan playing with smaller kids.

And one of the shots shows Jordan's classic dunk. You know what I'm talking about. He has his tongue hanging out, flying through the air. And then it quickly cuts over to another young boy that's mimicking the same look while he's playing ball out in his front driveway with his tongue hanging out and everything.

[ 2 : 10 ] I don't know about you, but I wanted to be like Mike. This was actually an accident. I actually have a Gatorade bottle. I didn't mean to do that.

It was just the kids had it. It was so convenient. I did want to be like Mike. I also wanted to paint like Bob Ross. I wanted to play guitar like Hendrix.

I wanted to go on adventures like Indiana Jones. In a way, I was interested in learning from each of them about their area of expertise. All of those in their own right are interesting, but there have been other times that my attention to a teacher ramped up to a whole new level.

When I was trying to learn how to drive an eight-speed roll-off dump truck, I was studying everything Dustin Tinsman said, and I did it with a vested interest.

I didn't want to fly off the road or drop a container, these giant containers on someone and crush them. I didn't want to crash while trying to find the right gear and slam into something.

[ 3 : 21 ] Learning from him wasn't just about accumulating facts or interesting information. It was literally a matter of life and death. Learning from him was so much more.

I was locked into everything Dustin said because I wanted to learn what he thought was most important and then operate in light of that. Well, in a much greater way, Jesus offers to teach us how to pray.

This prayer is so much more than just a few simple sentences to kind of mumble through like it's some kind of verbal good luck charm. You know, we used to do this at our basketball games.

Jesus does not waste words. This is more than a prayer. This is a vision for life. This is a statement of faith.

It's a battle cry for mission. It's a confession of our brokenness and our need. And it's an emboldened request for rescue.

[ 4 : 29 ] It set a pattern for the disciples of Jesus Christ to break away, us included, from our tendency to self-focus and self-reliance.

In his wonderful book on prayer, Paul Miller said that self-will and prayer are both ways of getting things done. At the center of self-will is me carving a world in my image.

But at the center of prayer is God carving me in his son's image. Well, it seems that God has graciously given us this prayer with the intention of transforming our hearts, our minds, and our actions to please the God that we love.

So I believe that the main point for us this morning is to bring your heavenly Father glory by aligning the priorities of your heart with his own in prayer.

Bring your heavenly Father glory by aligning the priorities of your heart with his own in prayer. We're going to look at three sections of this beautiful prayer. Pray to our Father.

[ 5 : 43 ] Pray for his glory. and pray for our good. So let's look first at pray to our Father. Well, this prayer is woven into the bigger tapestry of Jesus' teaching.

In chapters 5 to 7, we know it as the Sermon on the Mount. And in this section, Jesus is dealing with three of the most important acts of Jewish religious life.

Giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting. The big three. Well, maybe you've heard that people have said that Christianity is not about religion.

It's all about relationship. Maybe you've heard that phrase. And I get why people say that. Jesus often confronts, as we see, religious people who've drained the true meaning out of their religious acts in order to look impressive to others.

However, Jesus does not throw the baby out with the bathwater here. He's not discarding religion. Instead, he's reorienting religious acts into the right relationship with the living God.

[ 6 : 59 ] When you give to the needy, don't make a big deal about it. When you pray, don't do it to just try to look impressive. And when you fast, don't try to draw attention to yourself.

That's what he's saying here in this section. So, with the prayer, specifically, Jesus is providing a corrective for how to truly please God. In essence, he's refilling the cup, the empty cup of prayer, with the hot chocolate of God's priorities.

In verse 5, the hypocrites, if you look, the hypocrites pray publicly to draw attention to themselves.

And then in verse 7, the Gentiles pray with many empty words to try to get God's attention.

So, in contrast to these puffed up, empty worded prayers that we see in those verses, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray like this. Our Father in Heaven.

Jesus calls his followers to pray to God as our Father who is in Heaven. So, from the very first line, we are being taught. We're being taught to understand who we are in relation to who God is.

[ 8 : 15 ] He is both the Father and he is in Heaven. Well, maybe the significance of one of those resonates for you more than the other.

Maybe the word Father, for instance, doesn't carry much weight. Or maybe not much good weight anyways. maybe it's just this equal word for God that may be authoritative, but he feels super far away.

Like he's some kind of executive at the factory. He occasionally looks down from a balcony on all the line workers, but his main job is to not get dirty and to cut the checks for those who earn their keep.

My friends, this is not the sense of the phrase in Heaven that we see here is showing that he's on a different plane than us, not a different place than us.

He is the all-powerful creator and the righteous judge of the universe. But one of the shocking realities about the God of the Bible is that he came down to us on the factory floor.

[ 9 : 30 ] This God came to us on the factory floor. We just celebrated Christmas where we recognized Jesus' title Emmanuel. You remember what it means?

God with us. He is divine, but he is not distant. Not only is he near, we are able to pray to this all-powerful God as our Father.

And if you rightly understand anything about the magnitude of his power and his perfection and our own weakness and imperfection, then to call God Father really is shocking.

It really is. This is why a Muslim woman who converted to Christianity titled her autobiography I dared to call him Father. It's unthinkable to many.

And in some cases blasphemous to associate God with a Father. And not everyone can or will call God Father.

[ 10 : 37 ] So who is this prayer for? Who can legitimately refer to God as Father? Well, there is a sense in which God created all people.

He made all people, but the title Father is never used in relation to people just generally. Why is that? Well, when I was in fourth grade, I remember raising my hand in class to ask a

question.

I had to ask the question. I accidentally called my teacher, Mom! I was mortified. Maybe you've been there too. Why?

It was an understandable mistake. I was with Mrs. Logan day in and day out, and she was a nurturing teacher, but in the end, it was illegitimate for me to call her mom because I was her student, but not her child.

She did not birth me. She did not adopt me. I was not her dependent. I did not live with her. I was not a part of her family.

[ 11 : 47 ] So the question is, who can legitimately speak of God as father? Well, the Bible teaches that only disciples, followers of Jesus, can legitimately call God father.

This is really at the core of the Christian life. J.I. Packer wonderfully wrote, if you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his father.

Father is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.

God. and God and God and and God gave this prayer to his followers. He gave it to his family in the faith.

Can you pray to God as your father? Here's what John's gospel says. John chapter 1 verses 11 through 13 say, He came, Jesus, he came to his own and his own people did not receive him.

[ 13 : 17 ] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right, here it is, to become the children of God who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

To call God your father, you have to be his child. But how do you become his child? It's not based on how good you are or how hard you try.

It's not based on your family or your church attendance even. As you can see in John, becoming a child of God depends on how you relate to Jesus Christ.

God sent Jesus into the world to rescue sinners from the penalty of their sin by his perfect life and his satisfactory death. For those who do not receive Jesus, God stands against you as a judge.

But, from this text, for those who do receive Jesus, God gives you the right to become children of God, born again by the Spirit into his family.

[ 14 : 56 ] This prayer is intended for those who have been brought to new life in Jesus Christ and given access to the God of heaven as your Father.

So, unlike my fourth grade teacher, God causes us to be born again. And then he adopts us.

We are now his dependents. We live with him as we walk by faith. We are legitimate sons through Christ in God's family.

We can address him as our Father in heaven. When we pray this way, we are entering into conversation with a God of both intimacy and authority.

Intimacy and authority. If you're anything like me, maybe you find yourself struggling to pray consistently or without distraction or even just pray with faith and dependence.

[ 16 : 04 ] If you're like me, if prayer begins to feel dull, it's often because I've lost a sense of who it is I'm praying to. If prayer feels more like a chore than a privilege for you, then I'd love to humbly invite you to start by thinking about how you understand who God has revealed himself to be here.

Do you struggle to see his power and his authority? I'd recommend you spend some time immersing yourself in studying the attributes of God. You could read a book like R.C. Sproul's The Holiness of God.

A wonderful place to start. And if you're struggling to see him as intimate, as close, as accessible, as good, like a good father, I'd recommend J.I. Packer's Knowing God, especially his chapter on adoption.

And if you're not sure if you're a child of God, I'd love to talk with you after the service. Love to talk with you.

Second point, pray for his glory. Pray for his glory. The prayer here unfolds with six requests that can be grouped into basically two sets of three.

[ 17 : 29 ] And this first set in verses nine to ten deals with three basic things. God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will. In the introduction to his teaching Cat-Dog Theology, Bob Sjogren offered this helpful illustration.

It says, It's been said that dogs have masters and cats have staff. Cats may call you master, but tend to live a self-centered life where you are there to serve and take care of them.

On the one hand, dogs are eager to see and please their master. A dog may look at you and think, You feed me. You pet me. You shelter me. You love me.

You must be God. On the other hand, a cat can look at you and say, You feed me. You pet me. You shelter me. You love me.

I must be God. You see, they both look at the exact same information, but because of their self-centered or master-centered attitudes, they come to completely different conclusions.

[ 18 : 47 ] The prayer that we have in front of us that Jesus gave to his disciples will be offensive and will utterly disappoint anyone who has a cat theology.

I am a former cat theologian myself for years. And I kid you not, I tried to live Christianity as if I were the centerpiece of the whole story.

But Christianity just didn't make sense and eventually it breaks down because it's Christianity not Taylor-anity. It doesn't work. One of the great gifts of this prayer Jesus gave us is that it explicitly confronts our self-centering tendencies and it rightly places God's priorities at the forefront.

If you really believe that God is the authority and you want to think and you want to act in such a way to please him, then these are his priorities.

And the first request is that God might hallow his name. That's not a word we use. I don't know about you. I don't use that word.

[ 20 : 00 ] It's not normal in everyday life. What does it mean to hallow something? It's not hollow like it's empty. It's not hollow like we're waving to someone. In fact, it's kind of the opposite of hollow.

To hallow means to fill it up to the top. to capacity. To give something or someone the praise, honor, and reverence it deserves.

Hallowing, then, in God's name, it's not like using a microscope to make something teensy tiny look bigger. It's more like using a telescope to bring into view things that are unimaginably big.

So our first request that it shows us here is that God, God, would you cause the world to see you for who you really are?

That's the request. According to the Heidelberg Catechism, it says, Hallowed be your name means to bless, worship, and praise you for all your works and for all that shines forth from them your mighty power, wisdom, kindness, justice, mercy, and truth, and it means help us to direct all our living, what we think, say, and do, so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us, but always honored and praise.

[ 21 : 28 ] So to pray this, if you're tracking, is to ask God to do a miracle. To ask God to do a miracle in our own hearts, in our actions, and the world around us.

In a world that constantly pressures us to build a name for ourselves, this prayer goes immediately to making much of the name above all names.

It drains our self-importance and it rightly requests credit to go where credit is due. This is a prayer, if you pray it, of rest and of freedom because our top priority is no longer to push our resume and try to compare ourselves to one another constantly.

Instead, we're asking God to lay his resume out so that others can be rightly astonished and we can just join and say, we're with that guy, we're with him, he's our father.

Father, it's so wonderfully free. The next request is that, if you look, his kingdom would come.

[ 22 : 46 ] I think a simple way to think of the kingdom as the Bible uses it is God's ruling presence. It's not buildings, cathedrals, it's God's ruling presence.

And we can see this theme throughout Scripture. God's ruling presence was in the Garden of Eden until Genesis 3, where sin and rebellion caused mankind to be banished from God's presence.

Rebellion. And eventually, God promised his presence to be in the midst of his people through the promised land and the temple. However, because of sin and rebellion again, God's people were kicked out of the promised land and they were exiled, sent away to Babylon.

When they returned to the land, the temple was reinstated. But the people continued to wait for God's kingdom to be established in full.

And when Jesus came, he announced that he would be the true and better temple. Remember he's saying, destroy this temple and I'll raise it again in three days.

[ 24 : 03 ] And they said, what are you talking about? Took us years to build this. And he was talking about not the physical temple, but his own body. He was the new and better temple.

When he came, he said that all who received him as their king would be indwelt by the spirit, the presence of God.

So in other words, the ruling presence of God is experienced in his people, the church. So this is why we sing these wonderful words in come thou long expected Jesus.

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king. Born to reign in us forever.

now thy gracious kingdom bring by thine own eternal spirits, here it is, rule in all our hearts alone.

[ 25 : 04 ] It's the ruling presence of God has been established in the hearts of his people and he's done it all across the whole world, everywhere. The church and the kingdom are not identical, but there's significant overlap during this season of history that we're in.

We can think of the church as an outpost of the kingdom. Even though we belong to different languages and cultures and countries, our ultimate allegiance is to God and our primary citizenship is to his kingdom.

So we exist to advance the interests of this kingdom wherever we may find ourselves. In our case, Athens, Tennessee. Even though the kingdom is now here, it's only come in part.

We are still waiting for the fullness of the kingdom to be completely established. You can think of it like sun rays that beam down through storm clouds and light up different spots on the earth.

Some of the light is present on the earth and can be traced back up to the source. But in the future, the clouds, they will part, and the light will fully drive away all darkness and the light will envelop everything.

[ 26 : 31 ] In a similar day, the day is coming when God will judge the world in finality and he will establish Christ as king over all.

All. Every knee shall bow. Every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. It's coming in its fullness. But until then, where the king's ruling presence is, the kingdom has broken in and is there.

As Pastor Kevin DeYoung helpfully wrote in his book, we cannot bring about the kingdom by elections or education or humanitarian good works or environmental stewardship or by the cultivation of the arts, this is where we should not, must not be confused.

Yes, kingdom values should infiltrate our politics. Kingdom living should make a difference in our communities. But let us not misunderstand the nature of the kingdom.

The kingdom does not advance when trees are planted or unemployment lowered or beautiful art is created or elections go one way or the other. Those may all be important things.

[ 27 : 41 ] they may reflect certain values of the kingdom but the kingdom comes when and where the king is known. When Jesus is loved and worshipped and believed upon, there the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

So this is our aim when we pray God's kingdom to come. And it's connected to the third request that God's will be done here on earth as it is in heaven.

So in one sense, his will is done decisively, for he says in Ephesians 1.11 that he works all things according to the counsel of his will.

But in another sense, we are praying for increased obedience to God's commands. The difference between earth and heaven is not God's authority.

The difference is that in heaven, every command is fulfilled with cheerful and full obedience. And that's not the case here on earth.

[ 28 : 53 ] So this is shorthand for praying that the king would rule over every rebel heart starting with our own. God's God's glory.

So these are the first three requests in the disciples' prayer, and they all revolve around bringing God glory. Look at point three.

Pray for our good. So this is the second set of three requests, and it pivots from God's glory to our good.

good. Let me ask you this. What would you have included on the list leading to your greatest good? What would you have put on that list? Maybe health gets on the list, or maybe safety and security gets on the list, or maybe wealth, or even just the resources to get things like a car or a home or vacations.

Well, it's fascinating to see what Jesus includes and excludes in this prayer. Oddly enough, we don't see health, wealth, or security.

[ 30 : 10 ] None of them. And it's not that these things are bad. However, God seems to have a different order of priorities than what we would pick if we were left to our own devices.

And these are the three he gives us to pray for. Daily bread, forgiveness, and spiritual protection. So let's look briefly at these.

We are taught to pray, give us this day our daily bread. Think about it, bread was essential to life. In a farming society, people were dependent on rain and crops coming up and being able, bodied enough to secure the food.

Well, even in our modern culture, we refer to a breadwinner as someone who provides the main income, right? They make the dough. It's there. It's all across.

So asking for bread is really another way of asking God to give us what we need to live. Notice also that it says, give us this day our daily bread.

[ 31 : 21 ] Seems kind of redundant. constant. I remember when I was younger, I told my parents I was not going to pray before meals anymore because I asked God just to bless all the food I would ever eat in my whole life.

It just seemed like a way more efficient way to do things. What I didn't realize is that even though I was being efficient, I was missing out on some glorious truths here.

God wants us to recognize our daily need and his daily provision. When God's people were wandering around in the wilderness, God miraculously provided bread from heaven to sustain them each day.

You see this in Numbers. He told them that he would provide double on the day before the Sabbath, the day of rest, so that they could just rest in him.

But, like us, they wanted to collect enough for the whole week, get ahead of schedule, but God wanted them and he wants us to rest in his provision for the day.

[ 32 : 31 ] He gives what is needed one day at a time. This often makes me, and I'm sure many of us in here, very uneasy, doesn't it?

Just like those people wandering around the wilderness, we start to wonder, what if we don't have enough for tomorrow? And then our what ifs spiral us down into anxious thoughts about whether or not God will actually provide what we need.

The what ifs start kicking in to full gear. Well, Kevin DeYoung, I think, helpfully wrote, today's grace is for today's trials.

And when tomorrow's trials come, God will have new grace waiting for you there. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Don't expect next year's bread today. Anxiety is living out the future before it gets here. Of course you can't do that today.

[ 33 : 40 ] You don't have God's grace for tomorrow. Of course. Faith is trusting that when the future comes, our Father will be there to give us what we need.

You see, asking God for these things, it humbles us. And at the same time, it honors God as the giver. and it constantly brings us back into fellowship with God day in and day out.

Each day that passes is another day that we can give thanks for a day of provision. It would be a wonderful exercise today to look back not at what you missed, but what did God provide this year? He's helping us cultivate a heart of humble dependence. And in addition to daily provision, we're to ask for daily pardon.

If you look at the prayer specifically, we're asking God to forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors. Now, I've run into some Christians who get upset when we start talking about remaining sin in the life of the Christian because it seems in their mind to encouraging just kind of wallowing around in our sins and not embracing our status as being forgiven and free.

[ 35 : 06 ] Now, that impulse is good, but I think that it misses the point. The reality is that, hopefully this isn't a spoiler alert, Christians still sin.

It's true. Christians, Christians do still sin, but confession is not something that keeps putting us back into the courtroom with God the judge to decide again if we are innocent or if we are guilty. That's not what confession is intended to do here. We return to God, our Father, our Father, in the context of our eternal family that we can't be ripped away from.

A healthy family will be able to confess and to forgive. Confession does not cause us to gain or lose our family status.

and the second half of the request is that God would forgive our debts, take careful note, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

[ 36 : 13 ] We're being taught to pray, God, please treat me as I treat other people. people. The one who knows that his sins have been forgiven by God will be eager to forgive those who sin against him.

So in other words, forgiven people forgive. When God forgives us, he says, I will not make you pay me what you owe me.

that's what God says. With that being said, forgiveness is not the absence of consequences or discernment.

Forgiveness is not the absence of consequences or discernment, nor is forgiveness simply getting to the place where you just don't feel bitterness. That's not forgiveness according to the Bible.

Full forgiveness according to the Bible involves two parties instead of one. Forgiveness is what we grant people when they repent. We don't always have the opportunity to forgive those who have wronged us because they have not repented.

[ 37 : 34 ] But we, on our part, we are to maintain an eagerness to forgive as God and Christ forgave us according to Ephesians 4.

So do you need to be forgiven? Do you need to forgive? Is what this prayer puts in front of us.

The last request is that God would not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil. Notice that is not say, do not tempt me, God, because that would be inconsistent with God's character to present sin to us in order to try to entice us.

Instead, the request here is that he not lead us into temptation. In other words, don't allow me, God, don't allow me to be near the allure of sin.

One more helpful quote from Mr. DeYoung says, most of us, if we are honest, live our lives too serious about casual things and too casual about serious things.

[ 38 : 48 ] We fret about clothes and calories, we fuss about diets and home decor, our whole week can be ruined by a sporting event gone wrong. We are supremely concerned about these relatively unimportant matters, and yet, we will start each new day as if we were in no spiritual danger, as if we had no enemy, as if we were not at war with our flesh.

Well, detached from God's plan and his provision, our desires can mutate into our deities. Our desires can mutate into the things that we worship.

So Jesus accentuated this request at the end of the prayer for his disciples so that we would daily turn to our Father for spiritual protection. This, my friends, this is the pattern of prayer Jesus taught his disciples.

This is it. This is what he taught, but he not only taught it, Jesus made the prayer possible. Jesus was led into the wilderness by the spirit to be tempted by the devil.

And even though he was tempted, he was without sin. He remained faithful, showing that he is the true and faithful son.

[ 40 : 19 ] Jesus declared that he is the bread of life that comes down from heaven. He promises that all who come to him can be satisfied and find rest.

Jesus went to the cross to bear our blame so that we could be forgiven by God the judge, that we also might forgive others.

Jesus is the perfect son of God, the heir of all that belongs to the Father. And all who are united with the Son can become children of God and co-heirs with Christ.

And the Spirit who dwells in us gives us the ability to call on God as our Father, Abba, Father, and to pray this prayer in faith until the King returns to set all things right.

If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, God is your Heavenly Father. We can approach Him with humble confidence each and every day. So let's be a people who bring our Heavenly Father glory by aligning the priorities of our hearts with His own in prayer.

[ 41 : 28 ] I'd like to end this sermon with everybody standing. We're going to recite this disciples' prayer together. So if you would, go ahead and let's stand together.

We'll have it up here on the screen. Let's pray this as we enter into the new year together as disciples of Jesus Christ. 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. Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.  
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