

The Lord's Model Prayer

Lesson 1. Persistence

What is commonly known as The Lord's Prayer has been recited by million for centuries. But a more accurate name might be The Disciples' Prayer, since Jesus gave it to His disciples to serve as a model for their prayers.

Read Luke 11:1

This verse seems to indicate that the prayers of Jesus were so powerful that they inspired the disciples to want to improve their prayer life. They came to Jesus and requested of Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." Perhaps this is the first priority in developing a meaningful and consistent life of prayer: you must *want* to learn how to pray. The answer Jesus gave His disciples serves today as a model prayer for each of us.

Read Luke 11:2-4

In Matthew's version, Jesus adds at the end, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matthew 6:13).

There are five segments to this prayer. The first has to do with the coming of the kingdom. The second has to do with God's provision. The third has to do with our responsibilities in the Lord. The fourth has to do with God's guidance and protection. And the fifth has to do with our motivations. We will explore each of these segments in the upcoming lessons. But now let's continue reading what Jesus said, keeping in mind that He was responding to their request that He teach them to pray.

Read Luke 11:5-8

After giving His disciples the model prayer, He then tells them a story about a man going to a friend at night to borrow some bread.

How does this story relate to our personal prayer? What message can we derive from this story? (That God wants us to be persistent when we pray: not just asking once but praying until the answer comes.)

Are you persistent in your prayers or do you tend to give up easily?

Read Luke 11:9-13

In this passage, Jesus tells us that answers come to those who ask and keep on asking until they receive; who seek and keep on seeking until they find; who knock and keep on knocking until the door opens. He then makes the point that if mere mortals, who tend toward evil, give good things to their children, how much more would a gracious and kind heavenly Father be willing to give good things to His children. In other words, we should not conclude that God is ignoring us just because He may not answer our prayers immediately. The key is persistence!

Discussion Points:

1. Tell about a time when you persisted in something only to be totally disappointed in the end. Does this incident make it difficult for you to persist today? What could the group do to help you overcome this?
2. Can you think of a person in the Bible who was persistent in their petition to the Lord and got the answer he or she was hoping for? (The woman in Matthew 15:21-28)
3. Tell about a time your persistence paid off. How did it make you feel?

The Lord's Model Prayer

Lesson 2. The Coming of the Kingdom

Read together: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

This lesson will focus on Jesus' opening words: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." But first notice that this entire prayer is written in the plural voice. Jesus tells us to pray: *our* Father, give *us* this day, forgive *us* *our* sins, do not lead *us*, deliver *us*. This terminology indicates that when we pray, we must see ourselves as members of the community of faith. We are not loners and must not approach God as though we are the only ones who matter. When we pray for our daily provision, we must also pray for the daily provision of our brothers and sisters. Daniel provides us with a good example of this kind of prayer.

Read Daniel 9:3-6

Daniel may not have actually been guilty of the transgressions he prayed about, but he stood in the gap in behalf of others who were guilty. So as we pray, let's continually look outside of ourselves and pray for our fellow-believers and their needs as well as our own.

The opening words of Jesus' model prayer are: "Our Father in heaven." He is not just *your* heavenly Father, He is *our* heavenly Father. This introduction sets the tone for the rest of the prayer. He also is designated as our *heavenly* Father, not our earthly father. Many people attribute what they have experienced with their earthly father to the heavenly Father. But this is a grave mistake. God is above man in all His ways, and we must be careful not to think that He will treat us exactly as our earthly father has.

Jesus then directs us to treat our heavenly Father's name as being "hallowed." This means that we are to set the name Jesus apart from and above all other names and regard it as special and worthy of the highest regard. In light of the fact that we are saved through this name, this seems the least we ought to do.

Jesus then tells us to pray: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." To pray for the coming of the kingdom of God means to pray that God would manifest His heavenly power and authority in the earthly realm. Isaiah gives us an example of this kind of prayer.

Read Isaiah 64:1-4

When Isaiah prayed that God would rend (tear open) the heavens and come down, he was praying that God's kingdom and power would be manifested in the earthly realm. It is the manifestation of the Presence of God that causes those who are high and mighty in spirit (the mountains) to tremble and shake. The idea is that God's kingdom would begin to rule in the hearts of men as they humble themselves in His Presence and submit to His rule. The early believers also prayed this way.

Read Acts 4:23-31

When they prayed that God would stretch out His hand to heal, they were praying that His kingdom would come and manifest itself in the earthly realm. It is the power of God's kingdom that brings the will of God to pass in the earthly realm, just as it is in the heavenly realm.

God has placed His power in our hands. The question is, do we want to see His kingdom come and His will done on earth enough to pray persistently for it to happen?

Discussion Points:

1. If God has made the coming of His kingdom dependent on your prayers, what sort of obligation does that impose on you?
2. What does it say about a person who is unwilling to pray for the kingdom to come? (indifferent, uncommitted, carnally minded)

The Lord's Model Prayer

Lesson 3. God's Provision

Read together: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

The next portion of the Lord's model prayer we will examine is: "Give us day by day our daily bread." This is not Jesus' way of promoting a "Gimme, gimme" attitude among His people. He is simply inviting us to pray for our daily provision. Since throughout much of human history bread has been a basic necessity of life, we can think of it as representing all the things we need that are necessary for life. And when we think of life, we can think of both our natural life and our spiritual life. So let's begin with the natural.

Read Matthew 6:25-33

In this passage, Jesus acknowledges that we all need food to eat, something healthy to drink, and clothes to wear. The idea of being clothed can also include having adequate shelter. This is a pretty good summary of the necessities of life. We should understand that we do not necessarily need beautiful clothes to wear or a large house or gourmet food or Perrier water to drink; we only actually *need* whatever it takes to keep us alive. If we have nice things, that is God's special blessing, not His basic provision.

Some may say that since Jesus already knows that we need these things, why should we have to ask Him for them? The answer is because He wants us to acknowledge Him as our provider. We may think that we provide these things for ourselves by working and earning a paycheck, but God warned the Israelites to be careful not to forget where blessings actually come from.

Read Deuteronomy 8:1-20

In this passage, God reminds that Israelites that even though bread is important, we do not live by bread alone. Many people have plenty to eat, yet their spiritual man is starving for nourishment. So even though we are invited to ask God to provide us with physical bread, we should also ask Him to provide us with our daily portion of spiritual bread. In other words, we should also be seeking for the necessities of the spiritual life.

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus indicated that the real key to having all the food and clothing we need is to make the seeking of spiritual things our highest priority. He said that if we would "seek first" the kingdom of God (which we talked about in the last lesson) and God's righteousness (the right way of living), then we could always count on Him to provide what we need.

So as we ask God to provide our daily needs, both physical and spiritual, and also those of our brothers and sisters in the Lord, let us never fail to recognize Him as our provider. And let us always remember to wrap our requests around abundant expressions of thankfulness.

Discussion Points:

1. Our physical necessities are pretty obvious, but what would be some of the spiritual necessities that we should be asking God to provide? (understanding of His Word, knowledge of His ways, recognition of His will, greater revelation of His attributes)
2. When we fail to pray for God's provision yet He provides for us anyway, what does that say about us and what does it say about God?

The Lord's Model Prayer

Lesson 4. Our Responsibilities in the Lord

Read together: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

The next portion of this model prayer we will examine is: “And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” At first glance this may seem like another request, similar to “Give us this day our daily bread.” But actually it is a commitment to accepting our responsibility to forgive those who do us wrong, just as Jesus has forgiven us.

In Matthew's version of the Lord's model prayer, the wording is slightly different. It says, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12). This version clearly shows that to receive forgiveness from God, we must first be willing to forgive others. Forgiving those who have wronged us is our responsibility as believers. And in case there was any doubt about this, immediately following His model prayer in Matthew 6, Jesus reiterated this point in the strongest possible terms.

Read Matthew 6:14-15

What could be more clear? To be forgiven, we must forgive—willingly, quickly, and fully. Even in Old Testament times, God's people were forbidden to carry around grudges against their fellow believers.

Read Leviticus 19:18

Notice that the alternative to bearing a grudge is to love. This shows the vital link between love and forgiveness. From a biblical perspective, the failure to forgive is not merely a failure to resolve an issue between you and a person who has wronged you; it is a failure to love. This connection is brought out strongly in John's first epistle.

Read 1 John 1:5-10

Notice that the cleansing of the blood is limited to those who are walking in the light, which includes having “fellowship with one another” and “confessing” (or being honest about) one's sins.

Read 1 John 2:9-10

This passage makes clear that walking in the light is equal to loving the brethren. So again, we see that God views our responsibility to love others and forgive when they do us wrong as an essential prerequisite to receiving forgiveness for our transgressions against Him.

So as we pray after the pattern of the Lord's model prayer and as we consider the great mercy He has shown us by forgiving our sins, let's commit ourselves to following after His example and be the quickest forgivers on earth.

Discussion Points:

1. Read the parable in Matthew 18:21-35 and discuss it.
2. Many people have mistaken ideas about forgiveness. What does it mean to you? (When we forgive, we are not saying that what a person did to us was okay or even acceptable. We are only saying that we will not attempt to get even. We are letting go of the offense.)
3. Read Colossians 3:12-14 and discuss how each of the character traits listed relates to having a forgiving spirit. (tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, and love)

The Lord's Model Prayer

Lesson 5. God's Guidance and Protection

Read together: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

The next portion of the Lord's model prayer we will examine is: "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Jesus described the Christian life as like walking along a narrow pathway with dangers on every side. He advises us to be alert and watchful at all times. This is why after praying for God's kingdom to come, for God to supply our daily needs, and after we have committed to the basic Christian requirement that we forgive those who do us wrong, we must pray that God lead us away from temptations and deliver us from Satan's snare.

One of the ways that Satan tempts us to leave the pathway of righteousness is by bringing trouble our way and then telling us that God isn't real or that He really doesn't care about us. Paul was concerned that this might be happening to the young believers in Thessalonika.

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8

Paul was greatly blessed when he learned that the believers in Thessalonika were remaining faithful to the Lord, even though they were suffering trouble on every side. The Bible promises that God will never allow a temptation to come our way without also providing a way of escape.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Many times the way of escape is going to God and praying, "Lord, deliver me from the evil one." We would do well to pray this way every day, even before the temptations come along. We should also pray this way for

our brothers and sisters in the Lord, since if one member of the body is injured by sin, it affects all the other members of the body.

One of the avenues by which Satan tries to tempt us is the eyes. This is why Jesus said that if our eye causes us to sin, we would be better off plucking it out. But instead of literally plucking out our eyes, perhaps a better approach would be to pray David's prayer.

Read Psalms 119:37

David had the experience of allowing his eyes to drag him into sin, and he paid a heavy price for it. He therefore knew the importance of asking God each day to empower him with the strength of will to turn his eyes away from anything that might cause him to sin. David also prayed this way.

Read Psalms 27:11

Each one of us has a spiritual adversary. We therefore must be diligent in praying for God's grace to guide us through each day without falling into sin. If we can make it through one day without sinning, we can live a lifetime without sinning. But it all starts with our daily prayer that God would lead us away from any tempting situation that we might be vulnerable to. This prayer for God's guidance and protection is a way of expressing our weakness as human beings and our need for total dependence upon God.

Discussion Points:

1. Do you find that there are certain temptations that you are particularly vulnerable to? Talk about them if you feel you can.
2. What new strategy might help you to turn away from a temptation so as to avoid sinning once again? (perhaps committing to call someone, immediately going to prayer, immediately reading the Word)
3. How can this group help you to get stronger at resisting temptation?

The Lord's Model Prayer

Lesson 6. Our Motivations

Read together: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

The last portion of the Lord's model prayer deals with our motivations in pray and in our Christian service. Do we do what we do for ourselves or for God? Are we seeking to build our own kingdom or God's kingdom? Are we operating in our own human ability or by the power of God? Are we seeking to gain glory and recognition for ourselves or for God?

Jesus concluded His model prayer by telling us that we must always acknowledge that "Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." It is all God's—the kingdom, the power, and the glory—and we must be motivated entirely by that reality, otherwise we will eventually lose our grip on the grace of God.

All the kingdoms of men are destined to one day fall; and all the power of man will one day be shown to be worthless; and all the glory that man has achieved through his own efforts will one day dissolve into fine powder. But the kingdom, power, and glory of God will endure forever.

Many people labor long in the work of the kingdom, all the while failing to realize that they are operating out of the wrong motivations. David realized that he was being tempted to believe that he was someone special—above other men, more important to God than other men. So he prayed very specifically that God would expose the contents of his heart.

Read Psalms 139:1-4, 23-24

We must never allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that our motives are always perfectly pure. We should pray regularly that the Lord

would show us the true motives lying deep within our hearts and lead us in a pathway that will bring Him glory.

Let us continue earnestly in prayer. And let us remember to be persistent!

Let us pray, not for ourselves only, but for our brothers and sisters as well.

Let us revere and magnify the name of our heavenly Father: the name JESUS!

Let us pray that God would send His kingdom to us in great power to accomplish His will on earth as it is in heaven.

Let us thank God for His gracious provision and commit to expressing His love and forgiveness and kindness toward others.

Let us pray that He would lead us away from tempting situations and deliver us from the devil's snares.

Let us pray for the continuing expansion of His kingdom in our hearts, in our families, in our assembly, in our community, and throughout the world.

Let us labor in the work of expanding His kingdom, depending totally on His power (because we recognize that spiritual life cannot be imparted by human abilities).

And let us do all that we do for His glory and not our own.

Discussion Points:

1. Read and discuss 1 Peter 4:7-11. Notice the areas this passage covers: consistency in prayer, love of the brothers (and sisters), hospitality with a good attitude, ministering to others out of your giftings, and glorifying God.
2. Share what you have learned in this series on prayer and how your prayer life has improved.