

# Prayer Message

## Lesson #5 *Discipleship Essentials*

### **Introduction**

This week we're talking about prayer,

I'll be straight with you. One of the reasons why I am excited to be giving this message today about prayer is because I have a lot to learn about it. And I don't know all I want to know about it. Getting ready for this talk made me read & think & even study on what God says prayer is like. And I've been learning some things!

I want to invite you into the learning, too. Will you join me in that this morning? Let's just think about prayer for a minute. How does PRAYING differ from, say, WISHING ON A STAR? Or WISHING when we blow out birthday candles.

Wishing on a star focuses on what WE want.

Praying focuses on what the One who made us wants FOR us!

Wishing on a star relies on impersonal luck.

Praying relies on the One who is crazy about you & wants GOOD for you.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE between WISHING and PRAYING is WHO'S ON THE OTHER END!

You know—if you don't completely understand prayer, you're not the first one. There were 12 guys who followed Jesus around during his 3 years of “public ministry” on earth. You've heard of them – they were his disciples.

And they got to see Jesus close up.

When he walked around.

When he slept.

And when he prayed.

So you'd think they'd understand prayer pretty well, right? Well.... No. They'd seen him pray...but they sensed that when he talked to God, there was something DIFFERENT.

So – they asked him one day to “TEACH US TO PRAY”. And he didn’t yell. Or call them stupid. Or roll his eyes... he was patient. And he taught them. That’s where this most famous prayer – called The Lord’s Prayer – comes from. If you have any questions about prayer, or if your prayer life is not what it should be, then God wouldn’t roll his eyes at you, either. He would invite you to LEARN... and to TALK to him!

### **Matthew 6:9-13**

“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
<sup>10</sup> your kingdom come,  
your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread.

<sup>12</sup> Forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.’

## **Beginning to Pray**

*“Our Father in heaven”*

Jesus was giving us a new way to address God by calling Him “Our Father”. This is a very intimate and personal way of addressing God, which makes Him close and approachable. The plural pronoun “our” means “Jesus and I are coming in prayer.” He did not say my Father, he said “our Father,” so, we are stating that we are praying in the name of Jesus and it is by his righteousness that we are approaching the throne of God.

Many times when people pray, you’ll hear them end their prayers with “In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Is “In Jesus’ Name” just the church version of “Yours truly”, or “Roger, over and out”? Or is there more to it??

Praying in Jesus’ name is not to “make our prayers more powerful” by “saying the magic words” like “abracadabra, Hocus Pocus!” **INSTEAD, by praying in**

**Jesus name we're actually confessing that we're not coming to God and asking for something on the basis of our own goodness!** We're coming as people who have been forgiven by Jesus!

ON OUR OWN, we're not anywhere near "good enough" to approach the God of everything.

Our sin makes that impossible. But, the only reason that we're right with God is because of what Jesus did! Can I get an Amen?

Praying in Jesus' name is like admitting that we are less than God...and we're putting ourselves in the right "position".

So, for your fill-ins on the handout,

**God is approachable.**

**Pray in Jesus' name.**

Jesus says "PRAY IN MY NAME" because, basically, He's got you covered! Jesus said in **John 14:13-14** "*And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.*"

But REMEMBER, Jesus' prayer asked for GOD's will to be done... not his own. Because God really can see a bigger picture.

## **Focus on God**

Now the next thing that Jesus taught us about prayer is to start by focusing on God and not ourselves.

### **"Hallowed be your name"**

This phrase is declaring that God's name is holy. When we spend time praying about God's holiness we are worshipping Him in a special way by "ascending into the very heart of who God is and what he has done for us. This line is about worship and that is how we should begin all of our prayers.

When you hallow God's name, you esteem Him for who He is. God is Holy. That means that He is separate from anything on earth that is worldly, profane, or

sinful. Our prayers should be like the angels who cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (**Isaiah 6:3b**, NIV1984).

When you hallow God's name you are setting him apart in your thinking and feeling. You are treating Him with all the respect that is due to Him.

The Second observation about this verse is that, God has a name. Today, when someone says, "that person has made a name for themselves." We do not mean that he has created a unique spelling of his name. We mean that he has developed a reputation that stands behind his name.

Family names can be meaningful to people as well. INSERT EXAMPLE ... (Kenneth), include picture. I have always been proud of my name, because I was named after a hero. Kenny not Ken...

Names are meaningful and God has a name.

**Proverbs 18:10** "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe."

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus is teaching us in this verse that we should Hallow God's name. "Hallowed" means respect that has grown over time. When you hallow God's name you recognize how meaningful God is to you and your life. When you hallow God's name you climb to a new level of respect for God and reverence for His person. You are recognizing who God is and what He has done for us.

God has three main names in the Old Testament.

The First one is **Elohim**, which means "God the Mighty Creator."

The second one is **Yahweh**, which means "The Lord who is the Covenant-keeping One."

The Third primary name is **Adonai**, which means "Master" or "Lord."

Each of these names depicts a certain attribute of God that we should worship Him for.

ILLUSTRATION. Devote Jews back in the day... would not say the name Yahweh because it was so Holy. So what they did was took the consonants from Yahweh

and the vowels from Adonai and put them together to form the name "Jehovah." They did not want to dishonor God's real name by saying it. (Using a new pen to write God's name and then breaking the pen).

When Jesus taught us to pray "Hallowed be your name," He was telling us to make the presents of God real in our hearts. When you start your prayers by praising God's name you are not rushing into God's presence to demand something. You come into His presence recognizing who God is.

### **Begin your Prayers with Worship**

God is our Father, which means He is close to us and intimate. He is also our King, the powerful ruler of the universe. So in prayer we enter the family room of God the Father who is concerned about our hurts and needs. And, we also enter reverently and fearfully into the throne room of a God-King who demands obedience and reverence.

Finally, when we pray "hallowed be your name," you are recognizing all of God's attributes; you are recognizing who He is.

I realize that I have just scratched the surface of this topic. We could do a lengthy sermon series on the names of God and the attributes of God. But, it would go way beyond the scope of this message to go any further with it at this point.

**Resources** – *The Holiness of God* –By R. C. Sproul

### **"Your kingdom come"**

We are establishing God as our ruler and king. You are asking for "God's kingdom to manifest itself through your life" here on the earth. The rule of God on earth is called the "kingdom of God." Not everyone on earth is a member of this kingdom. A person must join the kingdom and pledge their allegiance to the King. People enter the kingdom when they are born again.

**John 3:3** *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

You must have a spiritual birth to become part of His kingdom.

When we pray for God's kingdom to come, we are asking for the spread of the Gospel to those who do not know Christ and are therefore not currently part of the kingdom. This is a prayer for evangelism, for the kingdom of God to be expanded into the lives of people who will become rightly related to the King.

When we pray it is important to lift up those within our lives who do not know Jesus, our family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors.

**Pray for those who do not know Jesus.**

Another aspect of praying for God's kingdom to come is that you are praying for the return of Jesus to establish His kingdom physically here on this earth. When Jesus does return, all earthly kings will no longer rule. God will be the king-ruler. **Revelation 11:15** *"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever."*

**Pray that Jesus will return.**

When you pray for God's kingdom to come, you are indicating that you have decided to live for God... you have chosen to live by His principles...you have decided to glorify God with your life. You could have chose to live the world's way, but you have chosen instead to live God's way. You have chosen His kingdom.

The next thing Jesus taught us about prayer is to pray for God's will to be done.

**"Your will be done"**

*The Four Spiritual Laws* - "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." He really does, and when you pray for God's will to be done, you are stating that you want to live by God's plan for your life instead of your plan for your life.

It is a phrase that tells God that you prefer His plan, while at the same time surrendering your will and your life personal ambitions. It is recognizing that God is the ruler of your life.

This part of the prayer is telling God to go ahead and make plans for you. This could mean long-range plans, like blue prints for your life. It also means that you are trusting God's decision making ability and are asking Him to be a guide through the daily challenges of life.

God wants you to do His will because it is good for you. EXAMPLE – car owners manual. Who knows best...

Choosing God's way is what is best for your life. In prayer we should regularly surrender our own will and submit ourselves to living God's way.

Notice that you are not asking God to do His will or to change His will; and you did not ask God to bless your will. You should be asking God to help you find and do His will in your life.

When we pray for God's will we are asking for four things.

1. To help find His plan.
2. To help understand His plan.
3. To help submit to His plan.
4. To help accomplish His plan.

"You do not pray to bend God's will. Prayer bends your will to His. Many people make the mistake of making praying just for their requests of God. We go to Him with a list of things we want or need. But, when you figure this little piece out your prayer life will begin to change. **It is not about our list for God. It is about God's list for us.**

This kind of prayer can change you. When you start seeking God's will instead of your will.

Jesus was trying to teach us in these verses not to just rush into God's presence like children...babbling about our problems. We are to instead to glorify Him, acknowledge His agenda, and to seek His will

**"...on earth as it is in heaven."**

This next line, "*on earth as it is in heaven,*" wraps up the first section. Why did Jesus include this line? It was not to show us how far short we come in our prayers. It is easy to look around and see that God is not always glorified on this earth. This line shows you how much you need to ask. It is there to stretch your prayers...to stretch your faith... to stretch your expectations. The challenge is to pray so that things on earth will be as they are in heaven.

**Pray big prayers.**

## Asking for Things

### **“Give us today our daily bread.”**

This is the place in the Lord's Prayer where we ask for our physical needs to be met. It includes more than just bread. “Bread” in this verse is a symbol word that stands for all of our physical needs. It stands for money... for time... for a job... for material things. Bread stands for the roof over your heads and the clothes on your backs. It stands even stands for physical healing so that you can work and support your family. Bread stands for every physical need in your life.

When we pray to God for our needs, we recognize a few things.

1. We have daily needs
2. God is the one who supplies our needs
3. God wants us to ask Him to supply our needs
4. Our needs are supplied one day at a time.

Now, most of us here today are not really hungry. We are not praying for God to give us a meal today or we will starve. It happens, but for most of us that is not the case. If anything we pray “Lord help me to cut back on the carbs so that I can lose weight.”

We take bread for granted, because food is so abundant in this country. We have all kinds of options for eating. What if you had no bread? What if you were starving and had no food? Then you would know how to pray with intensity.

God did not create self-sufficient people. He created people that need air to breathe and food to eat. We need shelter and clothing. We need love and social relationships. God created people to have needs, so that we would look to Him to supply them.

“Give us this day our daily bread” is a faith statement. When you pray to God and ask Him to supply your needs you are allowing Him to take His rightful place in your life. It is an acknowledgement of our dependence on Him. And it is an acknowledgement that He is the one who is the source of everything good in our lives.

This type of prayer is not about manipulating God to get what we want. That is not possible. God supplies our needs according to His plan not ours. He wants us



to ask, but the results are up to Him. Remember, prayer is a platform to worship God and to recognize His sovereignty.

**1 Corinthian 10:31** *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”*

One last thing about this, we live from day to day, we eat daily, we have needs daily. So when you pray for “this day” you are expressing ultimate confidence in God. It is recognition that He is your Father, and you are His child.

**Talk with God about your needs.**

**“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”**

Some translations say forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. This is not referring to forgiveness of sins for salvation, but for the cleansing of guilt that believers need when they sin in order to restore broken fellowship with the Father.

When we pray for God to forgive us our debts, we are praying as a child that has not lived up to the father’s expectations. You are saying, “I am sorry” to your heavenly Father.

We all know that, God’s children do not always do God’s will. **Romans 3:23** *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* We sin, and that breaks fellowship with the Father. This happens when we disobey God (either overtly or unknowingly).

Not all people feel guilty when they sin. However, if you are a child of God, you cannot sin continually and not suffer some inner guilt.

If you are guilty because you have disobeyed God, then you should confess it to God and ask him for forgiveness. Granting that forgiveness is what he does. **1 John 1:9** *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

When you pray for God to “forgive your sins,” you are exercising belief and trust that God will forgive you as He promised. The reality is that if you are a Christian, God has already forgiven all of the sins you have ever committed or will ever commit in the future. The father has already forgiven you and he is simply waiting to cleanse you and purify you.

### **Ask for forgiveness.**

The second half of this verse brings other people into the equation. It says, “as we also have forgiven our debtors.” God has forgiven such a huge debt for us that we should be quick to extend that Grace and forgiveness to others. We do it for others because God has done it for us. He is asking us to follow His example.

### **Grant forgiveness to others.**

### **“And lead us not into temptation,”**

In this prayer we recognize that God is our leader and we are asking Him to guide us along a moral pathway. The motivation for praying this should be a desire to live a life of victory.

This is also a recognition that you need a leader to help you navigate this life successfully, and you are asking God to be that person. This is not a prayer asking God not to tempt you, because God does not tempt anyone. You are simply asking the Lord to protect you from any temptation that is too big for you handle.

**1 Corinthians 10:13** *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*

Praying for protection from temptation is evidence of a changed heart towards sin. It shows that you have recognized the tyranny of sin, that it is a trap that enslaves you. Praying this shows that you know what sin can do and you are asking God to help protect you from falling back into its bondage.

### **Ask God to help keep you from sin.**

### **“but deliver us from the evil one.”**

This is the part of the prayer where you ask for God to provide his protection from the evil one.

I have three quick observations;

- 1. The evil one exists.**
- 2. The evil one is in conflict with you.**
- 3. God is your deliverer.**

When you pray “deliver us from the evil one” you are confessing that you believe there is a supremely evil one who will harm you. The Christian life is more than just attending worship services and adopting positive thinking. This life is a struggle with an enemy who opposes you and the kingdom of God.

Being a Christian is more than just going to church picnics where you play games and drink Kool-Aid. We have an enemy that is relentlessly trying to destroy us. He attacks us as a means to get God. In fact, all of Satan’s works are against God. He actively opposes the work or plans of God. He steals worship from God by his attempts to derail Christians and prevent those who do not know God from turning their lives over to Him.

Praying for God’s protection from Satan signifies that you have decided to ask for God’s help, essentially putting yourself on His side against the evil one. Also, you bring God into your experience. God is wiser than you and He knows how to defend you. God is also more powerful than you and He has the strength to defend you.

## Conclusion

The Lord’s Prayer is how Jesus taught us to pray. This is the template that He gave us so we would know how to pray and what to pray for. I did not prepare this message so that you would make a habit of mindlessly reciting the Lord’s Prayer. There is nothing wrong with praying it the way it is written in scriptures. If you do that, just do it with your brain engaged and pray with sincerity. What I think would be better however, is using this as a template for how to pray. Take each of these seven different types of petitions and pray for these things.

Journey Illustration for prayer retreat

**Ephesians 6:18** *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”*

Today, I am going to set the bar low. It is okay to pray one-minute prayers if you are praying with an engaged brain and sincerity of heart. This sermon is not intended to help you pray longer, but to help you pray following the biblical model, the model Jesus Himself gave us.

NOW, we can TALK all we want about prayer...but our RELATIONSHIP with God largely depends on not just TALKING about prayer but actually PRAYING!

Illustration - When troubleshooting computer problems, the first thing I check is to see if it is plugged in. more often than not that is the source of the problem. The same is true in one's spiritual life. When things are not going well for someone spiritually (you fill in the blank for what that means to you)... The problem usually lies in the fact that they are not plugged in to the source of power (prayer, truth, fellowship, etc.).

Prayer affects the inner life. A meaningful prayer life will change the way you think. "The way you think is one of the most powerful influences on the way you live." A person can fake outward transformation and have the appearance of a follower of Jesus, but they cannot fake inward transformation.

As you grow in prayer you grow in your inner life with Christ. This results in developing real faith, real trust, and true godliness. Through prayer you develop true inner Christian character which manifests itself through your outward life. It is by such men and women that God's will is accomplished. To be a true man or women of Christ the discipline of prayer is indispensable. The first step towards authenticity is to get out of the Holy Spirits way by yielding to His will through prayer.

I have to admit – I still have some unanswered questions about prayer. You know, like did you ever think about Competing Prayers?

- maybe the farmer who wants rain for his dying crop
- And the family that wants no rain for their vacation

Whose should get answered?

I don't know. But think about it this way:

*"Prayer is not a message scribbled on a note, jammed into a bottle and tossed into the sea in hopes that it will wash up someday on God's shoreline. Prayer is relationship with God. We speak to God, but God touches, embraces, shapes, and changes us. Whether we pray for rain or pray for sunshine our prayer is answered, because in the act of praying we receive the gift we really seek - intimacy with God."*

- quote from a smart person named Thomas Long