

## session 5 study guide

# the Lord's prayer

### starter

PRAYER TO ME: What is prayer like for you? For each pair of words or phrases below, choose which one most accurately describes your experience of prayer. When you're done, pick one of the pairs and write about why you picked that option.<sup>1</sup>

Prayer to me is more like \_\_\_\_\_ than \_\_\_\_\_.

a window

a closet

listening

talking

making a friend

seeing an old friend

hard work

time of rest

journey inward

journey outward

discipline

spontaneity

### message

The most famous prayer in Scripture is what we often call the Lord's Prayer. Many Christian denominations repeat this prayer every week in their services, and some even encourage their congregants to say it daily. The beauty, intensity and significance of this prayer of Jesus is unequalled in Scripture. As you read this model for prayer that Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 6:9-13, consider the following questions: (1) How did Jesus address God the Father? (2) What are the main requests to God in this prayer? (3) What does this model tell us about the way we should pray?

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one*

1. What is significant about the way that Jesus addressed the Father?

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2. What does it mean for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven?

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3. How did Jesus demonstrate God's will being done on earth, in His life, ministry, death and resurrection?

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4. What needs did Jesus ask the Father to meet in His prayer?

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5. In your own words, write each line of the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven:

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Hallowed be your name:

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Your kingdom come:

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Your will be done:

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On earth as it is in heaven:

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Give us today our daily bread:

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Forgive us our debts:

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As we also have forgiven our debtors:

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And lead us not into temptation:

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But deliver us from the evil one:

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## dig

Read the conversation below with a friend or group. When you're finished, answer a few questions about your response.

### if God should speak

Student: "Our Father, which art in heaven . . ."

God: Yes?

Student: Don't interrupt me. I'm praying.

God: But you called Me.

Student: Called You? I didn't call You. I'm praying. "Our Father which art in heaven . . ."

God: There, you did it again.

Student: Did what?

God: Called Me. You said, "Our Father which art in heaven." Here I am. What's on your mind?

Student: But I didn't mean anything by it. I was, you know, just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, kind of like getting a duty done.

God: All right. Go on!

Student: "Hallowed be Thy name . . ."

God: Hold it! What do you mean by that?

Student: By what?

God: By "Hallowed be Thy name"?

Student: It means . . . it means . . . good grief! I don't know what it means! How should I know? It's just part of the prayer. By the way, what does it mean?

God: "Hallowed" means honored, holy, wonderful.

Student: Hey, that makes sense. I never thought about what hallowed means before. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

God: Do you really mean that?

Student: Sure, why not?

God: What are you doing about it?

Student: Doing? Nothing, I guess. I just think it would be kind of neat if You got control of everything down here like You have up there.

God: Have I got control of you?

Student: Well, I go to church.

God: That isn't what I asked. What about that habit of lying? And your temper? You've got a problem there, you know. Then there's the way you spend money . . . all on yourself. And what about the kind of books you read?

**Student:** Stop picking on me! I'm just as good as some of the rest of those people—those phonies—at church!

**God:** Excuse me! I thought you were praying for My will to be done. If that's to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. Like you, for example.

**Student:** Oh, all right. I guess. I do have some problems, some hang-ups. Now that You mention it, I could probably name some others.

**God:** So could I.

**Student:** I haven't thought about it very much until now, but I really would like to cut out some of those things. I would like to, you know, be really free.

**God:** Good! Now we're getting somewhere. We'll work together, you and I. Some victories can truly be won; I'm proud of you!

**Student:** Look, Lord! I need to finish up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does. "Give us this day our daily bread."

**God:** You need to cut out some of that "bread." You're overweight as it is.

**Student:** Hey, wait a minute! What is this, Criticize Me Day? Here I was doing my religious duty, and all of a sudden You break in and remind me of all my problems and shortcomings.

**God:** Prayer is a dangerous thing. You could wind up changed, you know. That's what I'm trying to get across to you. You called me, and here I am. It's too late to stop now. Keep on praying. I'm interested in the next part of your prayer. . . . Well, go on!

**Student:** I'm afraid to.

**God:** Afraid? Afraid of what?

**Student:** I know what You'll say next.

**God:** Try Me and see.

**Student:** "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

**God:** What about Joe?

**Student:** I knew it! See, I knew You would bring him up! Lord, Joe has told lies about me, and cheated me out of some money, and he is the biggest phony around. He never paid back that debt he owes me. I have sworn to get even with him and then never associate with him again!

**God:** But your prayer! What about your prayer?

**Student:** I didn't mean it.

**God:** Well, at least you're honest. But it's not much fun carrying that load of bitterness around inside you, is it?

**Student:** No, but I'll feel better as soon as I get even. Boy, have I got some plans for old Joe! He'll wish he never did me any harm.

**God:** You won't feel any better. You'll only feel worse. Revenge isn't sweet. Think of how unhappy you are already. But I can change all that.

**Student:** You can? How?



**God:** Forgive Joe. Then the hate and sin will be Joe's problem, not yours. You may lose the money, but you will have settled your heart.

**Student:** But, Lord, I can't forgive Joe.

**God:** Then how do you expect Me to forgive you?

**Student:** Oh, You're right! You always are! More than I want revenge on Joe, I want to be right with You. All right, I forgive him. Lord, You help him find the right road in life. He's bound to be awfully miserable, now that I think about it. Anybody who goes around doing some of the things he does to others has to be out of it. Someway, somehow, show him the right way. Maybe You can even help me to help him?

**God:** There now! Wonderful! How do you feel?

**Student:** Hmmm! Well, not bad. Not bad at all. In fact, I feel pretty great! You know, I don't think I'll go to bed uptight tonight for the first time since I can remember. Maybe I won't be so tired from now on because I'm not getting enough rest.

**God:** You're not through with your prayer. Go on!

**Student:** Oh, all right. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

**God:** Good! Good! I'll do that. Just don't put yourself in a place where you can be tempted.

**Student:** What do You mean?

**God:** Change some of your friendships. Some of your so-called friends are beginning to get to you. Don't be fooled! They advertise that they're having fun, but for you it could be ruin. Either you are going to have to stop being with them, or start being a positive influence on their lives. Don't use Me as an escape hatch!

**Student:** I don't understand.

**God:** Sure you do. You've done it a lot of times. You get caught in a bad situation. You get into trouble by not listening to Me, and then once you do, you come running to Me saying, "Lord, help me out of this mess, and I promise I'll never do it again." You remember some of those bargains you've tried to make with Me, don't you?

**Student:** Yes, I do. And I'm ashamed, Lord. I really am.

**God:** Which bargain are you remembering?

**Student:** When the woman next door saw me coming out of that NC-17 movie with my friends. I'd told my mother we were going to the mall. I remember telling You, "Oh, God, don't let her tell my mother where I've been." I promised to be in church every Sunday.

**God:** She didn't tell your mother, but you didn't keep your promise, did you?

**Student:** I'm sorry, Lord, I really am. Up until now, I thought that if I just prayed the Lord's Prayer every day then I could do what I liked. I didn't expect anything like this to happen.

**God:** Go ahead and finish your prayer!

**Student:** "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen."

**God:** Do you know what would bring Me glory? What would make Me really happy?

**Student:** No, but I'd like to know. I want to please You. I know what a difference it can make in my life. I can see what a mess I've made of my life, and I can see how great it would be to really be one of Your followers.

**God:** You just answered My question.

**Student:** I did?

**God:** Yes. The thing that would bring Me glory is to have people like you truly love Me. And I see that happening between us now. Now that these old sins are exposed and out of the way . . . well, there's no telling what we can do together.

**Student:** Lord, let's see what we can make of me and my life, okay?

**God:** Yes, let's see!<sup>2</sup>

1. What would you do if God broke into your prayer like this?

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2. What is one thing that would change if God's will was done in your life the way it is in heaven?

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3. Are you extending forgiveness as God forgives you? Why or why not?

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4. What is so hard about forgiving those who sin against you? What is easy about it?

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5. Do you sometimes lead *yourself* into evil? How can you better listen to God's voice and avoid getting into those tempting situations?

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6. How will you bring glory and honor to God in the coming week?

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### apply

1. Take the inventory below to discover in which areas your prayer life needs some strengthening. Circle the number you think best indicates where you are now with prayer.<sup>3</sup>

**Adoration:** “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” I spend time praising God for who He is: the sovereign Lord and ruler of the universe who cares about me personally, as though I am the only person in the world.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I'm Weak Here					I'm Strong Here				

**Intercession:** “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” I spend time praying about the needs of the world. I try to look at the world the way God looks at it and pray about the things that are on His heart.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I'm Weak Here					I'm Strong Here				

**Asking:** “Give us today our daily bread.” When I ask for myself, I ask simply for the necessities of life—food, shelter and contentment—mindful that there are so many in the world without these.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I'm Weak Here					I'm Strong Here				

**Forgiveness:** “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” In my prayer time, I consciously recall the relationships in my family and with my associates where I have been hurt or hurt others and ask for forgiveness.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I'm Weak Here					I'm Strong Here				

**Temptation:** “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” In my prayer time, I allow God to speak to me about the areas where I am struggling or treading on dangerous ground.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I'm Weak Here					I'm Strong Here				

- How can the Lord's Prayer become nothing more than an everyday ritual, rather than a meaningful conversation with the Father?

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- What are some ways to keep the Lord's Prayer fresh and significant in your spiritual life?

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4. Why do you think our forgiveness from the Father is conditional on our forgiving other people?

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**reflect**

1. What attitudes, requests and priorities do you find in the Lord's Prayer?

Attitudes:

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Requests:

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Priorities:

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2. How can you more closely align your attitudes, requests and priorities with Jesus' model?

Attitudes:

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Requests:

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Priorities:

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3. How will you bring glory and honor to God during the coming week?

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### meditation



For if you forgive men when they sin against you,  
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

MATTHEW 6:14

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#### Notes

1. Adapted from *The Serendipity Bible Study Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), p. 33. Used by permission.
2. Adapted from Walt Kukkonen, "If God Should Speak," *Ideas 23* (El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties, 1980), pp. 35-39. Used by permission.
3. Adapted from *The Serendipity Bible Study Book* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), p. 33. Used by permission.