

The Prayers of Jesus – The Lord's Prayer

An Opening Prayer –

Lord Jesus Christ, You soaked Your life here on earth in prayer, and You taught Your disciples how to pray. As we read, think, pray and reflect on this Great Prayer – the most famous prayer ever taught – open our eyes and our hearts to receive Your gifts of insight, wisdom and understanding. May we come with the expectancy that You will give us the fresh bread that will sustain us... Amen...

Introduction

Let's pray the Lord's Prayer together.

It's definitely different to share in the Lord's Prayer in this way.

But how does it feel to share/pray this together?

We are so used to praying the Lords Prayer than we might actually forget its radical nature. In teaching this to His disciples, and handing it down to us, the Lord Jesus Christ was ushering in a new era of freedom and intimacy.

Jesus didn't specify a particular time, place, manner in which to pray. This was different from Jewish religious practices of praying a fixed times during the day. This was a prayer for any and all times.

There's also a contrast in that fact that this prayer does not hold back from speaking the name of God. In the Old Testament there was a reserve in speaking the name of God. In the Lord's Prayer, the Family Prayer, we are invited to say *ABBA FATHER*. It's a respectful way of addressing God but it is a familiar, close and loving name given to us to speak of God.

In the Gospel of Matthew, this prayer comes in the centre of Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Firstly, Jesus told the people how not to pray (like the hypocrites do with over the top displays). He knew

that the Father looks at the heart of those who prayed to Him. He wasn't looking at the outside.

The Jesus shares this prayer, demonstrating the way to pray from the heart – directed at the father heart of God.

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples – *WHEN* you pray. Jesus doesn't say *IF* you pray. He is telling us to pray always. He understands that we do and will continue to pray.

Our Two Readings –

Matthew 6:5-15 and Luke 11:1-4

Martin Luther said that the Lord's Prayer had become the 'greatest martyr on earth' because of the way we have tortured it.

We say it without thinking, we rhyme it off without giving it as much thought as we should, we usually only use it during set times and places. Ask yourself - do I use the Lord's Prayer regularly in my own prayer life?

We say the Family Prayer 'by rote.' We take it for granted. However, we can and should read this prayer with the lenses of Christ – in the spirit in which He gave it to us. We can pray this for our whole lifetimes without losing our sense of wonder, awe and adoration.

The first half of the prayer is often called the '*You Petitions.*' These point us to worship God the Father as we focus on making God's name holy, praying for the coming of God's Kingdom and His will.

The second half of the prayer is often called the '*We Petitions.*' These help us offer God our petitions and requests as we ask for our daily bread, for forgiveness and for protection from evil.

The Gospels don't record the final lines of the prayer that we usually say – the doxology 'For the Kingdom.'

This was established by the Church a within a century of Jesus' life.

Let's have a look at the seven 'parts' or components of the Lord's Prayer:

1. Our Father in Heaven

We approach our Heavenly Father as His children with Jesus as our Brother...

Praying to 'our Father' highlights the family nature – we are one family as His children.

Even when we pray this alone we are reminded of our brothers and sisters throughout the world who share in this prayer with us...

2. Hallowed be Your name

We don't start with our requests and concerns but with honouring our God – our creator and King.

Hallowed – meaning holy ... holy be Your name

3. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done

God reigns in Heaven, and His rule is breaking out across the earth. When His Kingdom comes, His will *will* be done.

... As we pray this, we invite Him into our hearts and our lives, we welcome His Kingdom through our very actions...

4. Give us today our daily bread

Jesus knows we are physical beings with human needs...

Does this refer to the physical bread or the Word of God???

We can apply it physically and spiritually.

5. Forgive us our debts

Matthew uses 'debts' and Luke uses 'sins...' Meaning that we both ask for forgiveness for our sins and the things we

have left undone... We're also praying to be forgiven as we forgive others... It's quite a big ask!

6. *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*

We live in a world not as God designed it with temptation and evil crouching behind many a door... Jesus knows we need protection and so gives us the words to speak...

7. *The Kingdom, the power and the glory...*

We end the prayer by worshipping the one true God, giving Him the honour and the glory.

Here is a suggestion: we can look at the Lord's Prayer as having six Steps of Prayer taught in the Lord's Prayer.

1. **Address** God's rightful place as the Father
2. **Worship** and praise God for who He is and all that He has done
3. **Acknowledge** that it is God's will and plans are in control and not our own
4. **Ask** God for the things that we need
5. **Confess** our sins and repent
6. **Request** protection and help in overcoming sin and Satan's attacks on us

In just a few words Jesus gives us all we need to approach the Father. In the words of the Family Prayer we can voice our praise to Him, welcoming His rule and reign on earth and in our lives. We present our requests to Him, knowing that He is good and loving. To do so can take courage and boldness, but we can trust that He hears our prayers and is pleased when we turn to Him.

Questions for Reflection

- Frederick Buchner said of the Lord's Prayer – 'To speak these words is to invite the tiger out of the cage, to unleash a power

that makes atomic power look like a warm breeze...’ What do you make of that??

- For new Jewish Christians, Jesus’ prayer would have felt radical, but in contrasts we might feel its too familiar...How can we keep praying it in fresh and authentic ways?
- A time for any other questions and reflections.

A Time of Prayer

Some Final thoughts

Through Jesus, God has given us a way to pray in which we can focus on Him and on our requests and petitions. It’s simple and its radical. So simple, perhaps, that we forget the power it can unleash as God ushers in His kingdom here on earth.

How can we incorporate it more into our daily prayer times??

Tom Wright suggests taking a component a day – ‘our father who are in heaven’ on day and then ‘hallowed by thy name another day.’

Another idea is praying the Lord’s Prayer throughout the day and at night.

Closing Prayer

Lord, You’re our Father and we honour and adore You! May Your will and Your ways be done here on earth as they are in heaven. Help us always to seek Your help for our daily bread. Forgive us our wrongs and save us from the time of trial. To You be all glory, honour and praise! Amen.