



Chapter 2

Praying Daily

Matthew 6:9-13

UNDERSTANDING

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UNDERSTANDING

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?

Read Matthew 6:9–13

The Big Picture

Knowing the details behind the Our Father give us insight into Jesus' outline for how we should pray.

Just like the Lord's disciples in Luke 11, many young Christians ask, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). Jesus' response is what we know today as the Our Father, recorded in the Gospels of Luke and Mathew. Some wonder whether Christians should pray the Our Father word for word, or whether Jesus was simply providing a model for our prayer. The best answer is, both: The words of the Our Father are powerful in themselves, and they give us an incredible model for our own prayers. Let's walk through the Our Father in Matthew, phrase by phrase, to get a better understanding of how Jesus is teaching us to pray.

Our Father Who Art in Heaven

Faced with a hectic schedule, we can easily lose track of why we pray in the first place. These first words of the Our Father give us the

foundational reason: We are in a relationship with God. The Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, the source of all that is good, invites us to converse with Him. Prayer is a daily response to an invitation to participate in an incredible relationship.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

To understand this phrase, we have to understand the power of God's name. Using God's name in vain is forbidden in the Ten Commandments. This does not mean just the use of God's name as a swear word; it also means that we should not use God's name without a purpose. The name of God is sacred because of its power. In fact, when we utter God's name, we bring about His very presence (Mt 18:20; CCC 2666). This phrase is a reminder that God is with us when we call on His name in prayer through the sign of the cross.

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will Be Done on Earth as It Is in Heaven

At first glance, this is a confusing concept. Why are we praying for God's kingdom to come if Jesus announced, "The kingdom is at hand" (Mt 3:1-2)? There is no doubt that Jesus established His kingdom here on earth—and yet, the Lord allows us to work with Him. This phrase helps us think of how our words and actions can build up the kingdom of God each day.

What Do I Need to Know about This Passage?

It also seems as though the will of God would happen no matter what. Do we even have a choice of whether or not we follow it? The

answer is yes. We have a free will to choose whom we will follow—God or ourselves. The Christian author C. S. Lewis once wrote about our decision to follow God or to follow ourselves, and its implication for our eternal life: “There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’” Silent prayer is a great outward and inward expression of a desire for God’s will. With our heart, mind, and body, we are saying that what God has to offer is more than what we can offer by ourselves.

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

Notice the sequence of the Our Father: It is only now that we bring a petition before the Lord—after we have recognized our relationship with God, praised Him for His holiness, and invited His kingdom and will into our lives. In this context, as children who first seek His kingdom, we make our petitions known to God (Mt 6:33). In one sense, we are asking God to provide for our material needs. Others have also noted that it is a request for the daily bread of the Eucharist. In both cases, we acknowledge that our material and spiritual needs must be turned over to God, who will provide for us.

And Forgive Us Our Trespasses as We Forgive Our Trespassers

This phrase reveals a key teaching that occurs several times in Scripture: The mercy God grants us depends on our own forgiveness of others. When we truly experience and understand the gravity of God’s mercy, we will forgive others in turn. We will be, as Jesus says in Luke, “merciful even as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:33).

And Lead Us Not into Temptation but Deliver Us from Evil

Temptations are a refining fire. Sometimes they bring out the very best in us; many times they bring to light our weaknesses. While we do not hope for temptations, we know the Lord uses them for our good, and He will not let us be tempted beyond our strength (1 Cor 10:13). Where do these temptations come from? In the Our Father, we usually say, "Deliver us from evil," but the Greek can be translated as "the evil one." 1 Peter 5:8 tells us that the devil prowls like a roaring lion; prayer is our spiritual weapon to fight this battle.

Application to Jesus

Through the Our Father, we continue to bring back the kingdom Jesus established.

Living Out Prayer

Prayer is at the heart of our relationship with God: It is our source of communication with the God who loves us. And yet, most Christians find prayer to be difficult. Deep prayer seems almost impossible, especially in such a busy, materialistic, and distracting age. But this is precisely why prayer is even more important for us today: We need silence in our lives, and most importantly, we need the presence of an eternal God to help guide our path. As one contemporary author noted, "No one died of hunger because of not having enough me to eat." Prayer turns our focus away from ourselves and to the One who alone can save us.

At the end of the study, you may want to challenge your group to pray twenty minutes each day. Be sure to show prayer not as an obligation

but as an opportunity to speak with the God of the universe. Also, be sure to give them resources on how to pray. Don't simply leave the members of your group with a challenge, but take the time to pray with them, either in or out of the study. Prayer is a lost art form, and your students will need examples to see how it is done. Finally, we included a "Prayer Card" with this study where the members of your group can commit themselves to praying each day, if desired.

Prayer Pledge

"And in the morning, a great while before day, He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there He prayed" (Mk 1:35).

"But so much the more the report went abroad concerning Him; and great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. But He withdrew to the wilderness and prayed" (Lk 5:15-16).

"And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18:1).

With God's help, I resolve to spend at least twenty minutes in prayer to God each day.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Resources to help me pray: *Time for God* by Jacques Philippe, *Praying Scripture for a Change* by Tim Gray

Application to Our Lives

Taking time each day to pray keeps us connected to the God of the universe.

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR YOUR BIBLE STUDY

Matthew 6:9–13

STEP 1: OPENER

Many Christians find prayer to be difficult. Why do you think this is the case?

STEP 2: BACKDROP

Just like the Lord's disciples in Luke 11, many young Christians ask, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1). Jesus' response is what we know today as the Our Father, which is recorded in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. It is easy to read or pray the Our Father without realizing its significance. Let's walk through the Our Father in Matthew, phrase by phrase, to get a better understanding of how Jesus is teaching us to pray.

STEP 3: PASSAGE

Read Matthew 6:9–13.

STEP 4: EXPLORATION: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Note that answers appear in italics.

1. What do you think is the most common way to pray?

Answer: Most people pray because they have a request to make to God. They need something or feel helpless, so they ask God for help.

2. Why do you pray?

Allow the group to discuss.

3. How does the very first phrase, “Our Father,” indicate why we should pray?

Answer: The phrase “Our Father” shows that we are praying because we have a relationship with God.

4. Prayer can feel like just another task to check off of our to-do list. How do we find ways to make it an opportunity and not an obligation?

Allow the group to discuss.

5. The names of God and Jesus have always been considered sacred throughout history. There is power in God’s name because it invokes His presence. (Read CCC 2666.) How does this apply to our prayer lives?

Answer: Prayer is our time with God. By invoking His name through the sign of the cross, we are asking for God to be present in a special way when we pray.

6. What comes to mind when you hear the words, “Thy kingdom come”?

Allow the group to discuss.

7. In what ways do you personally hope to bring about God’s kingdom?

Allow the group to discuss.

8. Why do you think we pray that God’s will be done? Don’t you think that God’s will should happen whether we pray for it or not?

Answer: God is powerful enough to make His will happen in any and every situation, but He allows us to have free will. He allows us to reject His will if we so choose.

9. What is the relationship between silence in prayer and wanting God’s will instead of our own?

Answer: When we enter into silence, we are saying with our bodies, minds, and hearts that we want to hear less of ourselves and more of what God has to say in our lives.

10. It’s only halfway through the Our Father that Jesus tells us to make our requests known. Why do you think this is the case?

Answer: Making your requests known to God isn’t a bad thing. The Our Father, however, shows us that the requests should be made in a context where we recognize our relationship with God and ask that His will be done first and foremost.

11. Read Luke 11:5–13. Why do you think that God doesn't always answer our prayers immediately or even at all sometimes?

Answer: God doesn't want to be a genie in a bottle; He wants us to have a relationship of trust with Him. Persistence helps us form this relationship. Sometimes it is because we fail to continue our prayers. At other times, God gives us what we need even if we can't see it at the time. In the end, God is always willing to give us His Holy Spirit (Mt 9:13).

12. When we turn over our material and spiritual needs to God, how does this change our relationship with Him? How can we actually do this?

Answer: We show that we don't rely on ourselves but on God. This will change our view of God and our anxiety about life.

13. Read verses 14–15. Why do you think God makes His own forgiveness dependent on our forgiveness of others?

Answer: It is only when we are able to act like the Father and forgive others that we truly understand and accept God's mercy.

14. How can temptations be helpful to us? How can they be harmful?

Answer: Temptations can bring out the best in us by showing us what we are able to withstand. But since temptations can also bring out the worst in us, we should pray not to go through them.

15. Where do these temptations come from?

Answer: Temptations come from the devil. The original Greek shows that this phrase from the Our Father could also be read, "But deliver us from the evil one." (Read 1 Pt 5:8 for more.)

16. Why do you think prayer is difficult in our world? What part of our culture can make it easier?

Answer: We live in such a busy, distracted, and materialistic age that setting time aside to pray silently about a spiritual need can feel like a waste of time or seem too difficult to accomplish. But with so much going on around us, we must take care to stay centered and be in touch with the One who will help us navigate our lives each day.

17. See the "What Do I Need to Know about This Passage?" section on how to help your group learn how to pray.

