

Teach us to

PRAY

STUDY GUIDE

NARARA VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Welcome to our series through the Lord's Prayer

As a church desperate for God and passionate for people, we know that prayer will always be an essential part of who we are and how we pursue our vision.

Over the next 5 weeks, we are going to deliberately and slowly work through the Lord's Prayer guided by the disciple's question: 'Lord, teach us to pray'.

We trust this series will equip and inspire you in your own personal prayer life. To get the most out of our series, we encourage you to:

- **Engage** with each week's messages on the Lord's Prayer
- **Journey** through this accompanying booklet resource. You are welcome to use it devotionally, although we recommend using it in community where possible (with your connect group or some friends)
- **Take up** the weekly prayer challenges, and most importantly
- **Pray!**

*"This, then, is how you 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.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.' "*

- Jesus, Matthew ch6

'The Lord's Prayer was not given as a literary masterpiece to be viewed and admired. Nor is it a beautiful set piece to be recited morning by morning as if the lovely words themselves would infuse a beauty into our lives but had no practical meaning or bearing on the way we live.

It was given to be a pattern and a basis of prayer for real people in the real world. It is the pattern our Lord has given His disciples. Even then it is not simply a recitation or a set prayer but truly a whole house of prayer with many rooms to explore. Each room opens to us a different aspect of God's world, the world for which we are called to pray.

Beware then, of rushing around the house from room to room simply 'checking them off'. But rather, take time to walk from room to room and bring before our heavenly Father, the people, the contents and the views, both near and far, of each room in turn.'

-Rev Dr John Belham in *Lord Teach us to Pray*

WEEK 1

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name

As we begin

As we begin our first study for this series, read together Jesus' words to his disciples as he teaches them (and us) how to pray in Matthew 6:9-13. Then share with one another:

- How did you learn to pray? Who or what has impacted your understanding of prayer (i.e.: how to pray, what to pray about or the impact of praying)?
- Was there anything that particularly stood out from Johnny's message on Sunday that you felt God was speaking to you through?

Our Father in heaven

Jesus begins teaching his disciples about prayer at the most logical place: who it is that we are praying to.

- When you pray, how do you normally address God or think of Him?
- By using the term 'Father', what is Jesus teaching about the nature of God and our relationship with him?

To open in prayer with 'Our Father' is to recognise also who we are: the children of God, which speaks of his great saving love. Read together 1 John 3:1-3.

- Share what it means to you that you have become a beloved child of God.

WEEK 1 CONTINUED

'Father' is a term of intimacy, of relationship, of knowing and being known. As Christians we don't pray "dear distant deity" but instead cry out "our Father".

- If prayer is based on such an intimate relationship, how should this impact our prayer life? [*eg: when we pray, how often we pray, what we pray about, the confidence we have in praying to God etc*]
- Do you think there is any significance that Jesus instructs us to pray 'our father'? What is the role and importance of a communal practice and understanding of prayer?

Hallowed be your name

While we can call on God as our father, we need to also remember who our Father is! Being overly-familiar with relational language can sometimes cause us to forget that we are praying to the cosmic, holy, sovereign, all-powerful, awesome Creator-God himself! Read Isaiah 6:1-5 and Revelation 4:7-11.

- Do you think you have an appropriate reverential awe/fear of the Lord in light of those passages? What would change if you more fully did?
- How do we keep a balance between relational intimacy and awe-filled wonder in our prayer life?

In Jesus' day, a person's name was indicative of, or synonymous with, their character. To pray that God's name would be 'hallowed' (ie: proclaimed as holy, set apart, held in highest regard) is like praying that God himself would be revered as holy by us and by all people.

- What does that look like/sound like in practice when we pray?
- What happens to our perception of ourselves, our problems, our lives, our future, and our God when we focus on glorifying the Father in prayer?

WEEK 2

Your kingdom come, your will be done

As we begin

This week we pick up where we left off in Matthew 6, but before we jump into week 2 share with each other:

- How did starting each prayer with 'our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name' impact your prayer life over the past week?
- Was there anything that particularly stood out from the message on Sunday that you felt God was speaking to you through?

Your Kingdom Come

The kingdom of God (or kingdom of heaven) is a significant concept throughout the Bible and takes central stage in the teaching of Jesus. Broadly speaking, the Kingdom of God means God's rule and his reign, his kingship, his sovereignty.

Individually, to be saved into God's kingdom is to embrace the comprehensive rule of God over every aspect of your life (and enjoy the associated blessings).

- In what ways do we currently experience the kingdom of God, and in what ways do we not yet experience the fullness of the kingdom of God?
- What do you think Jesus means when he teaches us to pray for God's kingdom to come?
- Is there a particular situation in your life or in our world where you are praying to see God's kingdom come in greater measure?

WEEK 2 CONTINUED

Praying ‘your kingdom come’ is about desiring to experience the fullness of God’s rule and reign in our lives and across our world.

- How does praying ‘your kingdom come’ help align (and re-align) your desires, attitudes and priorities?
- How might the types of things we pray for/about help us keep such a kingdom perspective?

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Aldous Huxley comments that this part of the Lord’s Prayer is *‘repeated daily by millions who have not the slightest intention of letting anyone’s will be done but their own’*.

- Do you think that’s a harsh but perhaps fair observation?
- What would shift in your prayer life if you consistently included a time of praying for your obedience to living God’s ways?

In one sense, the prayer ‘your will be done’ is a prayer for global justice; to see nations, organisations, and all people act in the way that God intends.

- What heartache, hurts, injustice and brokenness are perpetuated in our world by God’s will not being done on earth as in heaven?

At another level, ‘you will be done’ is a prayer of personal submission; where we submit our will to God’s will. It is also an expression of our deep trust in our God (that his will is ultimately best!). Read Mark 14:32–42.

- How can we follow the example of Jesus in our prayer life?
- What are you currently holding on to that you need to submit to God’s will?

WEEK 3

Give us today our daily bread

As we begin

This week we are already at the halfway point of the Lord's prayer! As we begin this week, share with each other:

- How did you go with last week's prayer challenge? Did praying for God's Kingdom to come change your perspective on who, where or what you were praying for? Have you seen God answer in some way already?
- Was there anything that particularly stood out from the message on Sunday that you felt God was speaking to you through?

Give us today our daily bread

The beginning of the Lord's Prayer makes it clear the focus must first be on the Father – His name, His reign, and His will. Jesus teaches us to then bring before our Heavenly Father our needs for each day.

- Do you find it easy or difficult to bring all your requests before God?
- When you pray about your needs, do you normally jump straight to the asking, or do you first spend time praying and reflecting on God's glory, His Kingdom and His will? Does it make any difference when you do?

In Jesus' day bread was synonymous with the physical necessities of life. 'Give us today our daily bread' carries the broader meaning of asking for God to provide everything that we need for each day. Read Matthew 6:25-34.

WEEK 3 CONTINUED

- In what ways does God provide for us?
- Share any testimonies you have of seeing God provide for your daily needs (or the needs of someone you know).

God cares for us and is our provider. That doesn't let us off the hook though!
Read together 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 & Deuteronomy 8:17-18.

- How do you understand the interplay between human responsibility and God's provision when it comes to meeting our daily needs?

Read together Proverbs 30:7-9, Philippians 4:12-13 and 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

- How does praying this part of the Lord's Prayer safeguard our own hearts against greed and coveting the possessions/wealth/lifestyles of others?
- How can including 'give us today our daily bread' in our prayer life help us grow a day-to-day dependence on God? How can it also help us be thankful for what He has already given us?
- In ways does acknowledging and receiving God's provision then overflow to generosity in our lives?

As holistic beings, we do have needs beyond health, housing, clothing and food.

- What do you think are some of those other human needs we may have, that are important for us to be praying about to God?
- How does Philippians 4:4-7 and Matthew 7:7-11 help remind us that we can pray about absolutely anything and everything else as well?

To end this week's study:

- Share and pray for an area of your life where you are seeking God's provision.

WEEK 4

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

As we begin

Let's check in to see how everyone went last week.

- How did you go with those arrow gratitude prayers throughout the week? Was there anything you ended up feeling genuinely grateful to God for that surprised you, or that you felt you had been taking for granted?
- Has there been any answers to the prayers for God's provision that we prayed at the end of last week's time together?
- Was there anything that particularly stood out from the message on Sunday that you felt God was speaking to you through?

Forgive us our debts (sins)

Read the Lord's Prayer aloud together from Matthew 6:9-13

- How does praying through the Lord's Prayer naturally bring us to an awareness of our own failings and our need for forgiveness?
- How much of what we need to confess has to do with not properly honouring God's name, failing to seek first his kingdom or neglecting to do his will?

Throughout the Bible we have recorded for us, some raw and personal prayers of confession. For example, read Daniel 9:4-10, Psalm 51:1-6 and Luke 18:9-14.

- Do you think it is important for us to see our wrongdoings not just as personal slip ups, but as sins made against God?

WEEK 4 CONTINUED

- What are the damaging consequences of being too prideful to admit our wrongdoings or of being confident in our own self-righteousness?
- What role has confession had in your own personal prayer life?

Read together the promise of Scripture in 1 John 1:8-10

- What assurance do we have as believers for when we truly confess and turn from our sins through prayer?
- What role should thankfulness and awe (that Jesus would paid the price for our sins in full so that we would be freely forgiven) have in our prayer life?

[Bonus question] How do you think we can have this element of confession (and thanksgiving for our forgiveness) in communal settings like Sunday services?

As we also have forgiven

The clear implication of being forgiven much is that we have no real right to withhold forgiveness from anyone. So important is this, that Jesus offers a strong follow up in the verses following the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:14-15) to reinforce the point.

- What role has prayer played in helping you to forgive others in the past?

Read Ephesians 4:31-32 and Colossians 3:12-14

- How is forgiving others a natural extension of our new identity in Christ?
- How does the difficulty we have in forgiving others give us a greater insight into how amazing it is that our God, in Christ, has forgiven our sins?!?

WEEK 5

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

As we begin

Welcome to the final week in our series as we complete our exploration of the Lord's Prayer.

- Last week we set the challenge of praying a prayer of confession at the end of every day and praying forgiveness over any who wrong. Share what impact that practice had on you this week.
- Was there anything that particularly stood out from the final message of our series on Sunday that you felt God was speaking to you through?

Lead us not into temptation

Pray the Lord's Prayer aloud together, paying particular attention to how it ends.

- Is temptation something you are aware of, think about or pray about often?
- Why do you think Jesus includes this in the Lord's Prayer right after teaching us to pray for the forgiveness of our sins?

In several places the Bible tells us that the best way to resist temptation is to flee from it (eg: 1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22), and Jesus wisely teaches us here to pray that God would lead us away from it.

- Have you ever, in the midst of being particularly tempted, turned to God in prayer and prayed this? Share what impact that had on you if you have.

WEEK 5 CONTINUED

- In our regular rhythm of praying, how might God lead us away from temptation by convicting us about some of our attitudes, choices or habits that lead us towards temptation?

As we pray about temptation, we also remember that Jesus was tempted in every way as us, yet had strength to conquer it (see Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:15).

- How does that thought give you greater confidence in praying honestly to God about the various temptations you face?
- As well as praying that God would lead us away from temptation, what can we pray that God leads us towards instead?

Deliver us from the evil one

For many Christians, praying on the armour of God from Ephesians 6:10-18 is part of their regular prayer life. Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and consider:

- What does Jesus' teaching about how we should pray reveal about the presence and influence of the evil one in our lives and world?
- How does being mindful of the spiritual battle we are engaged in shape our prayers and prayer life?
- (From v18) How can we also be praying for one another in this way?

As we finish our series through the Lord's prayer, reflect upon and share:

- What have you found the most personally meaningful (or challenging!) from our series through the Lord's Prayer?
- What changes will you continue to implement into your prayer life after the series ends?

APPLICATION

Weekly Prayer Challenges

We don't want to be hearers of the Word only, we desire to be those who put it into practice. To help us do so, below are 5 weekly prayer challenges that correspond with each of the 5 weeks of our series.

We highly encourage you to not only take up these challenges, but to then share the impact of them with your connect group or a close Christian friend.

WEEK ONE: *begin every prayer with...*

Every time you pray this week, start by praying
"our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name"
 and expand on that in prayer.

That is: come to God in prayer with the loving confidence of a child coming to speak to their Daddy, thank him for his love for you and pray that God's name would be revered throughout your life and the world.

Come ready to share the impact next week.

WEEK TWO: *praying HIS kingdom come...*

Where are the areas in your life, your family, your neighbourhood and our world where you long to see God's Kingdom come in power and His will being done as in heaven?

Intercede over those people, situation and places this week by praying
"God, Your Kingdom come, your will be done in ____"

(PS. This is a great week to prayer walk where you are praying for God's Kingdom to come in greater measure!)

WEEK THREE: *arrow gratitude prayers*

This is the week for short, sentence "arrow prayers"
for God's many provisions.

Every time you see, think of, use, interact with something that God has provided for you, pray: "thank you Lord for providing me with ___"

[For bonus credit, you can also try praying: 'Lord, give me today my daily bread' before making any purchases this week.]

WEEK FOUR: *end of day ritual*

At the end of each day, take a moment to pray
where you ask God's forgiveness

(for the ways that you have not loved him with your whole heart, mind and strength, nor loved your neighbour as yourself over the course of the day).

As you ask God for forgiveness, also release your forgiveness
to any who you felt wronged you in some way this day.

WEEK FIVE: *off to a good start*

Pray at the beginning of each day this week (before you leave home):

*"I choose this day to serve you Lord.
Lead me away from temptation.
Protect me from the evil one's schemes.
Empower me to honour you in every thought,
choice and behaviour that the day will hold."*

APPLICATION

Sermon Notes

Keeping a record of what we sense God is speaking to us is a powerful practice to get in the pattern of!

Below we have provided a space for note taking and reflection to accompany each week's message and study questions. The types of things you might want to note down could include:

- What stood out as particularly meaningful, challenging or new to you?
- Were there any questions raised for you that you need to think, read or prayerfully reflect more on?
- What truth do you feel the Lord directing you to take hold of, or what action do you feel the Lord directing you to put into practice?

Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name

notes

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

notes

Give us today our daily bread

notes

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

notes

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

notes

APPLICATION

Lord, teach me to pray!

Throughout this series we have explored the Lord's Prayer in greater detail, set and applied weekly prayer challenges and reflected together in small groups. Our desire for you is that a passion for prioritising prayer and a delight in communing with God through prayer has been stirred in you throughout the series!

We hope this passion will cause a marked difference in the amount you pray, what you pray for and the confidence you have in praying. And that this would all be to the Father's glory. Lord, teach us to pray indeed!

Write down how you believe your prayer life is called to change beyond the end of this series and booklet:

How my prayer life is called to change:

Who I'm going to share this with:

"This, then, is how you 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.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'*"

- Jesus



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