

## Lord Teach Us to Pray: Luke 11:1-13

Portions adapted from: "How To Pray The Lord's Way," by Brian Bill @ SermonCentral.Com

Two men were out walking one day. One guy challenged his buddy by saying, "If you're so religious, let me hear you quote the Lord's Prayer. I'll bet you \$10 you can't do it." The second guy responded, "*Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. And if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.*" The first guy pulled out his wallet, fished out a \$10 bill and muttered, "I didn't think you could do it!"

Not everyone is familiar with the Lord's Prayer. Fewer people are aware that, in our Bible, there are two versions of this prayer; with two distinct cautions that we will get to in a couple of weeks.

Today's scripture contains the shorter version of the Lord's Prayer. The longer version which we pray in this Church every Sunday can be found in Matthew's Gospel account (6:9-13). But like the two prayers, there are also two common misconceptions with our current practice of this praying this prayer.

1. First we call it "The Lord's Prayer," when it is really the "Disciples prayer." Jesus gave this prayer to us, to guide us in what we should be praying about. I am sure that while he was on earth, this was also what he prayed about. But now that he is ruling in heaven, this is what Jesus is busy bringing about. So this prayer is our way of aligning our requests up with what he is working to give us. This prayer is for every day of our life; not just to repeat on Sundays.
2. Secondly repeating the same words, every Sunday, while perhaps comforting and a good memory aid for when we don't know what else to pray, such repetition leads us to think of these words themselves as a magic formula, which we can recite without thinking and they will still accomplish the purpose of prayer for us. But this is not so. All Prayer comes from the heart, words are just the way we shape and share our thoughts. In Matthew's account of this prayer, Jesus was very pointed about not *heaping up "many words" or "empty phrases"* and expecting God to hear (Mt. 6:7-15). God knows what's on your heart, and he wants you to know and to speak what's on your heart. Repetitive, ritualized, language empty of thought just doesn't even get past God's spam filter.



So the prayer that he gave to us is not some magic formula ... but rather a brief and very specific framework to guide all of our prayers. As Jesus said, *Your Father knows what you need before you ask, pray then in this way* (Mt. 6:8-9) Today then, let's look at how and what Jesus taught us to pray about through the Lord's Prayer, which is a whole lot more than just the words we say.

This model prayer that Jesus gave us easily divides into two equal parts: The opening portion acknowledges and honors God not only as Lord of all, but also as our father, which are not the same thing. Though slightly out of order, let's take the "Lord" part first

We often use the title "Lord God" in referring to God's roll, His status, as creator and master of the universe; we see that idea coming out of this prayer where it says, ***Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*** As we have learned from our Bible studies, God has and is carefully bringing to pass His plan for the restoration of all creation back to the way He had originally designed it. That is why our Bible opens and closes in a garden with us humans living in close relationship with our creator. That is the way our world began and the way – one day – it will end (or begin again); God's will about this cannot be thwarted. So we either get in-line with God's plan or we will be gotten out of the way (c.f. Psalm 33:10-12, Isaiah 46:9-10)

Thus, when we pray *Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, we are declaring that we want to align our lives with God's salvation plan both for the planet and our fellow humans. We want to be a part of the answer, not the problem. We want to know how we can live and work to advance God's kingdom and champion what God values ("Your will be done") in the world around us.

But, one of the major aspects of prayer, that we often forget, is that prayer is as much or more about listening to God than it is about telling him our needs. So when we pray *Your will be done on earth*, we are asking God to tell us what He wants us to be doing today, to advance His causes, His kingdom. Thus, for a good portion of any prayer we should say, ***Father, what do You want to show me today?*** And then we need to wait quietly and let God speak to us. Psalm 46 contrasts a world gone mad but in the midst of which, a quiet refuge is given to all who will "*be still and know that I am God*" (46:10). And here is Isaiah on the matter:

those who wait for the Lord  
shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

Isaiah 40.31

A wise saying that also applies to our prayer relationship with God is that **we were given two ears and only one mouth, because we should listen twice as much as we speak.**

Listening for what God wants and waiting for His timing, these are both areas that I struggle with in my prayer life; I don't listen well, I don't sit long. But I am growing in this discipline, Saying *Lord God, what do You want to show me today? How do you want to use me today?* And then waiting for the answer.

Recognizing that God is Lord, master, creator, sovereign over the universe, all of this we express when we pray "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.*" But our prayer opens with the most amazing term that any human can use in relation to the Lord God of universe. Our prayer opens with "**Father,**" ("*our Father in Heaven*"). Just as "Lord" describes God's relation with our world, **Father** describes the relationship that He would have with you and me. Why this is so, I do not know, but the master of the universe loves us and wants to live with us as family. Our own ability to love, to want family, is just a reflection of God's nature which, being made in His image, He designed into us.

God is love,  
those who abide in love abide in God,  
and God abides in them.  
... We love because he first loved us.  
(1 John 4:16-19)

So "Father" is the most common term we use for God in prayer, and rightly so, because that is how Jesus addressed His prayers. The only prayer Jesus ever prayed without first saying "Father" was when on the cross he cried out, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" Only in that time of sin-bearing was He ever separated from the Father. But then he ended his life saying, "*Father into your hands, I give my spirit*" (Luke 23.46).

Jesus called God "Father" and has taught us to call Him the same. To call God "Father" acknowledges our new relationship with Him, brought about by Jesus giving his life in ransom for ours so that we might become "children of God," members of His holy family.

See what love the Father has given us,  
that we should be called children of God;  
and that is what we are.  
1 John 3:1

But, even as His child, it is understandable that our prayers will be shaped by the way we picture God. A dysfunctional idea of God will result in a dysfunctional way of praying. Perhaps we had bad or no parenting at all ... so we tend to think of God more as distant, uncaring, rigid or vengeful, rather than as our caring father. And if that is

the case we have a lot of growing in faith that we need to do. Because Jesus described God the Father as passionately caring for us better than even the best of our earthly fathers: *"Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**"* (Luke 11:11-13).

So we need not approach God with big churchy words or formalities; He is not impressed. Rather, God wants us to embrace Him as our Father. As the author of Hebrews instructed us, *Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* (Hebrews 4:16).

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And so we pray "Our Father," but we also need to remember that our father is holy. God's nature is like that of a parent, but His person is "holy," meaning: *as one who is perfect in goodness and righteousness He is worthy of our reverence.* So the next line in our model prayers declares: "**Hallowed be your name.**" Our parent-child relationship with God should not diminish our esteem for Him. He is not the "big guy in the sky" or "our buddy." He is the Lord God Almighty. Even as his child, we should give Him respect He merits.

**when we pray *Hallowed be your name*, we are saying, "may you be honored today in the world in which I live and by the things I do."** How do we do this?

One way that we honor God's name is by living a life of obedience before Him. God wants us to become a vehicle of His holiness to others. The Apostle Peter called us "*God's chosen race, His holy nation, His royal priesthood*" (1 Peter 1:9) And for this reason Peter has also instructed us ...

Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; 1 Peter 1:15
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Martin Luther said that God's name is made holy among us "*when both our doctrines and our living are truly Christian.*" **That's where prayer begins. By first lining up our beliefs and our lives with God's purposes, before we start asking Him for what we want.**

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven... Matthew 6:9-10

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Thus, the first half of this model prayer that Jesus gave us directed our thoughts Godward. Now, the second half focuses on us as believers. **Once God is given His rightful place, then we will have the proper perspective toward ourselves.** This section of the prayer covers our whole being: body, soul and spirit: *Give us this day our daily bread* relates to our body. *Forgive us our debts*, speaks to our soul. And *lead us not into temptation*, deals with our spirit.

Before we go any further in this second half, did you ever notice that this entire prayer is in the plural?

It does not say "give me my bread," but rather "*give US our Bread.*" Why? Because while we come to God as an individual, when we are born again it is within and as a vital member of God's larger family. The Bible describes us as being "members of the body of Christ," intricately bound together like all the various parts of the human body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). When God becomes our Father, we can no longer live alone. We need each other to thrive, so our prayer should address not just our own individual needs but the needs of our entire family.

And so we pray "give us" and "forgive us" and "lead us." I hope you find startling this idea that our daily needs, our sins, and our need for guidance, are not just individual but also corporate. Corporately, we need provision, forgiveness, and guidance from God. This is an idea, as a Church family, that we need to explore further. But for the moment, realize that **this is why we pray this prayer together every Sunday. Because, as members of God's family, our concerns – just as God's concerns – should be for "us" not just "me."**

"***Give us this day our daily bread***" may at first glance seem irrelevant to most of us. While there certainly are people right here in Bedford and millions around our world who are not sure where their next meal is coming from, most of us have plenty to eat. But this request has more to do with every aspect of our life. The word "bread" really refers to all of our physical needs.

When we pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread,*" we are asking God to supply all that we need to live and we are affirming our faith that He will take care of those needs.

Notice also that our request is only for the needs of each day. This is to help remind us that every day of our life is dependent on God's provision for us. Scripture teaches us that we live and move and have our being within God's realm; every aspect of our daily life is reliant upon His loving care (Acts 17:28). As a Jewish proverb teaches: *When God breathes out, we breathe in. When God breathes in, we breathe out. When God holds His breath, we stop breathing.* Jesus taught that there is enough going on in this

world, that we need only focus our concerns on today and leave tomorrow to God's capable care (Matthew 6:31-34).

Do we pray for our daily needs?

Do we at least give thanks for them?

**If we don't acknowledge that it is God who give us what we need every day we will gradually succumb to the delusion that we actually can provide for these needs ourselves and we can subtly pull away from trust in God.**

The next phrase of the prayer is, "***forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.***" Forgiveness of sin is the greatest need of the human heart. Only God can grant us a pardon from punishment and guilt.

But, this is perhaps a confusing phrase for Christians to pray, because Scripture teaches us that through our faith in Christ he has effectively taken our sins, nailed them to the cross, and triumphed over them by the cross (Colossians 2.14). So ...

There is now no condemnation  
for those who are in Christ Jesus.  
For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus  
has set us free from the law of sin and of death.  
Romans 8:1

What then do we still need to ask forgiveness for?

Not the forgiveness that grants us salvation, but rather the forgiveness that keeps us in right relationship with God our Father. When we sin as God's child, we do not jeopardize our status as God's child, but we do grieve God's Holy Spirit living within us (Ephesians 4:30). And one day, as a child of God, we will stand before our savior, our brother, our friend Jesus to give an account of the life we lived for or not for God (Colossians 2.14). The good we have done will be refined and rewarded while the bad we have done, perhaps for which we have not asked forgiveness, will cause us loss. What this loss means for us, Scripture does not say.

But, again let me repeat this is not a loss of our salvation – which has been secured for us by Christ – but in some way a loss for us in our relationship with him (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). I don't know about you, but I don't want to grieve the Holy Spirit, or my savior and friend Jesus, or my Father God and in any way suffer loss in that relationship. So even as God's child, I continue to pray *forgive us our debts*.

Now, having said that, notice that Jesus immediately gives us a limitation on God's forgiveness, which is in direct relation to our willingness to forgive our fellow sinners. Jesus told a very powerful parable about a servant who was cast into prison for being unwilling to forgive in the same manner that he had been forgiven This was in response

to Peter asking Jesus how many times he had to forgive and offending brother. Jesus' answer was that from God's point of view, our responsibility to forgive others is as limitless as is His (Matthew 18:21-35).

Bear with one another and ...  
forgive each other;  
just as the Lord has forgiven  
you, so you also must forgive.  
Colossians 3.13

This prayer that we pray weekly, thus teaches us that it is wrong to ask from God what we are not willing to give to other people. So let me ask you a pointed question.

1. Is there anyone who comes to mind right now who is in need of your forgiveness?
2. Have you been holding someone captive to your grudge against them?
3. Is there someone in need of your mercy, your grace?

When we fail to forgive someone, as we have been forgiven, we set ourselves up as a higher judge than God himself. Another way to say this is that **our relationship with the Lord cannot be right until our relationship with others is made right.**

The Bible tells us exactly what to do if we know of someone who has something against us,

When you are offering your gift at the altar,  
if you remember that your brother or sister  
has something against you ... go and first  
be reconciled to your brother or sister,  
and then come and offer your gift.  
Matthew 5:23-24

It also clearly tells us what to do to make things right when we have something against someone else:

If another brother or sister sins against you,  
go and point out the fault when the two of  
you are alone. If they listen to you,  
you have regained that sibling  
Matthew 18:15

Have you been wronged by someone?  
Have you sinned against anyone else?

Meet with that person face-to-face. Express yourself. Then let it go by giving or receiving the gift of forgiveness. Most of us grossly underestimate how committed God is to building and maintaining a loving community.

Finally we come to the last portion of our Disciples prayer: "**Lead us not into temptation.**" Even as a member of God's family, working to advance His kingdom, we still live in a fallen world that daily pounds against us with temptations we could never resist in our own humanness.

Just this weekend, I was packing up two "care packages" of Forrester's tools to mail to Alaska, when I picked up this really nifty two sided (double size), extendable socket wrench. And I really wanted it. Forrester wouldn't miss it; he has a huge collection of sockets and wrenches. So I laid it to one side thinking that maybe it just wouldn't go in the box. Until this voice in my head asked me, is this what I am intending to do? Stealing from my son? So I very intentionally packed that wrench in the middle of the box, while asking both God's and Forrester's forgiveness for the sin I had committed in my heart against them. Forrester will never know about the episode unless he reads this sermon; But God and I knew, that I had been tempted and for a while had succumbed.

You and I are faced with temptations all around us. The Greek word translated temptation is neutral and can refer to a test or a trial. So the NRSV translation, *do not bring us to the time of trial*, is more accurate in conveying this meaning. So, we are to ask God to keep us from falling into temptations that daily test us. We are not strong enough to handle these on our own. **Will God answer a prayer like this?** You bet He will. God's word gives us this wonderful promise: "

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

So there you have the Disciples prayer: A perfect framework that we can use each day to ask how we might serve today in our Father's kingdom while trusting Him to care for our daily needs.

Here then in closing, is a great summary of the Disciples' Prayer:

**I cannot say "our" if I live only for myself.**

**I cannot say, "Father" if I do not endeavor each day to act like His child.**

**I cannot say, "hallowed be your name" if I am playing around with sin.**

**I cannot say "your kingdom come" if I am not allowing God to reign in my life.**

**I cannot say "give us this day our daily bread" if I am trusting in myself instead of in God's provision.**

**I cannot say, "Forgive us our sins" if I am nursing a grudge or withholding forgiveness from someone else.**

**I cannot say, "lead us not into temptation" if I deliberately place myself in its path.** *(author unknown).*

Let's pray about this, together.