

# “FATHER, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME”

Luke 11:1-13

Key Verse: 11:2

**“He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.””**”

Today’s passage is Luke’s account of the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus teaches us what to pray and with what spirit to pray in order to have our prayer answered. When we hear the words “the Lord’s Prayer” we have a certain concept in our minds. It may seem to be a required religious activity as Christians. Frankly, it can sound rather burdensome. Growing up in the Catholic Church, I was told to recite “five Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys” after confessing my sins to the priest. It felt more like punishment than prayer. If we think of prayer as a religious activity, we can easily feel guilty about it for not praying more. But prayer is not just a religious duty. Prayer is an intimate relationship with God. Prayer is the source of power and wisdom to experience victory in our daily lives. We are facing many challenging issues in our families, at school, at work, and in our communities. This causes some to be depressed, even to the point of having suicidal thoughts. Some of us are going through relational conflicts with people close to us, and it leaves us frustrated and disillusioned. Some of us are facing serious crises with our health, and it is a lonely, desperate struggle. When these problems arise, we easily doubt God’s love and blame God and others. In truth, life is a spiritual battle. There are visible elements which we experience and understand. But there are also unseen spiritual forces at work. Prayer is not just speaking words in the air. Prayer is the expression of our faith in God. Through prayer we can experience God’s presence, love and grace. Through prayer we can experience victory. Let’s learn from Jesus how to pray.

**First, the Lord’s Prayer (1-4).** One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, **“Lord, teach us to pray...”** **(1).** As Luke has noted, Jesus prayed regularly. But he did not tell his disciples, “You should pray!” Rather, Jesus showed the example and waited for them to realize the importance of prayer. The disciples had probably wondered frequently why Jesus was always full of power and wisdom and was never discouraged or defeated. They were amazed at Jesus again and again. They really wanted to know his secret. Finally, they realized that it must be his prayer. So they wanted to pray. But whenever they closed their eyes to pray, they felt lost and didn’t know what to say or do. Sometimes they awoke a little later with a red mark on their forehead. So one of them courageously asked Jesus to teach them to pray, **“...just as John taught his disciples.”** Prayer was not unique to Jesus and his disciples. John’s

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disciples, the Pharisees, and even peoples of other religions practice prayer. Each group is distinctive in terms of how and to whom they pray. When Jesus taught the Lord’s Prayer, he established a distinctive practice for his disciples, which became a significant element of Christian identity. Many Christians have not studied theology, but they know the Lord’s Prayer. One man said that while on an airplane during a bad storm, all the passengers began to pray out loud. Most often heard were strands of the Lord’s prayer: “**forgive us our sins,**” and “**deliver us from evil.**”<sup>1</sup> Thank God that Jesus taught us what to pray. Let’s consider the Lord’s Prayer in three parts: invocation: “Father,” God-focused petition, and petitions for our needs.

- **Invocation:** “**Father.**” Jesus taught us to begin our prayer by calling God “**Father.**” This was unthinkable to Jewish people. When God came down on Mt. Sinai to make a covenant with them, the sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “**I am trembling with fear**” (Heb 12:18-21). To call God “**Father**” seemed blasphemous because God had revealed himself as the holy, pure, awesome righteous judge. But Jesus taught us to call God “**Father.**” This analogy teaches what kind of relationship God wants with us. Jesus emphasized that we can have an intimate love relationship with the One who created us, protects us, provides for us, and guides us like a Father. Prayer starts by affirming this relationship, calling God, “**Father.**” People have different reactions to the word “**Father.**” To some, it is positive and encouraging. But to others, hearing the word “**Father**” arouses anxiety. It is because their human fathers were authoritative, unfaithful, irresponsible, or even abusive. God is totally different than that. Our Father God is “in heaven” (13). To learn the truth about God we need to look at Jesus Christ and the revelation of the Bible. Our heavenly Father is perfect in every way. His love is unending and undying; his power is irresistible and almighty; his faithfulness endures forever; he is eternal; he is our Everlasting Father—he never gets old, gets sick, or dies; he is always good to his children; he is always ready to help us; he is righteous, just, compassionate, merciful, patient, kind, and full of wisdom. This God is our “**Father.**” We can call God “**Father**” only by the grace of Jesus, who suffered and died for our sins and rose again from the dead. After his resurrection, Jesus sent a message to his disciples, saying, “**I am ascending to my Father and your Father...**” (Jn 20:17b). By Jesus’ grace we are adopted into God’s family and can call him, “**Abba, Father.**” How can we know that we are God’s children? The Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children (Ro 8:16). As God’s children, we are heirs of God. Let’s call God “**Father**” with confidence. Whenever we experience stress, anxiety, fear, sorrow,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/january-february/our-prayer-instincts-are-backwards.html>

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depression, or pain let's come to God and call him “**Father.**” Our Father God will comfort us and renew our body and spirit. Our Father God will give us mercy and grace, and wisdom and strength to overcome all kinds of hardships in our time of need. While preparing this message, many things burdened my heart: my own failures to love and serve God as a pastor, problems among my family members, serious sickness of life-long partners in the gospel, the challenge of raising disciples, spiritual direction issues, and so on. But last night, as I came to God calling, “**Father,**” the love of God filled my heart and the peace of God overwhelmed me. I slept well, though briefly.

- **God-focused petition:** “**hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.**” The word “hallowed” means “to honor as holy.” God’s name represents his person, his character, God himself. God alone is the Creator and Redeemer. God is the source of all things—especially life—and he is the only one who can save people from sin and death. God alone is worthy to be worshiped, praised and honored as God. When God is honored and worshiped, he blesses any people or nation. On the other hand, when people do not glorify God, they become idol worshipers who are immoral and violent and their society becomes like hell (Ro 1:21-32). Proverbs 14:34 says, “**Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.**” We have many practical problems in our nation right now. Many people turn to politicians for solutions. But the greatest need for our nation is to turn back to God and to honor God as God. So we should pray, “hallowed be your name” in our personal lives, in our nation and in the whole world.

“**...your kingdom come**” is a prayer for God to reign over people and all creation as the rightful ruler. God is the Sovereign Ruler of all things. But his reign was usurped by the evil one through man’s sins. When men become rebellious and disobedient toward God, they open the door for Satan to rule over them. Satan is a liar and a murderer. Everything he does is to kill and destroy. There is no peace, love, joy or life for those under Satan’s rule. C.S. Lewis, in one of his books symbolizes Satan as a witch, or an ice queen. She makes everything frozen, hard, joyless, loveless, and lifeless. But when the lion Aslan, who represents Christ, comes, he melts the cold with the breath of his mouth and brings everything back to life. Creation begins to thrive again in love, peace and righteousness. Only when God rules in our hearts, in our families, in our communities, and in our nation do true peace, life, joy and love begin to circulate. This is what all people really need and want. “**...your kingdom come**” is the main theme of the Bible and the message that Jesus proclaimed. We experience the kingdom of God now, as Jesus reigns in our hearts. But there is so much more to come when Jesus returns in final victory. So let’s pray, “**...your kingdom come.**”

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• **Petitions for our needs.** There are three petitions for our needs. **The first is: “Give us each day our daily bread.”** We cannot deny that we need daily provisions to survive. An important issue for each person is who to depend on for our daily needs. Some people habitually depend on a family member. Others trust in the government or in a company. Some people are so self-reliant that they trust no one but themselves. But we must know that God is the source of everything. It is not other people, or ourselves, but God who provides. Though we work hard to gain what we need, the ability to do so came from God (Deut 8:17-18). If God does not give us health, strength, and wisdom we can do nothing. So we need to pray for our provisions—not weekly or monthly, but daily. And when God provides for our needs we should be thankful and make an offering. Then God continues to provide. The words “us” and “our” tell us that this is not just a personal prayer. We need to be aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters and pray for “our” daily bread.

**The second petition for our need is: “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.”** As we need bread every day for our bodies, so we need forgiveness every day for our souls. Everyone wants to live a healthy life. Many focus on the physical. But we also need to maintain our mental and spiritual health as well. How can we do so? We need daily forgiveness from God for our sins. God is a forgiving God (Ex 34:7). Jesus is forgiving. So he prayed on the cross, **“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”** (23:34a). Even though God provided everything, he wants us to ask for forgiveness each day. When our sins are forgiven, we can have peace with God. We can enjoy God and God’s blessing and be a blessing to others. We can think clearly, work effectively and sleep soundly.

However, in order to receive God’s forgiveness, there is a corollary: We must also forgive others. This implies that they have sinned against us. Indeed, this happens every day. Whether it is through a verbal attack, negligence, selfishness, pride or some other means, we all experience the pain of others’ sins against us. How we respond is important. It is natural to become bitter and vengeful, hoping that the other person will contract a disease or have an accident. Ironically, the other person may not even be aware that we have been hurt. Nevertheless, those who hold bitterness or grudges in their hearts suffer a great deal. Our blood pressure goes up, and we get tension headaches and become irritable. What is worse, our prayer is hindered. For our own well-being, we should forgive others. But even more than that, it is what God wants us to do. When we forgive others, grudges and bitterness disappear from our hearts. We can practice the love of God toward one another and form a loving community. This is what people in the world

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are longing to find. It is the way we can express God’s kingdom practically. Let’s ask God’s forgiveness and forgive others from our hearts.

### **The third petition for our need is: “And lead us not into temptation.”**

We are vulnerable to Satan’s temptation due to our sinful nature. Moreover, in our permissive society, there are many pitfalls. Technology can be used for good. But it has also made vicarious sinful indulgence possible for just about anyone at the click of a button. Material abundance is a blessing. But it also makes possible gluttony, substance abuse, and frivolous wasting of time. We are especially vulnerable when we are alone. God warned Cain, “**Sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you, but you must master it**” (Gen 4:7). Everyone is vulnerable; there is no exception: young and old, male and female, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. Once we fall into temptation we become prisoners of Satan. We cannot escape with our own effort. We are greatly damaged and damage others. So we should pray humbly, “**Lead us not into temptation.**” The Lord’s Prayer is short but very powerful. When we pray from our hearts, we can have a right relationship with God and with others. We can be healthy, both personally and as a community. We can receive strength, power and wisdom to overcome all kinds of pressing issues and live a victorious life. Let’s pray the Lord’s Prayer, not habitually, or ceremonially, but from our hearts with faith.

**Second, “ask...seek...knock” (5-13).** Now that we know what to pray, Jesus teaches us how to pray by telling a parable. A certain man was suddenly visited by one of his friends. His own refrigerator was empty because it was still a few days before payday and his wife could not buy groceries. There was no 24-hour McDonalds drive-thru at that time. He desperately needed something to give his friend the next morning for breakfast. Failure to do so was not an option. He could not sleep. So he made a midnight visit to a sleepy friend for three loaves of bread. His request was not well received. His sleepy friend was already in bed with his children, and refused. But the man did not give up. With shameless audacity, he pleaded with his friend again and again. His friend finally realized that the only way he was going to get back to sleep was to give the man bread. So he relented. The man could obtain bread in this way out of great compassion for his hungry friend. Jesus concluded, “**I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need**” (8).

This tells us that prayer is not making a polite request to God. It is boldly and desperately pleading for what we need. Jesus teaches us to ask with shameless audacity. Jesus went on to say, “**Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you**

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**will find; knock and the door will be opened to you”** (9). The verbs “ask...seek...knock” tell us that prayer is not just verbal; it is active pursuit with determination and persistence. What happens when we pray like this? Jesus promised, **“For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened”** (10). Last week, a very promising spiritual leader among us received sudden notice that he was dropped from his nursing program. Though he finished the full two years of study, he did not pass one final exam. In deep distress he asked for emergency counseling and shared this problem with me. We prayed together earnestly for God’s help. After prayer, he memorized Hebrews 12:1-12 and recited it out loud ten times. In this way he sought God with all his heart and strength, overcoming the fatal whisper of the enemy. As he did so, he realized that God was disciplining him out of love. Though his situation had not changed, he was filled with a sense of victory, joy, and meaning of life. Then a school representative called to say that he was reinstated. When we ask, seek and knock in this way, God surely answers our prayers.

Though Jesus teaches us to pray with shameless audacity, he also wants us to know that our Father God is not reluctant, but very willing to answer our prayers. In order to help us understand God’s heart, Jesus first reminds us how human fathers love their children. When hungry children ask their fathers for something to eat, the fathers do not give something harmful in response. Rather, they want to give even more than was asked. The other day my son Joshua asked me to cook eggs for his breakfast. I did my best to make tasty eggs, adding nutritious ingredients and also giving milk and English muffins. I did not give him a bowl full of scorpions. He ate joyfully and went out the door to school with a smile. We human fathers, even though we are evil, know how to give good gifts to our children. How much more will our Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (13) God loves his children perfectly, sacrificially and wisely, giving the best gift out of his generous love. Apostle Paul said, **“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things”** (Ro 8:32). The best gift God can give is the Holy Spirit. Why is this so? The Holy Spirit is God himself dwelling within us. The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God’s children with a heavenly inheritance. The Holy Spirit strengthens us when we are weak, gives us wisdom when we need it, leads us into all truth, and enables us to bear good fruit. The Holy Spirit helps us to fix our eyes on Jesus and live victoriously. Today Jesus has taught us to come to God as our Father. Jesus has taught us what to pray and with what kind of spirit to pray. Let’s pray the Lord’s prayer from our hearts.