

# **How should we approach God?**

**Jesus Christ teaches a simple way to pray.**



## **Course Description:**

What is the right way, the right attitude, and the right approach to God? What is the correct way to relate to God? All relationships require clear two-way communication. How does God communicate with us? Can we communicate with God through prayer? Jesus Christ taught a simple way to pray. Christians call Jesus' Prayer "the Lord's Prayer." But it is really a Model Prayer - a good Pattern to guide us when we approach God. In the coming weeks, we will discuss the meaning of this Prayer.

## **Weekly Discussion Topics**

**Teach Us to Pray - an Introduction**

**God our Father**

**The Holy One**

**The Ultimate King**

**Doing God's Will**

**What We Need from God**

**Seeking Forgiveness**

**Guide and Protect Us**

**God, Save us from Evil!**

**How God Defeated Evil**

**The Way Life Should Be**

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## Teach Us to Pray - an Introduction



### Preview

What is the right way, the right attitude, and the right approach to God? Does God communicate with us? Can we communicate with God? Jesus Christ taught a simple way to pray. Jesus' Prayer is our Model Prayer. It can guide us in how to approach God. In the coming weeks, we will discuss the meaning of Jesus' Prayer.

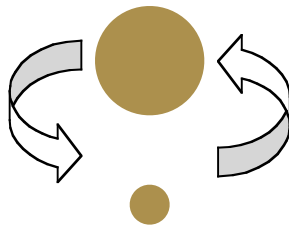


### Prayer - Our Side of a Relationship with God

Is there a God who answers prayer? The Bible describes God as One who hears prayer. People from all nations will come before the Maker of the universe (Psalm 65:2). God's temple is called "a house of prayer for all nations." (Isaiah 56:7)

All relationships require clear communication. When someone acts and speaks, you can learn about their nature, their goals, and true character. We relate to God as creatures. We come to the living God. We are visible. God is invisible. We are finite. God is infinite. All personal beings reveal themselves to each other. God is revealed in creation, history, and the Bible. When God reveals himself to us, we can respond in prayer.

GOD IS REVEALED ...  
First, God acts and speaks ...



AND WE RESPOND  
Then, we respond in prayer.

Prayer is our response to God's revelation. Prayer "completes the loop" of divine-human communication. There can only be a true relationship between God and humans if there is two-way communication. We must not forget that we relate to God as lesser ones to One who is greater. We do not pray to "get our own way" with God. Prayer is not "magic" to let you manipulate and control God. You must not say, "I know my prayers were answered because I got what I wanted." Instead, prayer is the way that you bring your life into line with God's wisdom, with God's ways, and with God's best plans for your life and work.

Is it possible to communicate with God? What should you say? Is there a correct way to talk with God? Should you stand or kneel in a certain way? Should you fold your hands? Prayer is a universal desire and human impulse. All spiritual teachers give instructions on prayer. And Jesus Christ's first followers saw how Jesus made prayer his top daily priority: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a lonely place, where he prayed." (Mark 1:35) Jesus was very serious about prayer. Jesus enjoyed the closest connection with God. Jesus was very intimate and close to God. Jesus usually began his prayers by saying, "Abba." This was an affectionate word for God. God was Jesus' loving Father. Jesus approached God as his perfect Father in heaven. God shows wise care and tender love for all who are his (God's) children on earth.

Jesus' followers, called disciples, observed Jesus closely. "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When (Jesus) finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." Jesus replied, "When you pray, say..." (Luke 11:1-2) The simple prayer that Jesus taught is often called, "The Lord's Prayer." But, the Prayer is more accurately called "The Disciples' Prayer." This is how Jesus teaches us to pray!

### Notes:

finite: limited in time and space. infinite: unlimited in time and space.

revelation: We know people and science by close observation. But God is infinite and not visible to us. So, we can only know God when God chooses to reveal or make himself known to us.

divine: the eternal God.

manipulate: to exploit, to influence or manage for your own purposes.

into line: to be in sync or aligned with God.

intimate: to have the closest possible shared knowledge of someone else.

## Notes:

paradigm: a pattern, model, or accepted way to do things.

hallowed: to treat as holy, to honor above all other names.

Your: in this prayer, the pronoun Your refers to things that belong to God. And the pronoun our refers to us.

Your will: what God purposes, plans, and desires.

temptation: a test that is greater than your ability to pass. Temptations can lead to personal moral failures.

## Teach Us to Pray - an Introduction

### Bible Passages



### The Disciples' Prayer

This prayer is found in two New Testament books of the Bible: Matthew and Luke. Matthew records the longer version - a form that is often used in Christian worship. This prayer is a "model" or a "paradigm" from which Jesus teaches us how to pray. Ask Jesus Christ to teach you to pray. Use this as a Model Prayer for your prayers. Each week, we will examine one of the seven lines of this famous prayer.

1. "Our Father in heaven
  2. Hallowed be (holy is) Your (God's) name,
  3. Your kingdom come,
  4. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
  5. Give us today our daily bread.
  6. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
  7. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."
- (Matthew 6:9-13)

### Discuss



1. What experiences have you had with prayer?
2. Is it good to repeat these exact words when you pray? When is repetition a helpful or a good thing to do?
3. Are there any risks if you frequently repeat the words of this prayer?
4. How could you use this prayer, not only to give you exact words to pray, but also as a pattern for your prayers?
5. Look at each line of this prayer. What words do you notice in that are new or surprising to you?
6. If you pray, what do you pray about the most?
7. Do you think that prayer a waste of your time? Is praying an excuse for you to do nothing. Is prayer a bad substitute for taking constructive action?

### Summary



In all personal relationships, there must be clear communication. This is true in relationships between people. It is also true with God. God is infinite and invisible. God is revealed in creation, history, and the Bible. Prayer is our side of a two-way relationship with God. In prayer, we communicate with God. Jesus Christ has given us a simple way to pray. We should not only use the exact words that Jesus has given us. From this Model Prayer, we should also learn a good pattern for our praying.

## God our Father



### Preview

What is the right way and the right attitude to come to God? Jesus Christ taught a simple way to pray. Jesus' prayer begins, "Our Father." This is an amazing way to approach God - as a Father in heaven. What does it mean to call God your "Father"? What does the Bible teach, and not teach, about God as a Father?

### "Our Father in Heaven"

When we talk about God as a Father, we should remember certain things:

- This does not mean that God has GENDER. Some religions speak in terms of male and female gods. But the God of the Bible is an eternal, infinite Spirit. The Bible sometimes describes God in tender, female terms. "As a mother comforts her child, so (God) will comfort you..." Isaiah 66:13. But at other times, God is revealed in powerful, masculine terms. For example, "The LORD is a warrior..." (Exodus 15:3)
- When Jesus revealed God as his Father, Jesus combined supreme AUTHORITY with a FAMILY relationship. Jesus lived under God's authority. But Jesus also related to God in an intimate, personal way. Jesus called God his "Abba," Father. No father on earth perfectly combines authority and family love. But God is the perfect Father in HEAVEN.
- Many world religions approach God by first expressing humility, reverence, and respect. In the second phrase of this Model Prayer, Jesus teaches us to say "Holy is your Name." But the first phrase of this Prayer begins in an amazing way. Jesus makes it possible for people to approach God in a FAMILY way, the same way that Jesus approached God!

- How do you think fathers in your home culture compare with fathers in other cultures?
- What are, or what were, your own father's best qualities?
- During the years when you were a child, how did you talk to your father?
- Since you became an adult, how do you now relate to your father?
- Here are a list of qualities. Which of these qualities would you most like for your Father to have?  
Love, wisdom, guidance, authority, tenderness, patience, discipline.

### According to the Bible, in what ways is God a Father?

#### 1. God the Father is our Maker (Creator) and Provider

Look at the following Bible section. In what ways do we see God acting as a father?

"From one man (God) made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and (God) determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him (God), though he (God) is not far from each one of us." (Acts 17:26-28)

Some people do not know their natural fathers. Other people don't have a relationship with their fathers. But what if you have a Father who gives you life and all that you need? What if you turn away from a perfect Father? To reject and dishonor God's love is called "sin" in the Bible. Is God your Maker? Then, to reject God's love is much more serious than rejecting your parents' authority. Sin is more than breaking rules or laws. Sin breaks your love relationship with God. You can disobey your father's rules and not disown him. But, "Do you show contempt for the riches of (God's) kindness, tolerance and patience? ... God's kindness leads you toward repentance (returning to him)." (Romans 2:4)

### Notes:

gender: male or female.

humility: to be humble, to not act proudly or with arrogance to those with authority over you.

reverence is religious humility. You respect and honor God as One who is greater and more powerful than you are.

contempt: to despise, to scorn, or to think that these qualities of God have no value for you.

## Notes:

### redeem, redemption:

During the Bible's Old Testament times, in the ancient Hebrew culture, a relative (like an uncle) accepted responsibility to care for a family when a husband or parents died. This person had to be a relative (a kinsman). The kinsman-redeemer would pay all the family's debts and provide a future for the family.

adopt, adoption: This is one way that Roman and modern western cultures take care of children who lose their parents. A parent chooses to make an orphan part of the family. Adopted children have the same rights and privileges as the natural children.

widow: a woman whose husband has died and left her alone.

orphan: a child whose parents have died, and left him or her alone.

kinsman: a near relation or family relative (uncle, aunt, grandfather, etc.)

sonship: to be a legally adopted as a son (or daughter)

testify: to give evidence, and to say that something is true.

heirs: people who have a legal right to inherit a family's house and all of the family possessions.

## 2. God can be your Father by redeeming and adopting you.

Redeem and adopt are Bible terms to describe how lost relationships can be restored. Redemption comes from Old Testament Hebrew culture. God gave a way to restore widows, orphans, and lost property to families. Widows could again become wives. Orphans could again be in families, cared for like natural children. In the Bible book of Ruth, a family was "redeemed." The hero of the book is a "redeemer," a man who purchased a family's lost property and then accepted them as his own wife and family.

During the time of the Bible's New Testament, the Roman practice of adoption could change your legal status. Even slaves could be adopted into wealthy Roman homes. By adoption, your slave status was erased. All of your debts were paid by the father. An adopted adult could inherit the family's property, possessions, and social status.

In the Bible, the words redeem and adopt explain the good news about Jesus Christ. God's one true Son put on our human nature to restore us to God's family. By coming to earth as the man Jesus Christ, God's Son can become your "kinsman-redeemer." Jesus paid all the moral debts (sin) of people who hope and trust in his Father's love. Your life can be redeemed (bought by Christ's blood). God the Father will adopt you, loving you as much as God loves his one true Son. When you believe this good news, you become God's "heir." You inherit God's kingdom with Christ. (Romans 8:17)

## 3. God the Father gives his children a new spiritual life.

An adopted child can receive new legal status and privileges. But adopted children can never share the adopted father's nature ("DNA"). But all who believe in Christ receive the gift of a spiritual "new birth." God the Father gives the Holy Spirit to all adopted children. This is the first part of ever-lasting life. You receive new spiritual life even before you go home to God the Father in heaven. So, redemption and adoption are like legal guarantees. But God the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit will give you the personal experience of eternal life even before you die.

## Look at each of these Bible sections. What do you learn about God as the Father who is in heaven?



Psalms 67:4: "May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you (God) rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth."

Psalms 68:5: "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling (heaven)."

John 1:10-13: "... the world did not recognize (God's Son) ... Yet to all who received (Christ), to those who believed in his name, (Christ) gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

Romans 8:14-17: "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear. You received the Spirit of sonship. And by (the Holy Spirit) we cry, 'Abba, Father' ... the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs - (who share in God's kingdom) with Christ..."



## Week 3: How to Pray

### The Holy One



#### Preview

Jesus gave us a Model Prayer - that can teach us how to approach God. This prayer teaches us to pray with God's priorities. The first thing we are to pray is "Holy is Your Name." This is our top priority as we come to God. This is the most important thing in life. What do these words mean: "Your name is holy"?

#### "HOLY is Your Name"

When you commit your life and your loyalty to serve God, you will honor God's name. The LORD is the Holy One. When you dedicate all you are, and all you have to the LORD, God's Name will be honored in your life.

God is perfect in holiness. You cannot add to God's holiness. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the LORD ruling over the universe. Angels surrounded God's throne. The angels called to each other: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of (God's) glory." (Isaiah 6:3) No person can "make God holy." God overflows with perfect splendor, honor, purity, justice, majesty, wisdom, goodness, and power. So, in the Old Testament, Moses prayed: "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you (God) - majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Exodus 15:11)

- How important is your family name, and your family's reputation, in your home culture?
- What are some ways that you could bring honor to your family's name?
- What are some ways that you could bring shame on your family's name?

#### "Holy is YOUR (God's) Name"

What does God's "Name" mean? Your name stands for who you are. Your friends know you by name. In most cultures, a name is more than a label or I.D. How do you respond when you hear a name? The name of a loved one makes you smile. But to hear some names will make you sad or angry. You react to a person, and not only to a name. God's Name is what is revealed to us about God's nature. You don't make God's name holy. But you can treat God's Name as holy. If you call God your Father, you will not want to see God your Father's Name dishonored! "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2) God's Name stands for God - as God is made known in the world.

- How does a son or a daughter honor their father?
- How can God's children honor God's Name?

#### A Passion for God's Name in Worship

Worship is a vertical passion. If God is wonderful, we should be full of wonder for God. Worship should be our top priority. "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31) Worship is our proper response to God. We worship God with reverence and devotion. When you live to honor God's Name, your top priority comes into line with God's top priority. God is full of glory, so we should be full of worship. Jesus prayed, "Father, glorify your name!" God's voice responded from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." (John 12:28) God always honors his Name. So, we should always honor God's Name. When you worship, you say, "LORD, your honor is my highest priority. Father, before I ask you to do anything for me, I pray that your Name will be honored in my life." You honor God's Name in your life when you honor and enjoy God for who God is, and not just for what God can do for you.

#### Notes:

top priority: what you should do first, before doing anything else.

Holy One: God is above all things. God is totally above all that is finite and God is separate from all that is impure or imperfect in life.

prophet Isaiah: prophets are human messengers of God who speak God's Word (they do not necessarily predict the future). Isaiah was one of God's prophets.

Angels: invisible created spiritual beings who are God's messengers.

splendor: radiance, perfect beauty.

majesty, majestic: the greatness of a royal King or Ruler.

awesome: inspiring awe, wonder. Something that is unexpected or beyond your greatest dreams.

wonders: God can do miracles.

worship: to describe, accept, declare, and acknowledge God as most worthy, of greater value than anything or anyone else.

wonderful: God is full of wonder. The LORD is amazing.

passion: a zeal, fervor, fire, energy, or great desire.

reverence: fear mixed with love and respect.

## Notes:

passion: a zeal, fervor, fire, energy, or great desire.

marvelous deeds: God's wonderful works will make you marvel. Wow! God's miracles fill you with wonder.

greatly distressed: to be provoked in spirit. To be very upset and offended.

reasoned: to discuss the truth about God.

synagogue: a Jewish place where God was worshipped.

idols: man-made symbols or representations of God. Finite things that are treated as ultimate.

## A Passion for God's Name in the World

Worship is a vertical passion. Sharing God's love with people is a horizontal passion. Many people dishonor and bring shame on God's reputation. But if we honor and enjoy God, then we will want to share God's love with other people. Those who love God will have passion for God's Name - God's reputation in the world. (3 John 7) We honor God's Name in the world when we value God and Jesus Christ more than anything else.

## Bible Passages



From the Old Testament: "Declare (God's) glory among the nations, (God's) marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens." (1 Chronicles 16:24-27)

From the New Testament: "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he (Paul) reasoned in the synagogue ... as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there." (Acts 17:16-17)

## Discuss



1. 1 Chronicles 16:24-27: Why should God be honored by all the nations in the world? (When an Olympic athlete wins a gold medal, that athlete is honored among all the nations).
2. 1 Chronicles 16:24-27: What is the difference between God and an idol?
3. Acts 17:16-17: Why did Paul observe in Athens that made him very upset?
4. Acts 17:16-17: Why should the worship of idols distress someone?
5. Acts 17:16-17: What does Paul's passion for God's Name motivate him to do?

## The Structure of the Lord's Prayer <sup>1</sup>



If you look closely, you can see that Christ's Model Prayer has a structure. This structure helps us to keep the big picture in mind - as we approach God.

The Prayer has two halves. There are three prayer requests in the first half, and there are three prayer requests in the second half. The prayer request in the middle is like a bridge or a hinge between the two halves of the Model Prayer.

Our FATHER, in heaven,  
1 Holy is YOUR Name  
2 YOUR kingdom come  
3 YOUR will be done on earth as it is in heaven  
→ Give us this day our daily bread  
3 Forgive US our debts as we forgive our debtors  
2 Lead US not into temptation  
1 But deliver US from the evil one.

- What pronoun is repeated in the first half? (1,2,3)
- What pronoun is repeated in the second half? (3,2,1)

<sup>1</sup> adapted from Dick Kaufmann, Harbor Presbyterian Church, San Diego, *How to Pray the Lord's Way*

## Week 4: How to Pray

### The Ultimate King



#### Preview

Jesus gave a model prayer on how to approach God. The prayer is simple and challenging: *Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* What is the meaning of this prayer: "God, your kingdom come"? What is God's kingdom?

#### God's Kingdom is not political, military, or national

This is important for international scholars to know! Jesus does not promote one nation's politics or favor one culture's values. Jesus announced God's good news. "The time has come ... The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:14-15) Notice that Jesus' message is "good news" about God's rule. God's rule over the earth is good news. But when one nation is all-powerful, that is bad news for the world! History and the Bible show that world domination is evil.

The Old Testament book of Daniel describes a powerful empire called Babylon. Babylon's king commanded all nations to worship a statue of gold - the symbol of Babylon's power. This king boasted, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built ... by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30) But God shamed that proud king. When the king was ashamed, he repented and "praised the Most High (and) ... honored and glorified (God) who lives forever." The king admitted that God's "kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. (God) does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can ... say to (God): 'What have you done?'" The king gave glory to "the King of heaven, because everything (God) does is right ... and all (God's) ways are just ... those who walk in pride (God) is able to humble." (Daniel 4:34-35, 37)

The good news is: "Let the earth be glad ... say among the nations, 'The LORD rules!'" (1 Chronicles 16:31) God is the real King over all nations. That is good news. We should pray that God's rule will be accepted and respected among all the nations on the earth!

#### What does God's Kingdom look like?

If God's kingdom is not national or political, then what does God's kingdom look like? Bible scholar John Stott says God's kingdom is "... spiritual in character (and not political); international in membership (not racial or national); and gradual in its expansion."

Jesus claimed to be God's King. Jesus came to earth as God's King. Jesus went through many towns and villages. Jesus proclaimed the good news of God's kingdom. Jesus also healed diseases. (Matthew 9:35) So, Jesus is not like other kings, emperors, or rulers. Jesus Christ did not come into the world with political or military power to conquer people.

In our time, God's kingdom spreads spiritually and gradually - by persuasion, not by force. The Bible describes God's kingdom with two pictures. God's kingdom spreads like planting and growing seeds. God's seed is the good news. God's kingdom is also like a feast, that God prepares for Christ's honor. In the good news, God invites all the nations: "Everyone, come and take part in Christ's feast!" This invitation is the good news for the whole world. (Matthew 24:14) At the end of history, Jesus Christ will come back to earth in God's glory. Those who have accepted God's invitation will come from east, west, north and south to enjoy the feast in God's kingdom. (Luke 13:29) Christ will restore glory, justice, and peace.

#### Notes:

kingdom: like an empire. God is supreme Ruler. But God's empire is not based on military power or human politics.

Repent: to turn away from your selfishness and self-centered living (which the Bible calls sin and rebellion against God as true king).

good news: the Christian message is called the good news or gospel. The message of Christ is that only God is the ultimate King. God will restore the world to harmony, peace, and joy in God's kingdom.

boasted: to brag or glorify yourself.

majesty: the greatness and dignity of a king.

persuasion: to convince someone with the truth, not by coercion (force).

feast: a big banquet or party, with many courses of food. Feasts are for special occasions.



## Notes:

wedding banquet: a feast celebrating a wedding. The Bible teaches that the church (those who believe in Christ) are Christ's "bride." The honeymoon lasts forever in heaven!

rumors: second-hand reports. Information that has not been proven.

gospel: the good news about Christ, based on the facts of who Christ is, and what he has done.

testimony: to tell the facts, as a witness to the truth.

domain of darkness: the territory or area where darkness rules (a symbol of the kingdom of evil).

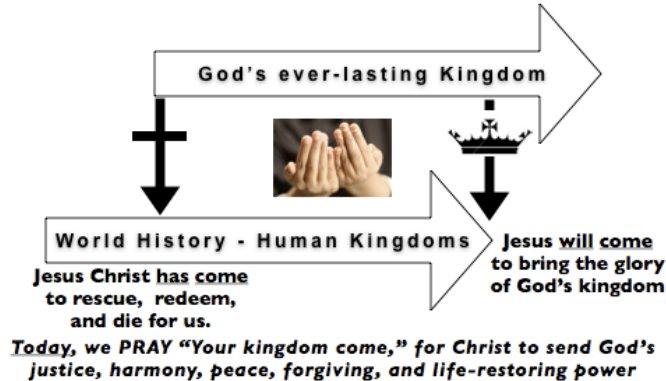
redemption, forgiveness: In the Bible, a relative could "redeem" a family member out of their debt. An older brother or uncle might pay off your debts. Jesus Christ is God's Son, who came to earth as a man, to redeem people from sin by his death on a cross. If Jesus pays for your sins, your debts are cancelled, and your sins are forgiven. Forgiveness is God's gift: Jesus Christ paid for our redemption by his death.

**救赎** rescue or save  
+ buy back = redeem.

mourn: to be sad. In this verse, to be sad because you have rejected Christ.

## We pray today, for God's future kingdom

The diagram below shows how God's Kingdom is both present and future. Today, God's kingdom spreads spiritually, gradually, and internationally. Christ's good news (gospel) is God's invitation to all nations. At the end of history, God's kingdom will come in glory. Jesus will return as the true Lord and King of the earth. This is called the "now, but not yet" reality of God's kingdom. When we pray, "Your kingdom come," we say, "God, give us the power by your Holy Spirit, so that the good news of Christ will spread and restore the lives of our friends and family." And we also pray, "Lord Jesus, come again to restore the whole world to your rule of peace and justice."



## Bible Passages



Matthew 13:24, 44; 22:2: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field ... The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field ... The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son."

Matthew 24:6-14: "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places ... you will be hated by all nations because of me (Jesus Christ) ... And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

Colossians 1:12-14: "Thanks to (God) the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of (God's people) in light. (God) has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of (God's) beloved Son, in whom (Christ) we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Revelation 1:7: "(Christ) is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him."

## Discuss



1. Matthew 13: What three word-pictures describe God's kingdom at this present time?
2. How is God's kingdom like a seed? How is God's kingdom like a hidden treasure? How is God's kingdom like a royal banquet?
3. Matthew 24: What things will happen before Christ comes at the end of time?
4. Colossians 1: Who can rescue us from the domain of darkness? Who qualifies us to be citizens in God's kingdom? What does God's Son offer to us?
5. Revelation 1: What will happen at the end of history?

## Week 5: How to Pray

### Doing God's Will



#### Preview

Jesus taught a simple and challenging prayer. It is a Model Prayer on how we should approach God: *Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* Today, we will examine the "will of God." What does it mean to pray for God's will to be done, "on earth as it is in heaven"?

#### To what kind of God do you pray?

Do you think there is a God? Does prayer ask for "luck"? If there is a God, what is God like? IF you pray, and HOW you pray, depend on what you think about God. We begin with a review of the previous parts of Jesus' Model Prayer.



The prayer begins with trust and confidence: *our Father in heaven*. You approach God like a child who comes to a loving parent. Each time you pray this prayer, you are reminded why Jesus Christ came to earth. All people have dishonored and turned away from God. But Jesus can restore us to God's family. Jesus, God's true Son, perfectly obeyed God and then died for other people. Followers of Christ know God as their heavenly Father.

We next pray *Holy is Your Name*. This focuses on God's reputation in the world. God the Father is in heaven. But we want the Father's name to be honored in the world. Jesus Christ always brought honor to God the Father. We pray that we, and others, will honor God.

We then pray *Your kingdom come*. We can trust God more than kings, governments, or politicians. We pray "Let the earth be glad ... say among the nations, 'The LORD rules!'" (1 Chronicles 16:31) We pray that people from every nation will be persuaded (but never forced) to trust in the LORD as the one perfect and good King of all the earth.

#### The Unselfish Prayer

The first parts of the Model Prayer all focus on God: GOD's Name, GOD's Kingdom, and GOD's will to be done on earth as in heaven. Jesus teaches that we should pray first for GOD's reputation and agenda. We must pray that before we pray for things WE want!

What do these words mean, "God's will be done"? This is your personal commitment to spread the good words and the good works of God's kingdom on earth. You cannot pray: "Lord, I want your Name honored and your Rule respected, but not in my personal life!" "God's will be done on earth," is a commitment. You must make God's kingdom real and visible to other people. You cannot accept the way things are. You pray for a better world.

Author C. S. Lewis said that this prayer means "May GOD's will be done - by ME - NOW." C. S. Lewis observed that there are only two kinds of people in the world. Some people will pray, "GOD's will be done." Other people will demand that "MY will be done."

When people obey GOD's will, life can reflect heaven. But when people demand what THEY want to do, life can be like hell on earth. (Judges 17:6). "God's kingdom come" means you want God's rule to spread on earth. If you pray, "God's will be done," you commit yourself to God's cause. "What does the LORD require of you? To act with justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God." (Micah 6:8) Do not wait for heaven. Begin to do God's will today!

Some people think prayer is a waste of time. Isn't everything planned by God, or Fate, or Destiny? Even if you do not pray, won't God's will be accomplished? Then, why pray?

#### Notes:

examine: to look at closely, to consider and observe carefully.

reputation: the public opinion about a person's character or behavior. Like "good face."

agenda: plan, schedule, goals that you want to accomplish.

commitment: a promise to do something, your dedication to someone or something.

## Notes:

Distinction, to distinguish: to see as being different or distinct.

paradox: statements that seem to contradict each other, but may actually be true. For example, "Light acts like a particle." and "Light acts like a wave."

prevails: to prevail is to overcome, to succeed, to come true.

crucified: executed by hanging from a cross. The Roman empire used this painful form of the death penalty to make a public example of those who rebelled against Roman rule.

## A Distinction and a Paradox

The Bible distinguishes the will of God's PLAN and the will of God's WORD. We pray, "God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is not a prayer for God's PLAN or for God's PURPOSES to be done. This is a prayer for God's WORD to be obeyed.

Notice these two statements. They seem to contradict each other. But both are true.

This is called a paradox:

- GOD IS IN CONTROL (God has a plan)
- GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS (Prayer works)

Look at these Bible sections. Which describe God's PLAN? God's WORD?

## Bible Passages



Deuteronomy 29:29: The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of (God's) law.

Proverbs 19:21: Many are the plans in a man's heart ... it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Genesis 50:20: You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive ...

1 Corinthians 2:7-8: God's secret wisdom ... has been hidden ... that God destined for our glory before time began. None of (this world's) rulers understood (God's secret wisdom) ... if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Matthew 10:29-30: Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father ... the ... hairs of your head are all numbered.

John 15:7-8: If you remain in (Christ) and (Christ's) Words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to (God the) Father's glory ...

## Discuss



1. Deuteronomy 29:29: What "secret things" belong to the LORD? What has been "revealed" to us - and to our families?
2. Can you change the "secret things"? What can you do with "things revealed"?
3. Proverbs 19:21: What does this say about our plans? What does this say about God's purpose? Can your prayers or plans rule over God's purposes?
4. Genesis 50:20: In this verse, a man speaks to family members who hurt him many years earlier. How do evil human plans relate to God's plans?
5. 1 Corinthians 2:7-8: This gives different viewpoints on the execution of Jesus. How is Jesus described? What did the human rulers do? What did the rulers not understand?
6. Matthew 10:29-30: How specific and detailed is God's plan?
7. John 15:7-8: If you want to receive answers to prayers, what should you do? How does God's Words bring honor to God?

God's secret will is God's eternal plan. We cannot know God's plans until we see what happens in world events. God's revealed will is God's Word, that teaches us how to live. The Bible completely reveals this aspect of God's will. Is God's will being done on earth? Yes and No! No: not God's revealed will - just pick up a newspaper or review your own life ... But yes! God's secret will is being done. God's eternal plan is being carried out on earth as it is in heaven. God is in complete control of every detail of life." (thank you to Rev. Dick Kaufmann for this explanation)

## What We Need from God

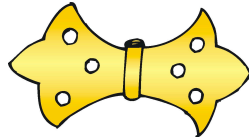


### Preview

In Jesus' model prayer, we learn how to approach God. The prayer's structure has meaning. And each part of the prayer is meaningful. *Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* Today, we notice a hinge or turning point between the first and second half of this prayer. Jesus teaches us to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread.*

Holy is your Name  
Your Kingdom Come  
Your Will be Done, on earth  
as it is in heaven

Our Father  
in heaven ...



Give us today  
our daily bread

Forgive us our debts as we  
forgive our debtors  
Do not lead us into temptation  
Deliver us from the evil one

## Notes:

hinge: A movable joint used to attach and turn two parts around a pivot or turning point. Like the hinge on a door frame.

## WHAT should you ask from God?

The first half of the prayer focuses on GOD: God's reputation, kingdom, and will. The second half focuses on OUR needs: forgiveness, protection, and to be saved from evil. *Give us this day our daily bread* focuses BOTH on God's desires and our needs. When you pray, *Give us this day our daily bread*, you recognize that God, like a loving Father in heaven, will provide for your needs. You admit that you depend on God, and not only on your own hard work. Is the idea of depending on God new to you?



For westerners, bread is a basic meal. For many Asians, rice is the most basic food. At a meal, you "break" or share bread. In East Asia, you "eat rice," *chī fàn*, 吃饭 at meals. Wheat and rice are called the "staff of life." Our two basic needs are bread and water. For people with supermarkets and refrigerators, to pray for daily bread does not seem necessary. For many people, this prayer for basic needs is a day to day experience!

## How MUCH should you ask from God?

We pray, *give us today our daily bread*. The word *daily* can have two possible meanings. In one Bible verse *daily* means, *give us tomorrow's bread today*. (Matthew 6:11) But in another verse, *daily* seems to mean, *give us bread according to each day*. (Luke 11:3) Do we pray for bread for tomorrow? Or, do we pray for today's needs? Remember: this prayer connects GOD's priorities (God's reputation, kingdom, and will) with OUR needs (forgiveness, guidance, and protection from evil). *Give us today our daily bread* connects God's promise for TOMORROW (God's plans to restore and completely heal the world) with the needs that we experience TODAY (we live in a broken, painful, and sinful world).

## Support for your difficult and challenging journey

For the first followers of Jesus, daily bread had a special meaning from history. God saved Israel out of slavery in Egypt. God promised to give the people of Israel a beautiful land. The journey from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land took 40 years. The LORD led Israel through a wilderness or desert. How did the people survive their difficult journey? God provided daily bread!

Let us look at some Bible sections that describe how God provides for our every day needs.

staff: something that supports your life. For example, a stick or cane is a staff to support your body when you walk or climb. Office staff can support your work. You may also carry food to support you as you go through life. Basic food is the staff that supports your life.

priorities: The things that are most important. The things that deserve your first attention.

## Notes:

poverty: to be poor, to not have enough for your basic needs.

Observations from two international scholars:

- We usually ask God to give us "things," but the LORD gives us himself. (ShahreYar Makarechi)
- The friend asks for bread to give to his other friend. We ask God the Father, and God gives the Holy Spirit, not only for ourselves, but to serve others. (Ashok Maharaj)

scorpion: an insect that can sting and poison you with venom.

Sabbath: a special (or holy) day that God gives to us for rest and worship. We are commanded to trust the LORD to provide 7 days food from 6 days work. God reminds us that we are not only workers. We are also to be worshipers.

## Week 6: How to Pray What We Need from God

### Bible Passages



Proverbs 30:7-9: O LORD ... give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown (God) and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

Luke 11:5-13: (Jesus) said to them, Suppose one of you has a friend, and ... goes to him at midnight and says, "Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him." Then the one inside answers, "Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything." I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. So I (Jesus) say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if (your son) asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you (fathers) then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

From Exodus 16: The LORD said ... "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day ... In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD ... Some gathered much, some little ... Each one gathered as much as he needed ... On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much ... "Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord ... Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any (bread)."

Deuteronomy 8:3: (God) humbled you (the people of Israel), causing you (the Jews) to hunger and then feeding you ... to teach you (the people of Israel) that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

John 6:32-35: Jesus said to them, "It is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is (Jesus Christ) who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world ... (Jesus said) I am the bread of life. (Anyone) who comes to me will never go hungry, and (anyone) who believes in me will never be thirsty."

### Discuss



1. Proverbs 30: What does the man ask God? Why is poverty dangerous? Why are riches dangerous? Why is daily bread a good answer to the man's prayer?
2. Luke 11: What time of day is mentioned in Jesus' story? Notice: midnight is an inconvenient time. Midnight is the time between the present and the future.
3. Luke 11: At midnight, the man asks his friend to give to him TOMORROW's bread based on TODAY's needs.
4. Luke 11: In what ways is God the Father a better GIVER than your good friend? How is the Holy Spirit a better GIFT than your daily bread?
5. Exodus 16: How did the people survive their long journey in the desert?
6. Deuteronomy 8: What did God's people learn through their hunger?
7. John 6: Who gives the "true bread" from heaven? Why is Jesus called the "bread of life"?



## Seeking Forgiveness



### Preview

Jesus Christ taught a model prayer to explain the right way to approach God. Each week, we have discussed one part of this prayer: *Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* Today, we look closely at this part of the prayer: *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

### How are sins like debts?

Jesus' Model Prayer is quoted in two parts of the Bible. The Bible book of Luke says, *forgive us our sins*. In the book of Matthew we read, *forgive us our debts*.



How are sins like debts? Westerners think of sin as "breaking rules." God makes the rules, but we disobey them. But, the Bible's Mid-Eastern culture is similar to Asian culture. The Bible teaches that sin "breaks our relationship" with God. What do we owe to God? We owe God honor, respect, and obedience. Most important - we owe our love to God. Do you obey your parents so you can get something you want from your mother or father? Or, should you obey to honor and respect your parents? God the Father wants respect. We don't obey to get something from God. We must honor and love our Father in heaven.

We also sin against people. We owe honor to parents. We owe hard work to employers. We owe taxes to our governments. We owe our wife or husband our love and faithfulness. We owe friends our loyalty. We owe teachers our respect. But sometimes we fail in these relationships. When we sin against other people, we break relationships. We have moral obligations to God and to other people. How can we repair our broken relationships?

### It is hard to forgive.

It is expensive to repay your debts. When you have debts, you are obligated to pay back. Think of the words, *forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*. Notice that we break our relationship with God. We also break relationships with other people. Think about a time when you were dishonored or disrespected. Did a professor make you ashamed in front of your classmates? Did a friend betray you? Was your husband or wife unfaithful to you? Did your boss cheat you? When relationships are broken, we may think, "I will pay you back!" This shows that we want justice. We want our debts to be repaid.

The opposite of repaying debt is forgiving debt. Suppose a person owes you \$1 million. That person should pay you. But they lost their job. They don't have money to repay you. Can you say to them, "I will forgive you all that you owe to me." Could you do that? Can you forgive all the person owes you? To forgive your debtor means that you are ready to accept the cost, and to pay the high price to restore your relationship.

### The high price of forgiveness.

Jesus Christ teaches us to ask God the Father, *forgive my debts*. When you pray this way, you say two things: 1) God, I owe you all of my respect, honor, my loyalty, and obedience. But, Father in heaven, I have failed You. My God, I have broken my relationship with You. I have shamed Your holy name. 2) God, I can never repay you for all of my many failures. Father, will You forgive all of my sins, debts, disrespect, and dishonor? Father in heaven, I realize that I am asking that You pay the high price to restore our relationship! Let us look at some Bible sections that describe how God the Father can forgive our debts.

## Notes:

debts: what you owe to someone. Obligations that you must repay. In the Model Prayer of Jesus, debts are your unpaid moral obligations that you owe to God. If you cannot repay your debt to God, you must ask God to forgive what you owe.

debtors: people who owe something, who are obligated to repay. Our debtors refers to people who owe us repayment.

sin: In the Bible, this word describes the break in our relationship with God. Sins are not the same as crimes. Sins dishonor God and turn away from serving God.

## Notes:

righteous, unrighteous:

A righteous person has a right relationship with God. He always honors, obeys, and respects God.

The unrighteous person does not do what is right. His relationship with God is broken until he, or someone else, pays his moral obligations to God.

sacrifice of atonement: the offering of a sacrifice to repay the debt that we owe to God. Sins are "atoned" or forgiven when they are repaid

justify: for the judge to declare you "not guilty" - either because you have done nothing wrong, or because all of your debts have been paid for.

Lamb: In the Bible's Old Testament, God provided that a lamb or a ram could be sacrificed to repay debts to God.

deceive, confess: when you are deceived, you don't understand your own situation. But if you confess, you agree with God about what is true.

## Week 7: How to Pray Seeking Forgiveness

### Bible Passages



1 Peter 3:18: Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

Romans 3:25-26: God presented [Christ] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. [God] did this to demonstrate His justice ... so as to be just and the [God] who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

John 1:29: John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

1 John 1:8-9: If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, [God the Father] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 2:1-2: If anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to [God the] Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. [Jesus Christ] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins...

### Discuss



1. In 1 Peter 3, what word describes Jesus Christ? What word describes us? For what purpose did Jesus Christ die?
2. Romans 3: Who presented or gave Jesus Christ as a sacrifice of atonement? Why did God do this?
3. Romans 3: How is God just - to demand payment of all of our obligations? How does God justify - forgive us and make us right?
4. John 1: How is Jesus described? As God's Lamb, what did Jesus do?
5. 1 John 1: How can we deceive ourselves? What does it mean to "confess"? What does God promise to those who admit they have dishonored God?
6. 1 John 2: In what two ways is Jesus Christ described? What qualifies Jesus to speak to God in our defense?
7. 1 John 2: What does it mean that Jesus is the "atoning sacrifice" for our sins? [see the Note for sacrifice of atonement - how does this apply to Jesus?]

Notice the traditional Chinese character for *honor* or *to make right*. How does Jesus Christ makes us right with God?

The Chinese character *Yi* for *honor* or *make right* combines the picture of a *Lamb* over *Me*. Jesus is the *Lamb of God* who takes away the sin of the world. (John 1:29)



## Week 8: How to Pray

### Guide and Protect Us



#### Preview

Jesus Christ taught a Model Prayer to explain the right way to approach God. We have looked at one part of this prayer each week: *Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* We now look at this part: *Lead us not into temptation.*

### Confidence in God the Father

The Model Prayer begins with words that are CONFIDENT but not SELF-confident. It is not humble or realistic to think that we will always do the right thing. We are not always wise or strong. But those who trust in Jesus Christ can be confident in God's love. Through Christ, we can call God our "Father in heaven," in the same way that Jesus did.

We first pray for WHAT GOD WANTS. We pray for God's reputation (God's Name), for God's kingdom (we want God first in our lives), and for God's will (that we will obey God).

Next, we pray for OUR NEEDS. We pray for the bread that we need each day. We pray for God to forgive our debts. We have obligations to God and people. But we often fail.

We also pray for God to guide us and to protect us from our own foolish choices. "LORD, do not lead us into temptation." We ask for guidance and protection. But, if we demand to have our own way, or insist that we follow our own desires, we can walk into trouble.

The Bible teaches that guidance is not a problem. God promises to guide us. But our own stubborn hearts can interfere with God's guidance. So we pray, *lead us not into temptation.*

### Trials - Tests or Temptations?

In the Bible, the word for temptation can also be translated test. The ideas of trial, test, and temptation are all contained in the same word. The right translation depends on what the result is - the outcome. A temptation is a trial that can lead you into personal failure. But a test is a trial that can lead you to grow stronger or wiser. All trials put pressure on you. But trials can result in either failures or successes. "Temptation means an invitation to disobedience and testing means a proving of obedience through pressure. So, there are two sides to every trial." <sup>2</sup> Think of the pressures and situations in your life that are trials. You may face health difficulties, or pressures in your career, or challenging relationships. These trials can be temptations that hurt your faith. Or they can be testings that strengthen your faith. The Bible describes our lives as a pressure-filled journey.

### Life is a Journey - that is filled with Trials

The Bible describes life as a journey in the wilderness or in a desert place, with many trials. That was historically true of the people of Israel. God saved them from slavery in Egypt. Then, for forty years, the people of Israel experienced many trials in the desert of Sinai. The people faced many pressures. Their faith in God was tested. The people often failed.

Trials can become tests that mature your faith in God. God will never tempt you to fail. God tests you so you can mature spiritually. Stressful times are opportunities to grow. God will not abandon you. But be careful when you go through trials. Don't make your goal to "escape the situation as soon as possible!" A desire for quick relief can lead to temptation. Don't ask God to get you out of trials. Instead, use the trial to get to know God better.

#### Notes:

confident, confidence:  
WHO or WHAT do you trust? Who or what gives you certainty of success? Self-confident people believe in their own wisdom and ability. But the Bible teaches that faith is confidence in God, to trust in God. What are you most sure about - your wisdom and strength, or the wisdom and strength of God? There is a wise saying: "Strong faith in a weak bridge will cause you to fall into the river. But weak faith in a strong bridge will lead you safely to the other side."

temptation, test, trial.  
These are three possible translations of the same Greek word in the Bible. A temptation is negative (situations that lead to failure). A test is positive (situations that lead you to growth or success). Trials are neutral - they can become either tests or temptations. Think of your academic exams. If you are well prepared, exams will test and prove your knowledge. If you are not prepared, exams are a temptation that can lead to failure.

abandon: to leave you all alone, or to remove support from you.

<sup>2</sup> Dick Kaufmann, Harbor Presbyterian Church, San Diego, *How to Pray the Lord's Way*

## Notes:

bit and bridle: horses or mules must be restrained or guided by force. They are controlled by a metal bit in their mouth, and by a bridle or harness.

steadfast: lasting, stable, constant, reliable.

discipline: A wise parent does more than train a child by words, teaching. Children must be allowed (within boundaries) to learn from their mistakes. God the Father not only teaches his children. God trains us, by letting us go through trials.

perseverance, persevere: to persist or to remain constant. To continue, to keep trying, to endure, or to carry on in spite of the difficulties along the way.

## Week 8: How to Pray Guide and Protect Us

### Bible Passages



Psalm 32:8-10: <sup>8</sup> I (God) will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I (God) will counsel you with my eye upon you. <sup>9</sup> (Don't) be ... like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be controlled with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. <sup>10</sup> Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:2-3,5: <sup>2</sup> Remember how the LORD your God led you (the people of Israel) all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep (God's) commands. <sup>3</sup> (God) humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with (daily bread) ... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD ... <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

James 1:2-4,12-17: <sup>2</sup> Consider it pure joy ... whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because ... the testing of your faith develops perseverance. <sup>4</sup> Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything ...

<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial ... when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him ... <sup>13</sup> ... No one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does (God) tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each (person) is tempted ... by his own evil desire ... <sup>16</sup> Don't be deceived ... <sup>17</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

### Discuss



1. Psalm 32:8: What does God promise to do? What three words describe God's guidance?
2. Psalm 32:9: How is a stubborn person like an animal?
3. Psalm 32:10: What is the promise for people who trust in the LORD?
4. Deuteronomy 8:2: What did God want the people to remember? For what purpose did God guide his people in the hot desert for 40 years?
5. Deuteronomy 8:3: What can you learn during times of hunger or pain?
6. Deuteronomy 8:5: How is God like a wise father?
7. James 1:2: When you face trials, what should be your attitude?
8. James 1:3: What benefits can come from the times when you face trials?
9. James 1:12: What is the ultimate, long-term benefit of passing the test?
10. James 1:13: What must you not say? Tests may be external experiences (they come from outside). How are temptations internal (from the inside)?
11. James 1:17: If temptations don't come from God, what does come from God?

When we pray, *Lead us not into temptation*, we pray with confidence in God the Father, but with no confidence in our own sinful flesh.

Insight from Chinese calligraphy: when the characters for Danger 危 + Opportunity 机, are combined, the result warns of a Crisis 危机. But "crisis times" are opportunities for you to mature through testing.

危机

## God, Save us from Evil!



### Preview

The Model Prayer of Jesus points to the right way for us to approach God.

This Prayer is filled with hope. For example, God is a perfect Father. We should honor and trust this Father in heaven: God will provide all that we need. God the Father in heaven will guide and protect his children. God is infinitely good and powerful - and God will ultimately defeat evil. So, we pray, *Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* We can hope in God to save us from evil.

### The Problem of Evil

Where does evil come from? Is God a perfectly good heavenly Father, who has infinite power? Then, why did God allow evil to damage the beautiful and good world that God made? Different philosophies and world religions try to explain evil.

The ancient Persian Zoroaster (or, Zarathushtra) taught that there is only one ultimate God. But forces of good and evil are separate and at war with each other. Confucian and Taoist teaching also balances the opposite forces of nature, the 阴阳 (or, yīn yáng).

Hindu philosophy says that supreme reality is in many forms, with multiple deities or gods. Absolute truth has Brahmā as the creator, Śiva as the destroyer, and Viṣṇu as the preserver. The universe is constantly created, preserved, and destroyed. Reality has opposing forces.

Buddhism, which grew out of Hinduism, teaches humans to escape from the evils of this life. Through Karma, humans rise to higher levels of existence, or they sink to lower levels of life.

The Bible gives us a reason to hope for a better world. Christians know that evil is a mystery. Did God make humans good, righteous, and able to know God? Then, how were humans tempted to do wrong? The Bible does not answer all the questions about evil. But the Bible does teach that evil is not God's equal. Evil is not the ultimate and final reality. Good and evil are not both absolute forces. The Bible teaches that, in the beginning, evil was outside the world that God made. Evil came into the world as an "outside invasion." Evil can be compared to a bacteria that enters into our lives to infect, harm, and destroy us.

The Bible identifies the source of evil by several different names: the devil, Satan, or evil one. In the Model Prayer, notice that Jesus tells us to pray to God, *deliver us from the evil one*. The evil one is not God, or an evil god, but a powerful angel who rebelled against God. In the devil's army are demons and evil spirits that are the "angelic enemies of God ..." But "Satan ... [is] the leader or dictator of devils."<sup>3</sup> But the devil is not eternal like God. Satan knows his rule will not last forever, and that God will destroy evil. (Revelation 12:12) Evil is a very real problem in human history, and a real danger to us. But evil, the evil one, and all who rebel against God's kingdom will be destroyed, and will not last into eternity.

Based on the Bible, Christians do not believe that good and evil are equal, absolute forces. Christians believe that light will win over darkness. Only God is absolute, infinite, supreme! Humans are too weak to win over evil's power. But God wins over evil through Jesus Christ.

This week, we will not spend more time to discuss how philosophy or religion tries to explain the mystery of evil. Instead, we will look at two famous Bible sections. In these Bible sections, we see that GOD wins the victory over the evil one, to save people who believe in the LORD.

### Notes:

Zoroaster: He was a religious reformer in ancient Persia (now Iran) and was the founder of a pre-Islamic religion called Zoroastrianism. The religion still exists in the Parsi community in India.

the devil: from a Greek word *diabolos*, which means the adversary or the enemy, the one who is the chief of all demons and evil spirits.

Satan: from a Hebrew word which means the accuser or adversary.

evil one: the one whose nature is evil, who is the personal source of all forms of evil.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, keynote address to The C. S. Lewis Institute, Oxford, University, 2002



## Notes:

Job: this is the name of a Bible book, and the name of the major character. Pronounced Jōb (long ō), not job (like your work).

roaming: to go on an inspection tour of the earth.

fears God: this does not mean "to be afraid" of God, but to revere, to show awe, obedience, and respect for God.

shuns: to avoid contact, to stay away from.

hedge: a wall that can protect those inside.

household: a person's family members, who live in their house.

do not lay a finger: an idiom that means, "you must not even touch Job" to harm Job.

Simon, Simon: It is very significant that Jesus calls Peter by his birth name. As a child, Peter was called *Simon son of John*. When Simon expressed his faith in Jesus as God's Son, Jesus renamed him *Peter*, meaning "rock." Faith in Jesus Christ will make Peter strong to serve. But, Peter is still simply and sinfully *Simon*. Peter is weak and easily tempted under pressure. Note Jesus says Simon's name twice for emphasis. It also may be significant that a rooster (like a first century alarm clock) will remind Peter every day that he could easily deny Jesus again.

sift: when wheat was harvested, it was put in a sieve or mesh device to separate or sift the wheat grains from the waste husks. Satan demanded to "shake" Peter - to see if Peter would stay true to Jesus Christ. The devil made the same demand to test Job.

## Bible Passages



Job 1:6-12 <sup>6</sup> One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." <sup>8</sup> Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." " <sup>9</sup> Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a <sup>10</sup> hedge around [Job] and [Job's] household and everything [Job] has? You [God] have blessed the work of [Job's] hands, so that [Job's] flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. <sup>11</sup> But stretch out your hand and strike everything [Job] has, and [Job] will surely curse you [God] to your [God's] face." <sup>12</sup> The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything [Job] has is in your [Satan's] hands, but on the man [Job] ... do not lay a finger."

Luke 22:31-34: [Jesus said] <sup>31</sup> "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you [Simon] have turned back [come back to Christ in faith], strengthen your brothers." <sup>33</sup> But [Simon Peter] replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

## Discuss



1. Job 1:6-7: How do we see that Satan is not equal to God?
2. Job 1:8: How does the LORD describe the man Job?
3. Job 1:9-10: According to Satan, what is the real reason Job believes in God? This is a good test of faith. Will you *believe and serve God for nothing*, or so that you can get *something* from God?
4. Job 1:11: What does Satan predict Job will do if God removes the blessings?
5. Job 1:12: What limits does the LORD put on the things Satan can do to Job?
6. What does Job 1:12 show about God and Satan? Who is in control - God, or the evil one?
7. Luke 22:31: What demand did Satan bring to God about Simon Peter?
8. Luke 22:32: Why did Simon's faith only fail temporarily, and not forever?
9. Luke 22:33: What great promise did Peter make to Jesus?
10. Luke 22:34: What does Jesus predict that Peter will do?
11. Were Job or Simon aware of the spiritual battles that were happening to them?

## Summary



Based on the teaching of the Bible, Christians realize that evil is real and powerful. But Christians also have hope. Evil is not ultimate or eternal like the one true God. Humans are not strong enough to win the battle of good over evil. Only the LORD God can win the victory. Next week, we will learn how God does this through Jesus Christ.

## How God Defeated Evil

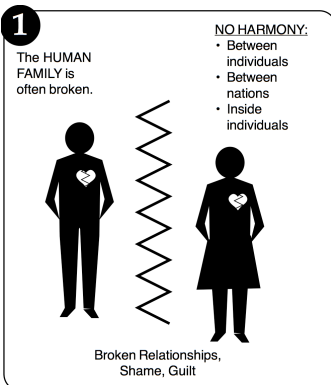


### Preview

In the Model Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray, *Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth as it is in heaven.*

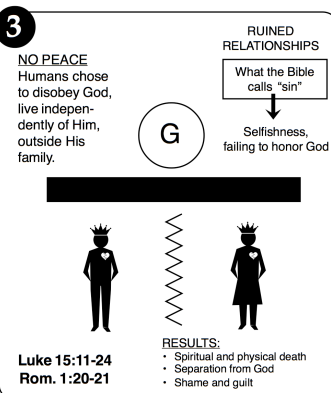
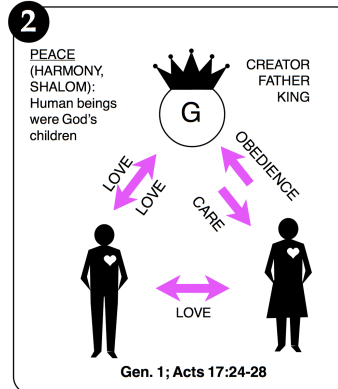
*Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* In this Prayer, Jesus describes God as the Father in heaven. Can you trust a perfect Father to guide you? We live in a painful and dangerous world. The Bible teaches that evil is real and powerful. You can be attracted to bad things that can hurt or destroy you. Will you trust the perfect Father to protect you from evil and save you from harm? If you are God's child, the perfect Father promises to guide and protect you forever! The question is: Are you a child of God? The Bible teaches that we have all turned away from God. We all dishonor the Father in heaven. Who can restore a family relationship with God? That is our discussion this week.

### Broken Relationships <sup>4</sup>



Think of your relationships. You may have classmates, co-workers, brothers, sisters, best friends, and parents. You may have a boy friend or a special girl friend. We want our relationships to have harmony and to be healthy. But our world is filled with broken relationships - which produce pain. When a close relationship is important to you, a break in that relationship brings you great pain. If a classmate criticizes you, you will feel bad. And if someone you are dating breaks your relationship, that is painful. When a husband, wife, or parent rejects you - that breaks your heart. We become broken inside.

The Bible teaches that God created us all. We were made for peace and harmony in a relationship with God as our Father. As children of God, the King of heaven, human beings were made to enjoy a relationship of love, care, and obedience. When people live in a right relationship with God the Father, they also enjoy healthy and loving relationships with each other. Notice, in the diagram on the right, the crown is with God. When God's kingdom is honored on earth, as it is in heaven, humans respond to God's love and care with love and respect for each other. But all people have turned away from God.



Notice, in the diagram on the left, the crown is not with God. When we try to selfishly rule the world or rule our own lives, relationships are broken - between people and even nations. The Bible has a word that describes rebelling against God, the true King and perfect Father in heaven. Sin means to turn away from God, to rule our own lives, and to seek our own way. When we dishonor our relationship with God, this is our most serious broken relationship! As a result, we experience both physical and spiritual death, separation from God. We build walls between us. We have shame (loss of face) and guilt.

### Notes:

sin: does not mean crime. Sin is an attitude of the heart - an attitude that says, "I will live independent from God."

<sup>4</sup> The "Broken Family Diagram" was developed by Katie Rawson, PhD, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship.

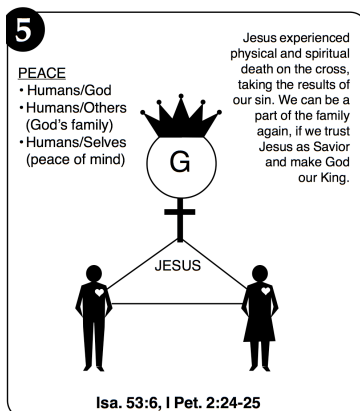
## Notes:

## Week 10: How to Pray How God Defeated Evil

### God Restores Relationships

We may try to break down the wall between God and us. We can try good works, be more religious, or study philosophies. But God is 100% pure. We are never 100% pure. For the wall to be removed, God must break through - from the top (heaven) down (to the earth). We cannot climb up to God's kingdom. God's kingdom must come down to the earth from heaven.

sin: does not mean crime. Sin is an attitude of the heart - an attitude that says, "I will live independent from God."



God came down to earth, to break through the wall of sin. God's Son came from heaven, to bring God's kingdom to us.

Notice, in the diagram on the left, the crown belongs to God. Jesus came to restore peace and harmony with God. Jesus lived in a perfect relationship with God the Father. Jesus lived a perfect human life - the life that we should live. Jesus always obeyed and honored God as his Father. Jesus died on the cross, to suffer separation from God in our place. Jesus Christ did not deserve this pain and death. Jesus experienced the ultimate, painful broken relationship.

Jesus took our place, so that we can go to his home in heaven. Jesus was rejected by God, so we can be accepted by God. We can be restored to God's family if we trust in Christ.

iniquities: self-centered living in your heart (sin) produces bad behaviors (iniquities) in your life.

### Bible Passages



Acts 17:24-27: <sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything ... is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. <sup>25</sup> And [God] is not served by human hands, as if [God] needed anything, because [God] ... gives all [people] life and breath and everything else ... <sup>26</sup> [God] determined the times set for [people] and the exact places where [people] should live ... <sup>27</sup> so that [people] would seek [God] and perhaps reach out ... and find [God], though [God] is not far from each one of us.

Isaiah 59:2: <sup>2</sup> Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden [God's] face from you, so that [God] will not hear [you].

Isaiah 53:6 (Message translation): <sup>6</sup> We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost. We've all done our own thing, gone our own way. And GOD has [placed] all our sins, everything we've done wrong, on him [God's Servant-Son, Jesus Christ].

### Discuss



1. Acts 17: 24: How is God described in this verse?
2. Acts 17:25: What does God give to all people?
3. Acts 17:26: What did God determine? Is it a mistake that you are here?
4. Acts 17:27: What should all people do?
5. Isaiah 59:2 What puts a wall between us and God?
6. Isaiah 53:6: What are people compared to? What did God do?

### Summary



Only God can defeat evil and restore our broken relationship. We can only pray "Father, I want to know the truth about You. I have tried to live independent from You. But now, I want to come home. Thank you for sending Jesus Christ to die for me."

## The Way Life Should Be



### Preview

In the Model Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray, *Our Father in heaven, holy is your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* This prayer is full of hope. But it is also realistic. We can have hope, because God is the perfect Father in heaven. We can pray for God's kingdom to come down to earth. We can pray for God's Word to be honored and obeyed - for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. But there is also REALISM. We have real needs. So we pray for *our daily bread*. We often fail in our obligations to God and to each other - so we ask God to *forgive us our debts*. The world is a dangerous place. So we pray for God to *deliver us from evil*. This prayer is realistic but it is not pessimistic. There is hope without any fantasy. Jesus teaches us to pray with our eyes open. We see how things are now. But we also see what God promises will come.

### Now, but Not Yet

Bible scholars describe our time in history as "now, but not yet." Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth to bring us good news about God's kingdom. Jesus taught, healed, and forgave people. But today, many people still need to hear about Jesus. And many people are still very sick. All people need forgiveness for turning away from God. We live between two "comings" of Christ into the world. Christians celebrate Christ's first coming at Christmas. God sent his Son into the world to give us hope for the future. If you believe in the good news that Jesus brings, you will find hope. At some time in the future, Christ will come again, to bring God's glory and a beautiful re-made world, rescued from evil. So we pray between NOW and THEN. And we should pray for the way things "should be." God's future did arrive in the coming of Jesus. But God's future did not completely come. We live in a time when we still do wrong and need forgiveness. People still do wrong to us. We still face tests and temptations. Evil is still alive and powerful.

In the future, heaven will be "the way life should be."<sup>5</sup> People, nature, and God will all come together in a relationship of wholeness, fulfillment, and delight. Because heaven is "the way life should be," it will be more beautiful than you can possibly describe. God's future world will be more lovely than any place in a travel brochure. But the beauty of the people will be even more amazing than the physical splendor of heaven.

Different racial and cultural groups will treat one another with dignity and respect. People will celebrate and learn from their differences. Marriages will be strong and children secure.

Since heaven is "the way life should be," government officials will tell the truth and honor other public officials. Streets will be clean. Business associates will rejoice in each other's accomplishments. Success will be defined as increasing good things for all people. People will honestly explain the good things about other people's work. Newspapers will only print stories about good and noble people. Most importantly, in a new heaven and new earth, God will rule as the only King. God will be real and present in royal beauty, glory, and goodness. People will respond by honoring God. People will use their abilities and resources to reflect God's character. Individuals, families, and communities will welcome each other, remembering how God welcomed them to heaven.

Heaven, "the way life should be," will reflect what the Bible calls shalom. It is called peace. But it is more than peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. Shalom means universal fulfillment, wholeness, harmony, delight. Shalom is "the way things should be."

### Notes:

hope: in the Bible, hope is not "what you wish for" but it is confidence that all God's promises will come true.

realistic: the way things really are, not the way you wish things were.

pessimistic: to always expect a bad outcome.

fantasy: a dream or fiction that is not reality.

shalom: This Bible word is often translated "peace." But shalom includes physical health, spiritual life, economic prosperity, and peace of mind. What the Hebrew people called shalom is almost like the idea of harmony - peace and prosperity - the Asian ideal of a good society. The Bible teaches that harmony in society can only come from God.

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Rev. Dick Kaufmann, *How to Pray the Lord's Way*, based on Cornelius Plantinga's *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*

## Notes:

Lamb of God: the Lamb that God provided. Jesus is God's Lamb because God sent his Son to be the final sacrifice for the world's turning away from God as true King.

sin: Notice the word is singular. This word does not describe crimes or bad deeds - but the world's dishonoring and rebelling against God.

ranks before me: Because Jesus Christ is the King of God's Kingdom, Jesus has higher authority than anyone in human history.

salvation: to save is to deliver, to rescue, or to make safe. In this Bible verse, the idea is that those who are eagerly waiting for Christ will be totally set free from sin and death.

Lion of the tribe of Judah. Because Jesus' ancestor was Judah, and because Jesus wins over evil, Jesus is described as a mighty Lion as well as a Lamb. Jesus Christ is both God's worthy Victim and the one righteous Hero.

triumphed: win the victory.

scroll, seals: a rolled document that is kept sealed or closed shut, so that what is written inside stays a secret. This is a word-picture. Only Jesus Christ is worthy to open and fulfill God's secret plan to save the world.

slain: Jesus Christ was killed on the cross.

purchased men for God: Jesus' death - Jesus' blood - paid the ransom price so that people from all nations can belong to God's kingdom.

## Week 11: How to Pray The Way Things Should Be

### Hope for a Better World

There is a Chinese saying that expresses a universal hope: "Evil will not win over justice." According to the Bible, evil will not win over GOD. God's Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to win victory for God's kingdom over evil. This is good news that we can believe for today. And this is hope for a better "happy forever" in God's kingdom of healing and harmony.

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### Bible Passages



John 1:29-30: <sup>29</sup> [John] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup> This is [Christ] of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks before me, because [Christ] was before me."

Hebrews 9:28: <sup>28</sup> Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and [Christ] will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Revelation 5:5-9: <sup>5</sup> Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. <sup>6</sup> Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of [God's] throne ... <sup>9</sup> You [Jesus] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation ...

### Discuss



1. John 1:29: How did John, God's messenger, describe Jesus?
2. John 1:29: What did Jesus come to take away?
3. John 1:30: How does Jesus compare with John?
4. Hebrews 9:28: For what purpose did Christ come the first time?
5. Hebrews 9:28: What will Christ do when he appears a second time?
6. Revelation 5:5-6: What two word-pictures describe Jesus Christ? (see notes)
7. Revelation 5:9: Why is Jesus called worthy?
8. Revelation 5:9: What has Jesus accomplished for the whole world?

### Summary



In world literature, both simple stories and great legends, there are heroes and victims. The hero is the one who is good and strong. The hero wins the victory over the evil enemies. The victims are those who are hurt or oppressed by the enemy. The hero rescues the victims. And the people honor the great one who saved them.

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The Bible also describes a Hero and a Victim. But, unlike all other world literature, the Hero and the Victim are the same person! Jesus was the only perfectly honorable man to live in human history. Jesus Christ is the only perfectly righteous, 义, hero in history. Jesus Christ was also God's Lamb, who was sacrificed for the sin of the world.