

The Lord's Prayer - notes to aid understanding

For all Christians, praying is very important, because it makes their relationship with God stronger, and they believe it changes them and the world in which they live.

Praying is much more than giving God a list of things you want him to do, although sometimes it can be like that. It is more to do with spending time enjoying God's company, a bit like you would do with a friend. Asking questions, talking about your family and friends, wondering about the future, saying sorry, saying thank-you, listening to what they have to say, not worrying about silence, just glad to be with them.

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. **Matthew 6:5-14** records what Jesus said.

First, Jesus teaches what not to do:

v5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full."

v7 "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father in heaven knows what you need before you ask him."

CONSIDER: What does Jesus say not to do when praying?

Don't put on a show or an act, don't pretend.

CONSIDER: Why ask God for things when he already knows what you want?

A parent of a child will sometimes know what their son or daughter needs, but they will get that child to actually ask nicely for it first. So by asking God for things in prayer, it teaches us to respect God and to see Him as our Heavenly Father. Also God is a loving father who gives us what we NEED, not necessarily what we WANT.

Jesus teaches how to pray:

v6 "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen."

CONSIDER: Should we only pray alone?

Jesus is not saying that praying with others is wrong, but you need to be able to pray on your own (private prayer) as well as praying with others (public prayer). Christians can pray at any time and anywhere that gives them space on their own. A lot of people find a quiet room in their home. Some people pray in their bedroom. Others might pray when they walk the dog, or when they are travelling to school or work! You don't have to pray out loud, you can pray in your mind, or just be quiet and listen.

Then Jesus gives disciples an example of a prayer.

The Lord's Prayer should be understood as an example, a pattern, of how to pray. It gives us the "ingredients" that should go into prayer.

The first parts of the prayer are concerning God and the glory of God and the next part deals with our needs. Only when God has been given his proper place will all other things fall into their proper places.

Our Father

Use of the word "our" instead of "my" shows us that prayer should not to be selfish. It also reminds us that we are part of God's family - others are our brothers and sisters because God is their father too. We should treat all others like family members. The word 'Father' also teaches us that we should pray to God [the Father]. The parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32) shows us the kind of loving father God is. Like a loving father, God listens to our prayers and always gives his best. Sometimes, this may not always be exactly what we want - sometimes a loving parent even has to use the word no!

who art in heaven

We should not think of God being in a far away place because God is everywhere. Acts 17:27-28 reminds us "....he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being....'" This line of the prayer reminds to acknowledge God's sovereignty over the universe.

hallowed be thy name

'Hallowed' means 'holy'. Keeping God's name holy means that he should be honoured and respected and admired for who he is and what he has done. "Hallowed be your name" is telling us to worship God and to praise Him for who He is. We should begin our prayers with worship to God because he is so worthy of it.

thy kingdom come

thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven

God is King so he has a kingdom. God is a fair, loving king. By saying 'thy kingdom come' we are saying 'Be my king', so we are asking for help to act, talk and think the way God wants us to. We are praying for the advancement of God's kingdom and remembering the part we have to play in that.

Asking for God's kingdom and for God's will to be done is really surrendering to God, because his rule and his plans are the best things for our lives. It is a reminder to us that we are to pray for God's plan in our lives and the world, not our own plan. We are to pray for *God's* will to be done, not for our own.

In heaven everyone submits to God – that is why it is heaven – there is no selfishness, no cruelty, no lies – but plenty of love, peace and happiness.

give us this day our daily bread

'Daily bread' symbolises everything we need for our life, for that day. It is not demanding that God gives us food but reminds us not to take for granted everything we have but it is agreeing that God is the one who gives us life and sustains us each day –we depend on God for daily physical and spiritual food.

forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us

We need to ask God to forgive us our sins - that is all the wrong things we have done - this includes our actions, our thoughts and what we have said. We have to be sincere in saying sorry to God but we must forgive others too. We should not keep something like being hurt by someone else a secret – instead we should tell God - and after we talk about it God will help us forgive those who hurt us. Jesus teaches that if we don't forgive others then God will not forgive us. (v15)

and lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil

This part of the prayer is asking about God for protection so that we will be able to stand against all the bad influences in the world, we will be able to achieve victory over sin. Feeling angry, afraid or lonely can make us want to break a rule, that is temptation. We need to pray so God can help us with our feelings. Breaking a rule hurts God but he still loves us. We should pray that God helps us know the difference between right and wrong.

for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

for ever and ever

[This was not part of the Lord's Prayer as Jesus taught it. This part was added later.]

God is the real King. If we want to be part of his kingdom we must trust him to teach us to pray, to understand the bible and to help us love others. God is almighty and deserves glory.

Amen

Amen means: -

- I don't know when or how, but I know Jesus will answer my prayer.
- So be it
- I really mean it.