



A One Week Journey

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Week of Prayer

Prayer Guide

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.*

Matthew 6:9-13

We all live with a longing for more. It's God given. The challenge is that we sometimes get confused about what exactly we want more of. We go in search of more stuff, when what we really crave is more contentment with the stuff we already have. We pursue more affirmation from others, when what we really need is the greater affirmation God has spoken over us. I believe that we were made to experience more. More of what we are made for. More of God.

Prayer is and has always been the way to that more. When we open ourselves in prayer to the God in whose image we are made, we come to see the image more clearly. When we turn to the One who created the universe, we come to experience His power at work in the world he made. Prayer orients us to the more that we long for, the more that is always available, but is so often missed.

This is your invitation into the more that God longs for you to have. But it's not just you. It is the more that God longs for the people of Mission Creek Alliance Church. God is inviting us all into something he is already doing, yet something he has yet to complete. It is something he wants you to be part of. So let us respond together. Let us commit ourselves to intentionally pray this week so we might truly participate in the more that God has dreamed for us.

This prayer guide walks you through a week of praying through the Lord's Prayer. The disciples only ever ask Jesus to teach them one thing. They don't ask him to teach them how to evangelize, or how to perform miracles, or even how to preach. They ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. I think this is because they knew everything Jesus did (his loving actions and mighty miracles) came from a place of prayer. And so Jesus, who was with God before the world began, teaches us to pray the words of the Lord's prayer. As such, these precious words are a window into very heart of God. And as we pray them, God's heart is shaped in us.

Day One:

The Danger & Delight of Prayer

Our Father in heaven...

Prayer is a dangerous endeavour when we capture the full breadth of the One to whom we pray. He is the One “who art in heaven,” to use the old english of The Lord’s Prayer. In prayer we approach the One who stands above all things, the One in whom all things hold together. David’s poem reflects what we sometime forget: “*Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm*” (Psalm 33:8-9). Prayer is dangerous because in it we address the Holy and Almighty God who both creates and brings to ruin with a single word.

Yet, this dangerous God comes to us as Father. He is *Our Father* in heaven. In the Aramaic language it is the word is *Abba*, which we can translate as “kind Father” or “Daddy.” The picture that the word conjures up is a father who delights in his children; it is the picture a parent who invites his children onto his lap not because of anything they have done, but simply because he loves them, because his heart delights in them.

As you enter into prayer today may you catch a vision of the God who invites you to sit on his lap and to be the object of his delight. And as you pray may you open yourself up to the mighty power of your kind Father who rules from heaven.

Scripture Reading

Psalm 103

Pray

1. Pray through the Lord’s Prayer. Reflect on the line, “Our Father in heaven.”
2. Express to God you delight for him.
3. What do you need his profound power for today? What does our church need? What do your friends and neighbours need?

Journal

What is God speaking to you today? What are you speaking to him?

Day Two:

What's In A Name?

Hallowed be your name, on earth as it is in heaven...

My daughter's name is Sofia. It's Greek for wisdom. Her middle name is Grace, so our prayer since she was born has been, "Lord, make our daughter a picture of your *wisdom* and *grace* in the world." I can't think of a greater combination of characteristics to live into.

Names are important, particularly in the Bible. Someone's name said something about their reputation and character. To know a person's name was to know something about them -- who they were, what they were like, even where they were headed. In Exodus 34:5-7, God spoke his name to Moses, and he did so by revealing his character: I am the Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin, and yet I hold people to account!

So what does it mean to pray "Kind Father, hallowed be your name, here on earth just like it is in heaven?" There is a great deal packed into the word *hallowed*. It means to set apart, to glorify, to make known, to reveal. We might paraphrase: "God, act in a way that glorifies yourself. Make yourself known. Reveal who you are. Bring your reputation to earth. The way you are in heaven, your fame, your reputation, make it known here on earth."

Here is where the Lord's prayer confronts our typical prayer life. So often we pray that our own reputation would increase or that our own success and glory would rise to the top. We pray "Father, make me rock this exam; help me impress my boss; make my business grow." Yet, the Lord confronts our own hearts in His prayer and conforms them to his. "It's not your glory that the world needs," He says, "it's mine." So we learn to pray, "Father may my school come to see that you are the God who welcomed the outcast and ate with sinners; may my boss see that you are the God who is slow to anger and abounding in love through my work; may your fame as the One who puts broken people back together again grow like wildfire across our city through the living witness of this Church." Hallowed be your name!

Scripture Reading

John 17:20-26

Pray

1. Pray through the Lord's Prayer. Reflect on the line, "hallowed be your name, on earth as it is in heaven."
2. Pray through the names of God or the images of God that you know from the Bible.
3. Pray that God's name would be hallowed in these areas: self, family, church, community, country, and world.

Journal

What is God speaking to you today? What are you speaking to him?

Day Three:

Rule Without Rival

Your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven...

The prophet Isaiah prays the words that have laced the mouth of every person who has ever known hardship, suffering or despair: "*Oh Lord, that you would tear open the heaven's and come down!*" I have prayed those words in my own debilitating anxiety, in the face of my friends mental illness, and so often when I hear the news about those suffering because of injustice and war. Oh God, may your kingdom come on earth! It is our greatest felt need.

Praying for the Kingdom of God to come is a prayer invoking God's divine intervention in our world, to put to rights everything that has gone wrong, everything that has been broken. It is praying for heaven's King to bring heaven's rule to earth once and for all. We see the prayer being answered whenever we read about Jesus in the Bible—he is the King after all. When the King comes the blind receive their sight, the sick are healed, the lame begin to walk, and even the dead are raised! In God's kingdom the sinner and outcast and enemy become his friend. When the Kingdom of heaven breaks into the earth the poor are blessed, those who mourn receive comfort, the meek rule the earth, those hungry for justice are satisfied, and the peacemakers become heirs to the King.

When we pray for God's kingdom to come on earth we are praying for Jesus to complete his work. We are praying for wholeness and healing - for broken selves and broken bodies, broken relationships, broken leaders, and broken governments. It's a beautiful prayer filled with a yearning for the restoration found only through Christ.

Yet, are we ready for all that this prayer entails? Are we ready to step off the throne of our life and let the true King take his place? When we pray, "Your Kingdom come," we invite God not only to restore us, but to confront us. This is a prayer for God's holiness and justice -- which confronts our own sin; it's a prayer for unity, not only with those we love, but with our enemies and those who irritate us -- which confronts our unforgiveness; it's a prayer that invites the marginalized, broken, and poor into our care -- which confronts our sense of entitlement and our desire for comfort. But when the King rules without rival, we will finally have heaven on earth.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 5:1-12

Pray

1. Pray through the Lord's Prayer. Reflect on the line, "Your Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven."
2. Pray your deepest felt needs to God. Pray for God to reveal where he wants to grow his Kingdom in your life.
3. Pray for our world's needs. Ask God to reveal what you should continue to pray for.

Journal

What is God speaking to you today? What are you speaking to him?

Day Four:

Have Your Way In Me

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...

Of all the petitions that Jesus teaches us to pray I have found this one to be the most challenging of all. And the challenge may not be where you think it is. Here's what I see.

On one end of the spectrum is the idea that God has a particular will for our lives, a blueprint if you will, and our job as Christians is to find out what it is so we can walk in that will. The prayer, then, becomes a prayer of discovery. A searching after the elusive blueprint that must be found in order to experience fulfillment in our Christian living and approval from God.

On the other end of the spectrum is the idea that God's going to what he's going to do anyways, so why even bother praying. We pour our hearts out to God, petitioning him to intervene in our lives, to heal our child, to restore our husband, to bring peace to our family, but then when we have poured out our hearts we pray, "not my will, but your will be done, God." Reading between the lines (and the tears) these words have become a prayer of defeat. Do you ever feel like that?

I'm certain that this prayer is neither one of discovery nor of defeat. This is not what Jesus had in mind with the Lord's prayer, and it's not what he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. How do I know this? Simple. Because we know God's will for our lives. He's told us.

Jesus says it this way: "my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life" (John 6:40). The Apostle Paul like this: "God has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." In short God's will on earth is what is going on in heaven: a world full of the knowledge of the Glory of God, the creation enjoying their Creator.

When you pray these words you are confronted with God's goodness and his desire to see you, your neighbours, and our whole world flourish. And in light of his goodness we must decide: am I willing to align all of my life with the will of God he has shown me in Christ Jesus?

Scripture Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:12-24

Pray

1. Pray through the Lord's Prayer. Reflect on the line, "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
2. Pray simply about God's will for you, for your family, for our church, for your neighbourhood, and for our country.
3. Ask the Lord where your will is out of sync with his? Turn to him and make a change.

Journal

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Day Five:

Bread From Heaven

Give us today our daily bread...

Six words: Give us today our daily bread. Four of these words take focus: *Give, Today, Daily, Bread.*

Give: it has taken five days living in the Lord's Prayer to finally come to a petition based in human physical need. Our heavenly Father knows how to give good gifts to his children, so we ask, Lord, give.

Today: Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow has enough worries of its own. Focus on today, on God's provision today. This focus deepens your faith.

Daily: Lord, give us today enough for the day. Just enough. Not more, lest I become greedy. And not less, lest I go hungry. Just like God gave the daily bread to the Israelites in the desert, who awoke each morning to a new grace, manna from heaven, so too may we receive from his hand just what we need. This focus deepens our dependence and grows our generosity, because with God there is always enough for everyone.

Bread: Lord, give us today our daily bread. Bread. Not steak, not caviar, not money, not power, not status, not comfort. Bread. What we ask from the Lord is a mirror of our heart, a window into our desire. Yet, the Lord's prayer confronts our misplaced desires and satisfies our real hunger with bread, the bread of heaven.

So what about the other 2 words in this prayer? *Us* and *Our*? These words should not be missed. We do not pray, "give *me* today *my* daily bread" but, "give *us* today *our* daily bread." Not me and my, but us and our. This prayer is about something bigger than yourself. It's a prayer calling upon God to provide the entire world with everything necessary for life! When we pray for God to give *us* bread, we pray for a world where people never go hungry again, whether physically or spiritually. In our prayer we yearn for God to bring the Bread of life to every person on earth. Lord, make it so through us, your beloved church.

Scripture Reading

John 6:25-58

Pray

1. Pray through the Lord's Prayer. Reflect on the line, "Give us today our daily bread." Which word are you most drawn to? What do you think the Lord is speaking to you about that word?
2. Express your thanksgiving to God for the simple things in your life.
3. Pray for those who go in need in our church, our city, and around the world.

Journal

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Day Six:

Freedom In Forgiveness

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors

As we approach the Lord's Prayer today, there are two parts to our petition. One flows from us, the other sometimes needs some prying. Let's begin with the easier one: Forgive us our debts. What debts do we need forgiven? The most obvious to us in our faith tradition is our debt to God. None of us have loved God with our whole heart and soul and mind and strength. But we have also failed to love our neighbour as ourselves. That is, we are in debt to our neighbour, for the things we have done and the things we've left undone. But, there is more. How about the debt we owe to ourselves? Is it possible that there are things we've failed to do in life with our own lives, our own bodies? There are choices that have left us feeling like we are living under a weight, a great debt of regret. It doesn't take long to see how much debt has accumulated. And when we feel the weight the prayer flows from us: "Kind Father, Forgive us our debts!" Release us from our wrongs. The ones we have done to you, to others, and to ourselves. Lord, there is no freedom without our forgiveness, without you cutting the chords that keep us bound!

Now for the part of the prayer that needs to be called forth. Forgive us our debts, *as we forgive our debtors*. What does this mean? Does it mean that God will forgive us *if* we forgive others? Or is the prayer saying that God will forgive us *in the same manner* that we forgive others? If we are forgiving to people then God will be forgiving to us? Where is the grace in that? Here is how I've come to understand it: if I am not willing to forgive others then I am not asking God to *forgive* me, rather I am asking him to *excuse* me. Forgiveness goes far beyond being released from our own debt. It is about every debt being released. The heart cry for forgiveness is a cry to set the prisoner free, and we cannot ever experience freedom if we hold a grudge against others.

Forgiving our debtors is never easy. The greater the sin against us the harder it is to forgive. Yet, Jesus bids us to the cross regardless, for it is the place in which we come to have our debts forgiven and it is the place where our Lord gives us the strength to forgive those who have wronged us. So bring all of your debts to the cross today, and pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Scripture Reading

Psalm 139

Pray

1. Pray through the Lord's Prayer. Reflect on the line, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive those against us."
2. What debts do you feel and need released from? Who is your debtor?
3. Bring all these debts to the cross of Jesus and ask for forgiveness and the freedom that comes in it.

Journal

What is God speaking to you today? What are you speaking to him?

Day Seven:

Keep Us In Faith

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil one...

Lead us not into temptation, Lord. Does the Lord ever lead us into temptation? The answer is a resounding “no!” But as the prayer tells us the Evil one certainly does. We pray, “Kind Father, deliver us from the Evil one so we will not be lead into temptation.” Our Western North American “sensibilities” would have us believe that there is no such thing as the Evil One. But Jesus certainly did. Make no mistake about it, there is an evil in the Scriptures that is spoken of as a person and that Evil One would love to see God and his people destroyed. But make no mistake about this great fact too: he never will. The Evil One never will destroy God. And he never will destroy those who cling to Jesus.

Yet, though he has no authority over those who are in Christ Jesus, his schemes seek to subvert the authority we have in Christ. His great scheme is deception. This is after all the angle he worked with Jesus in the desert—planting seeds in the mind, the temptation to believe that God is not who he says he is. Is God really good? Does God really have my best interest at heart? Is God really going to come through right now, when I need him most?

Where are you tempted to believe that God is not who he says he is? When God says he is faithful, or powerful, or loving. When He says he will never leave you or forsake you. When he says you can trust him.

Indeed, the final petition is as much a prayer for faith as it is a prayer for protection. Deliver us from the scenes of the Evil One so we might not fall into sin. Keep us from the temptations that only lead to brokenness and death. Lord, keep me on the path of Life, even when the way is dark.

Scripture Reading

John 17

Pray

1. Pray through the Lord’s Prayer. Reflect on the line, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One”
2. Where do you feel tempted the most? What characteristic of God do you need to be refocus on?
3. Give God thanks and praise for all that he has done in and through you this week.

Journal

What is God speaking to you today? What are you speaking to him?