

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY: Matthew 6:5–13 | Luke 11:1–4

OPENING

Church, turn with me in your Bibles to **Matthew chapter 6**. And as you're turning there, let me ask you something: **Who taught you how to pray?**

For some of us, it was our parents. Maybe somebody knelt beside your bed when you were little and taught you what to say. For some of us, it was a grandmother who prayed about **everything**. You couldn't leave her house without getting prayed over! Some of us learned in church. We listened to other people pray, picked up some of their language, and eventually started praying ourselves. And some of us would say, **"I don't know if anybody ever actually taught me."**

You know you're supposed to pray. You've prayed before. You definitely know how to pray when something goes wrong! But if somebody asked, **"Do you know how to pray?"** you might say, "I don't know." If that's you, you're in good company. Because apparently the disciples of Jesus felt like they still had something to learn too. For the next seven weeks, we're going to sit with the prayer Jesus gave His disciples and ask Him to teach us. And every Sunday we're going to begin by hearing the entire prayer.

Matthew 6:9–13

"This, then, is how you should pray: '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.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

INTRODUCTION

Matthew gives us the teaching, but Luke gives us another detail about how this conversation began. Luke 11:1 says: **“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray...’”**

Think about that. These disciples had heard Jesus teach with authority. They had watched Him heal the sick and do things they couldn't explain. But they also kept seeing Jesus **pray**. Luke tells us Jesus **“often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”** Before choosing the twelve apostles, He spent the night praying. When pressure increased and crowds grew, Jesus prayed. Eventually they would see Him praying in Gethsemane and hear Him praying from the cross. There was something about the prayer life of Jesus that made one of His disciples say: **“I want to learn that.” “Lord, teach us to pray.”** And church, I can't think of a better prayer for us to carry through these next seven weeks.

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.

I've been following Jesus for a long time, and that's still my prayer. You never outgrow this. You can know Scripture, lead ministry, serve faithfully, walk with Jesus for decades, and still have more to learn about prayer. And if you're new to following Jesus and you don't even

know where to begin, **“Lord, teach me”** is a pretty good place to **start**.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Now, Matthew places this teaching in the middle of the **Sermon on the Mount**. Jesus is teaching His disciples what life looks like under the reign and rule of God. In Matthew 6, He talks about giving, prayer, and fasting—practices His listeners already knew. The issue isn't whether they pray. The issue is what's happening in their hearts when they do. And before Jesus ever says, **“This, then, is how you should pray,”** listen to what He keeps saying:

Verse 6: **“Pray to your Father...” “Your Father...sees...”**

Verse 8: **“Your Father knows what you need...”**

And then verse 9: **“Our Father in heaven...”**

Do you see it?

Jesus is teaching them about prayer, but He keeps bringing them back to **the Father**. Before He teaches them what to say, He wants them to understand **who they're talking to**.

And that's our ***Big Idea*** today: **JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY BY TEACHING US TO KNOW AND TRUST THE FATHER.**

That's where learning to pray begins. And Jesus shows us the first thing that can get in the way.

Matthew 6:5: **“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites...”**

1. PRAYER ISN'T A PERFORMANCE — YOUR FATHER SEES YOU.

Jesus says: **“For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others.”**

Jesus isn't condemning standing or public prayer. The issue is right there in the text: **“To be seen by others.”**

Somewhere along the way, they're no longer thinking primarily about God. They're thinking about the people listening to them. And I think some of us need freedom here, because if we're being truthful, **prayer can be intimidating**. Especially praying out loud!

Have you ever been in one of those prayer circles where you realize they're going around the circle? Immediately you're doing the math: *Okay...three people before me*. Then the person next to you starts praying and you're not even listening anymore because you're working on yours!

How am I going to start? Do I need a Scripture? And there's always somebody who can **pray**. They've got an introduction, three points, cross-references—they somehow worked Revelation into a prayer about lunch!

Then it's your turn: **“Jesus...thank You for today. Bless everybody. Amen.”**

And you think: *That wasn't very good*. **According to who?** Where did we get the idea that God is impressed by how good our prayers sound?

Jesus says in verse 6: **“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.”**

He's getting at the heart. When the door closes and nobody is there to hear you, there's nobody left to impress. **It's just you and God.**

Jesus says: **"Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."**

Your Father sees you. There are prayers you've prayed that nobody else knows about. Things you've whispered to God that you've never told another person. Prayers you've prayed over your children, your marriage, your future. Maybe prayers that never even became complete sentences. Nobody applauded. Nobody knew. **But your Father saw you.** And that's where Jesus begins setting us free: **You don't need everybody to see you when you know your Father does.** Prayer isn't a performance. **Your Father sees you.**

2. PRAYER ISN'T A FORMULA — YOUR FATHER KNOWS YOU.

Look at verse 7: **"And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words."**

Jesus isn't saying long prayers are wrong. He prayed for extended periods Himself. And He's not condemning persistence or every kind of repetition. Jesus teaches us to keep praying. The issue is what they believed all those words were accomplishing. In the pagan world, people often believed they could get the gods to respond through the right words, enough repetition, or the right religious activity.

You see a vivid picture of this in **1 Kings 18** with the prophets of Baal. They cry out for hours: **"Baal, answer us!"** They shout. They dance. Eventually they're cutting themselves, desperately trying to get their

god's attention. And Scripture says: **"There was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention."** They're doing everything they know to get their god to notice them. And Jesus says, **don't bring that understanding into your relationship with the Father.**

Now, we may not pray to Baal, but we can still fall into that kind of thinking.

Maybe I didn't pray long enough. Maybe I didn't say it the right way. Maybe there's a certain phrase I'm supposed to use. Maybe if I can just pray better, God will finally respond.

And listen to Jesus' answer in verse 8: **"Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."**

Your Father knows. Before you received the phone call, He knew. Before you looked at the bank account, He knew. Before you knew how to explain what was happening inside of you, **your Father knew.**

And that naturally raises a question: **If God already knows what I need, why pray?** Because prayer isn't giving God information He doesn't have. There are times my sons come and tell me something I already know. I don't stop them and say, **"I have already received this information. This conversation is unnecessary."**

They're my sons! I want them to talk to me. I want them to know they can come to their father. And Jesus is helping us understand something about the heart of God. **He knows what you need, and He still tells you to come.**

Your Father isn't irritated that you're praying about it again. You don't have to convince Him that what you're carrying matters. And

sometimes we do pray about something for weeks, months, even years. Jesus teaches us to persist. But we're not trying to slowly wear God down. **We keep coming because we trust the One we're coming to.**

And while we're praying, God often does something in us. Our dependence deepens. Our desires get examined. Our will begins to surrender. That's going to matter when we eventually get to: **"Your kingdom come, your will be done."** But for today, hear what Jesus is saying: **YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIND THE RIGHT WORDS TO GET GOD'S ATTENTION. YOU ALREADY HAVE YOUR FATHER'S ATTENTION.**

He sees you. **He knows you.** And now Jesus says in verse 9: **"This, then, is how you should pray..."** And the first two words He gives us tell us where prayer begins.

3. PRAYER BEGINS WITH RELATIONSHIP — "OUR FATHER."

"This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven...'"

Before God's kingdom. Before God's will. Before daily bread, forgiveness, temptation, or deliverance. Jesus begins: **"Our Father."** We're going to spend next Sunday digging deeply into those words, so I don't want to preach next week's sermon today. But we have to see what Jesus is doing.

He's already said: **"Pray to your Father."** **"Your Father...sees."** **"Your Father knows what you need."** And now: **"Our Father..."**

JESUS DOESN'T BEGIN BY TEACHING US WHAT TO ASK FOR. HE BEGINS BY TEACHING US WHO WE'RE TALKING TO. Because how you understand God will affect the way you pray. If you believe God is

distant, you'll approach Him one way. If you think He's constantly disappointed with you, you'll approach Him another way. If you think you have to earn His attention, you'll spend your prayer life trying to prove yourself. But Jesus keeps saying: **Your Father**. And from there He gives us a prayer that eventually reaches into every part of life:

"Hallowed be your name..." Father, let my life honor You. **"Your kingdom come, your will be done..."** Father, rule over my life. **"Give us today our daily bread..."** Father, I depend on You. **"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors..."** Father, deal with my sin and the way I relate to people. **"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one..."** Father, guide me and protect me.

That's why the Big Idea for this whole series is: **JESUS DIDN'T JUST GIVE US WORDS TO PRAY; HE GAVE US A WAY TO LIVE.**

Because you can't keep praying this prayer and never allow it to touch your life. You can't continually pray **"Your will be done"** while insisting on your own way. You can't continually ask for forgiveness while refusing to deal with your sin. You can't ask God to lead you away from temptation while intentionally walking toward it.

Prayer starts shaping the person who prays. That's what I want for us during these seven weeks. I don't want us to finish knowing seven more things **about** the Lord's Prayer. I want us to become people who pray. I want prayer in our homes. I want children learning these words. I want people who don't know how to pray discovering that they can come to God. I want people who have prayed for decades finding fresh life in His presence. **I want this prayer to get into us until it starts shaping the way we live.**

But that brings us to a question we can't skip. Jesus has told us again and again: **Your Father**. And then He tells us to begin: **"Our Father..."** But how can sinful people like us come before a holy God and call Him **Father**? How do we get that kind of access? The answer isn't that we've finally learned how to pray correctly. **THE ANSWER IS JESUS.**

GOSPEL CONNECTION

So how can we call a holy God **"Father"**? That's where the gospel underneath the Lord's Prayer becomes so important. Sin has broken our relationship with God. We've gone our own way. We've chosen our will over His. So our greatest problem isn't that we don't know the right words to pray.

We need to be reconciled to God. And that's why Jesus came. Jesus didn't come simply to teach us a better way to pray. **Jesus came to bring us to the Father.**

He says in John 14:6: **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** And Jesus opened that way through the cross. He took our sin upon Himself. He carried our guilt. He gave His life for us. And on the third day, **He rose from the grave.** And when we put our faith in Jesus, God doesn't simply forgive us and send us on our way. **He brings us into His family.**

Listen to Romans 8:15: **"The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"** That's the gospel underneath the first two words of this prayer.

Adoption. Through Jesus, sinners who were separated from God are forgiven, brought near, given the Holy Spirit, and welcomed into the

family of God. So every time a follower of Jesus prays: **“Our Father...”** those words are resting on what Jesus has done for us.

JESUS DIDN'T JUST TEACH US HOW TO PRAY TO THE FATHER; JESUS MADE A WAY FOR US TO COME TO THE FATHER.

That means you don't have to clean yourself up before you come. You don't have to have a perfect week. You don't have to finally get your prayer life together so that God will receive you.

Our confidence is in Jesus. So when you don't know what to say, come to the Father. When you've blown it, come to the Father.

When you're carrying something you don't know how to carry anymore, come to the Father. When you've prayed about the same thing a hundred times, come to the Father.

Jesus has opened the way. And maybe that's what some of us have been missing. We've been so concerned about **how** to pray that we've forgotten the wonder of **who we're invited to pray to**. He sees you. He knows you. And because of Jesus, you can come to Him as Father. Which brings us right back to our Big Idea: **JESUS TEACHES US TO PRAY BY TEACHING US TO KNOW AND TRUST THE FATHER.**

BOTTOM LINE So if you're sitting here thinking: **“Pastor, I don't know if I'm very good at prayer.”**

Remember how this whole thing started. The disciples had walked with Jesus. They had heard Him teach. They had watched Him pray. And they still came to Him and said: **“Lord, teach us to pray.”** That's a prayer

every one of us can pray. And here's where I want this whole message to land: **PRAYER BEGINS WHEN WE KNOW WHO WE'RE TALKING TO.**

Your Father **sees you**. Your Father **knows you**. And through Jesus, you have been invited to **come to Him**.

So you don't need to wait until you know more about prayer. You don't need to wait until life settles down. You don't need to wait until you feel more spiritual. **Start where you are**. And I think that's what Jesus wants from us at the beginning of this series.

I don't want us walking out of here saying: **"I learned some things about prayer."**

I want us walking out saying: **"I'm going to pray."**

CHALLENGE

So for the next seven weeks, I'm asking our entire church to do **one thing together: PRAY THE LORD'S PRAYER EVERY DAY.**

That's it. Seven weeks. One prayer. And I'm not asking you to race through it so you can check a box. I'm asking you to **let Jesus teach you to pray**. Find a place every day where you can give God your attention. Maybe it's first thing in the morning. Maybe it's in your car before you walk into work. Maybe you pray it with your spouse before bed. Maybe you teach it to your children.

And begin: **"Our Father in heaven..."**

Then slow down. When one of those phrases opens something in your heart, **stay there and talk to your Father**. Maybe you get to: **"Your will be done..."** And there's something you've been trying desperately

to control. Talk to Him about it. Maybe you get to: **"Give us today our daily bread..."** Tell Him what you need. Maybe: **"Forgive us our debts..."** And the Holy Spirit puts something on your heart. Confess it. Maybe: **"As we also have forgiven our debtors..."** And a name comes to mind. Stay there. Maybe: **"Lead us not into temptation..."** And you know exactly where you're vulnerable. Ask your Father for help. You may begin with the words Jesus gave you, but let those words help you find your own words before God. And if you miss a day, don't turn this into guilt. This isn't homework. **We're learning to pray.** Just come back the next day and pray. Because that's our challenge: **DON'T JUST LEARN ABOUT PRAYER. LEARN TO PRAY.**

Imagine what God could do over seven weeks if our whole church begins seeking Him together. People praying who haven't prayed in a long time. Families praying together. Children learning these words. People who have walked with Jesus for decades discovering fresh life in His presence. And all across our church, one prayer rising to God: **"LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY." Seven weeks. One prayer. Lord, teach us to pray.**

INVITATION / ALTAR RESPONSE

And before we leave today, I think we should **begin right here.**

Because some of you know Jesus, but if you're truthful, it's been a while since you've really prayed. Life got busy. Maybe you got distracted. Maybe you went through a season where you prayed and prayed, and things didn't turn out the way you were asking God for. And somewhere along the way, you stopped coming. Today, Jesus is inviting you back. **Come to the Father.** Some of you are praying, but there's a hunger in

you for something deeper. You heard the disciples say: **"Lord, teach us to pray."** And something inside of you said: **That's me.** *Jesus, I want to know You more. I want to learn to live in Your presence. Teach me to pray.* And then there may be somebody here today for whom the words **"Our Father"** still feel foreign. Maybe you know about God. Maybe you've been around church. But you've never surrendered your life to Jesus. I want you to hear the good news clearly: **Jesus came to bring you to the Father.** He died for your sins. He rose from the grave. And today you can turn from your sin, put your faith in Jesus Christ, and receive the new life He offers. You can be forgiven. You can be made new. You can become part of the family of God. And if that's you today, I want to invite you to respond to Jesus.

[PAUSE] for Alter Response

Church, would you stand with me? And if you're comfortable, just open your hands before the Lord. Nothing magical about this posture. It's simply a way of saying: **"Father, I'm here."** And before I pray over you, I want to give you a moment to pray for yourself. You don't need to impress anybody. You don't need to find the perfect words. **Your Father sees you. Your Father knows you.** So right where you are, make the disciples' prayer your prayer: **"LORD, TEACH ME TO PRAY."** Tell Him again: **"Lord, teach me to pray."**

RESPONSE PRAYER

Father, here we are. You see us. You know us. You know what we carried into this room today. You know the prayers we've been praying, and You know the things we haven't known how to pray about. And

together we're asking: **Teach us to pray.** Jesus, thank You for making a way for us to come to the Father. Thank You for the cross. Thank You for the empty tomb. Thank You that through faith in You our sins can be forgiven and we can be welcomed into the family of God. Holy Spirit, help us in our weakness. When we don't know what to say, help us pray. When we get distracted, draw us back. When our faith is weak, strengthen us. And over these next seven weeks, do something in us that goes far beyond a sermon series. **Make us a praying church.** Let prayer fill our homes. Let children learn to pray. Let marriages be strengthened through prayer. Let people who have stopped praying begin again. Let those who have prayed for decades discover something fresh in Your presence. And as we pray the words Jesus gave us, let those words shape the way we live. May Your name be honored. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done. Give us what we need. Forgive us and teach us to forgive. Lead us. Protect us. Deliver us. And teach us to trust You as our Father. We ask it in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

Church, receive this blessing: May **God the Father**, who sees you and knows what you need before you ask, draw you deeper into His presence. May **Jesus Christ the Son**, who gave His life and rose again to bring you to the Father, teach you to pray. And may **the Holy Spirit**, who helps us in our weakness, fill you and lead you as you seek God this week. Go knowing you are seen. Go knowing you are known. And go learning every day to pray: **"Our Father in heaven..."** In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**