

Think about the conversations you've had recently. They probably included some with people you didn't know well and some with those closest to you. How were those conversations different?

A few weeks ago I met a guy for the first time, and our conversation was a mess. He hardly let me speak, he gave me side-eye when I did speak, and about halfway through the conversation I thought "I have no idea what we are talking about." Just painful. I didn't know how to relate. But this week, Martha, whom I know pretty well, and I had a couple deep conversations. They were personal and intimate, anticipatory and responsive, and she and I thrived in them because we know each other so deeply. My guess is a lot of your conversations went the same way.

Now think about your conversations with God. Which are they more like? Talking to a close personal love, or talking to a stranger? What is true about our interpersonal life is also true about our prayer life. Our conversations with God will be different based on what we know or don't know about him. Whether he is a stranger to us or a friend. **What we know about God determines how we pray to him.** Said another way, how we pray reveals what we believe about God. Who we think he is determines the words we say.

Just look at the prayer life of Jesus. When you read any of Jesus' prayers in the Gospels you see evidence of a deep intimacy and awareness between the Son of God and his Father. They are expressions of love, devotion, dependence, and hope all based on the clarity of his Father's character and will. And he wants us to pray that way too. **But for too many of us, we don't know how to pray because we don't know God very well.** We know God so loved the world that he sent his only Son, but we're not sure if he cares about our day-to-day concerns. We know he created the world, but we're not sure if he's going to provide for our needs. We know we're forgiven, but we're not sure if God is still mad at us. Our prayers become works of frustration, or we don't even bother, and we miss out on the foundational way we relate to God in this life. Jesus doesn't want that for us, so he decided to teach us.

This morning we are going to look at, and work through, what many of us know as The Lord's Prayer. A better name for it is The Disciples' Prayer because he gave it to us, his disciples, as both a prayer we can pray and a model, a template, for how we pray. This morning, we're going to use it for that very thing. I'm going to talk about each section individually, we'll then have one of our members come up and pray in that focus, and then our worship team will play over you as we give you an opportunity to pray in that way (also have prayer cards, prayer rooms, prayer night). My prayer is God meets you in the moment, whether you have a flourishing prayer life, or are afraid of it, because this is the way we commune with God and invite him to work in our life.

**[Matthew 6:7-8] <sup>7</sup>“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.**

Last week we saw Jesus criticizing the Pharisees for using prayer to call attention to themselves. This week we see Jesus criticizing Gentiles for the way they pray because it reveals they know nothing about the one true God. For them, they see God as distant, impersonal, and indifferent, and their prayers show it. They believe the only way to get him to move is to badger him with

repetitious, babbling prayers. If you've ever experienced a toddler not getting what he or she wants while in the toy section of a store, you know what this sounds like. These are prayers intended to wear God down until he finally gives in. Repetition and persistence in prayer is not a bad thing. Jesus prayed three times in the Garden for God to take this cup from him. It's the heart and understanding of who God is that Jesus is getting us to. These guys have no idea who God is, and it shows.

Jesus says God is your Father. He is up close and personal. He loves and cares for us and knows us so well that he knows what we need even before we ask for it. Some of you don't have a great relationship with your father, so you may struggle with this idea, but know your heavenly Father is perfect, he loves you unconditionally, he wants to talk with you, and he wants to bless you. Given that glorious truth, Jesus then shows us how to pray.

**[Matthew 6:9] <sup>9</sup> Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

Jesus' model of prayer begins with the acknowledgement that **God is loving Father and wholly other**. He encourages us to start a prayer by declaring and being reminded that God loves us and we have a close, personal relationship with him. When we pray, we are talking to our dad who delights in us. But he is also our dad...in heaven. It's not as much a reference to place as it is to God's power and authority. Yes, he is personal, but he's also majestic. Yes, he is near, but he's also transcendent. And because so, he is to be revered. "Hallowed" means to set apart, to make holy, and we do that through worship. Worship is the essence of prayer. It is the act of ascribing worth to God by declaring who he is. We start our prayers here because starting with God's magnificence sets the tone for the rest of our prayers. **Worship directs our heart towards God, fills our heart with God, and devotes our life to God.** -Martha will now come up and pray.

**[Matthew 6:10] <sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

Jesus then encourages us to pray a prayer that acknowledges **God is King**. Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension ushered the Kingdom of Heaven into creation, and this prayer asks that God would grow that Kingdom and bring it to completion, that life on earth would look more and more like life in Heaven. Think of how a sunrise casts out more and more shadow and darkness as it progresses in the sky. This is a prayer for God's Kingdom to do the same.

But this prayer goes beyond the general. It's personal too. This prayer is a commitment to be a part of that Kingdom. Instead of working to build our own, we make our lives about our King's business and will. But this might be the hardest part of the prayer to pray. It is for me. For many of us, we want the Kingdom without the King, the benefits and blessing of salvation without the cost of discipleship. But if we struggle with it, we are fooled by what we think is a better alternative.

**[Romans 12:2] The will of God...is good and acceptable and perfect.**

This prayer recognizes there is no better way and offers up all of who we are to be used by him. **It reaches back to V9 and recognizes our loving Father is the one who gives us the best gifts, has the best ways, and wants the best for us.** When we recognize that, we'll pray this part of the prayer. It is a declaration of what your life will be about, who is in charge and confidence that

whatever her has is best. -Lacy Dembicki will now pray for God's Kingdom to flourish and for us to commit our lives to God's will.

**[Matthew 6:11] <sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread.**

If we begin our prayers with a declaration of worship and follow it with a commitment to follow God's ways, anything we ask for ourselves will then be aligned with what God wants for our lives. If we start with our requests, though, we'll warp our worship and any idea about God's will to fit our self-centered requests. This is what the prosperity gospel does. "I want this. Let me bend God's Word to say he wants it for me too." But if we start with worship and submission, our prayers for ourselves will align with him, and will properly recognize **God is provider**.

This prayer confesses our utter dependence on God and declares our total confidence that he will pour out his grace on you. **"I need your help and I know you will help."** But it's not one and done. It's a daily dance of dependence that grows your faith and reminds you of your need for God. Lamentations says his mercies are new every morning. That means every day we wake up is another opportunity to trust God, pray for his provision, and see him come through.

What do you ask God for in your life? Is it self-indulgent? Or is it maybe nothing at all? Many of us think our requests are too insignificant to bother God with, that he has more important things to do. Well, I can tell you that he has all the capacity in the world to answer even your smallest of prayers spoken with faith and genuineness.

Because he is a loving Father you've committed your life to him, he will give you everything you need. While Jesus focuses on bread, he means it to be all we need to sustain life. God does not provide that begrudgingly or reluctantly, he does so joyfully, because he loves you. -Mark Langworthy will now pray for God's abundant provision.

**[Matthew 6:12-13]<sup>12</sup> and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

This prayer acknowledges **God is Judge and Savior**. God is holy. His standard is perfect, and he holds everyone to that standard. But all of us are sinners who fall short of that standard, leaving us subject to judgment. Jesus used the term "debts" to show our sin must be paid for. Thankfully, Jesus did live up to God's standards on our behalf, paid for our sins upon the cross, and made a way for our sins to be forgiven. If we confess our sins and put our trust in Jesus and what he did for us, we are saved.

But this prayer goes beyond our moment of salvation. Only those who have been saved can call God "Our Father". Remember, Jesus is talking to Kingdom citizens, and nothing can separate us from God once we've trusted in Christ. **But sin still comes at a cost. Sin still separates.** It does not cause us to stop being his sons and daughters any more than my boys messing up causes them to stop being my sons. But ongoing sin does damage to fellowship with God. It puts something between us God and creates barriers to us intimately connecting with him. Just think about how the masks we've worn the last eighteen months created real challenges in our interaction with one another. That's what sin does in our lives.

So Jesus calls us to a life of confession. “I messed up and I’m sorry. Will you forgive me?” It’s a prayer that takes ownership of our sin, asks the judge to forgive it, and casts ourselves upon our savior who made it possible, restoring fellowship between us and God.

Jesus also calls us to a life of confession that says we can’t live right on our own and we need God’s help. God will never tempt you. He wants to deliver you from the evil of sin and the evil one hell bent on taking you out because God doesn’t want anything between the two of you.

Some of us may struggle with us. We’re afraid God is angry and disappointed with us, and we’re not sure how he’s really going to respond. But he has no condemnation for you because Jesus paid it all. God is quick to forgive because he doesn’t want anything between him and you either. And the more we recognize all we’ve been forgiven, the more eager we will be to forgive others. - Marcel Soubayi will now come and lead us in prayer.

**[Matthew 6:9-13]**

**“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
10 Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
11 Give us this day our daily bread,  
12 and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
13 And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

God wants to talk with you this week. Jesus has shown us how. He’s waiting. Go have a conversation.