

Matthew 6: 9-14 – The Lord’s Prayer

Main point: Here’s how to talk to Our Father.



Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background (optional): Jesus taught his followers this famous prayer right in the middle the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Before he teaches this prayer, Jesus has just finished teaching about loving your enemies (5:43-47) and not doing “religious things” just so you look like a good person (6: 1-4)

For prayer, Jesus starts with this instruction: ⁷“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. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹Pray then like this:

Focus of the study:

⁹“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread,

¹²and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

[*some manuscripts add:* For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.]

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Questions:

1. *Since we’re talking about prayer, I wonder how you would describe or define prayer?*
 - a. Talking to God; asking God for what we need; listening to God. A conversation!
2. *How does Jesus start this teaching about prayer? Verse 9: “Our Father in heaven.”*
 - a. *Who is our audience when we pray?* God in heaven! Jesus starts out by saying: Know to whom you speak.
3. *I wonder why it’s important that we’re praying to God, and not just thinking or wishing or sending out hopes into the universe?*
 - a. God listens, answers, and has the power to do something about our needs. (Can the universe hear us or help us? Nope!)
4. *How does Jesus identify God in this prayer? What words does Jesus use right at the beginning?*
 - a. Our Father.
5. *I wonder what it means that God is **our** ... **Father**. What does a good father mean to you? What is a good father like?*
 - a. Close, family, caring, looking out for us, knows us; strong; not anonymous, not detached, not a puppet master or disinterested stranger.
 - b. *And whose father is this? Ours, not someone else’s, not “the”; personal.*

6. *What words come after “Our Father in heaven”? “Hallowed be thy name.” I wonder what “hallowed” means? Have you ever heard the phrase “these hallowed halls” or a “hallowed Academy”?*
 - a. Something special, set apart
 - b. The dictionary defines “to hallow” as “to honor as holy”
 - c. These words are also translated “Let your name be kept holy, or Let your name be treated with reverence.” So Jesus says we should honor and worship our God as unique, perfect, delightful in every way.
7. *What’s next in the Lord’s Prayer? Verse 10: “Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” What kind of kingdom do you think God has in heaven? I wonder what it’s like? [generate ideas: peace, all is right and true, rest, beauty, music, feasting, glory, worship]*
 - a. *What kind of kingdom do we have here on Earth? Does it look particularly heavenly? All joy, no tears? Hardly ... there is still so much brokenness in our world.*
 - b. So this piece of Jesus’ prayer, “we ask for your kingdom to come here,” asks God to fulfill his purposes right here, where we live; purposes of peace, goodwill toward all.
 - i. *And who does God use to fulfill those purposes? Us! Given how much we need God to help us, the next verse makes sense...*
8. *What’s next? Verse 11: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Why do you think Jesus includes this instruction as he teaches people how to pray? What do we need every day, and where do we get it?*
 - a. This is a practical way of saying, “God, we need you.” Asking God simply for daily provision; admits our dependence on God every day, for everything.
9. *After that? Verse 12: “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”¹ I wonder why Jesus brings up forgiveness? What is, sadly, the most common truth about human history?*
 - a. Wars, fighting, people at odds with each other, divided
10. *In contrast to the strife and anger of human hearts, what is at the core of God’s heart?*
 - a. LOVE, reconciliation. Being at peace with other people and with God matters as we pray for God’s kingdom to come to Earth!
11. *How does Jesus end his teaching on prayer? Verse 13: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (This is also translated “deliver us from the evil one.”) I wonder why Jesus includes this part about asking God to help us with temptation and evil? How often do bad things happen, and what causes them to happen?*
 - a. All the time, because of our own faults and the faults of others. We try to do good, but we so often fail; and we are so often hurt by others, either intentionally or unintentionally. So Jesus says, ask for the Father’s protection.
12. *Interestingly, at this point Jesus actually circles back to the idea of forgiveness. What is the very serious warning that Jesus gives?*
 - a. If you don’t forgive, God won’t forgive you. (Yikes!)
 - b. *Why do you think Jesus gives this warning? What is an unforgiving heart like?*
 - i. Hard, closed off, proud; doesn’t admit any need for anything or anyone.

¹ How we recite that phrase usually depends more on what English-speaking Christian tradition influenced us than what Bible translation we use. Those raised in Presbyterian or Reformed traditions are more likely to say “debts.” Those who come from Anglican/Episcopal, Methodist, or Roman Catholic traditions are more likely to say “trespasses.” Those whose churches were influenced by ecumenical liturgical movements of the late twentieth century are probably more likely to say “sins.” –from <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/forgive-us-our-what>

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