



Show Me Your Ways Through Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4)

Prayer is such an integral part of our lives as Christians. It nurtures the core of our relationship with God. Through prayer we are able to connect and communicate with God, strengthening our relationship as we speak to God and listen for God's response.

In Matthew 6:9-13, we are given the perfect model for prayer, The Lord's Prayer. Jesus gave this prayer to His disciples to use as a pattern for meaningful prayer. When we pray, we should **praise God**: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name," God is majestic and holy, but also a loving and very personal God. We honor God's name by using it appropriately and respectfully. Respecting and remembering the holiness of God helps us to be in the right frame of mind to communicate with him about our needs. All glory is God's!

When we pray, we should **pray for God's work in the world**: "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's kingdom will be complete when evil is abolished and God establishes the new heaven and earth. God's purpose for us and this world is perfect. Through our willingness to obey God, we offer ourselves to be active in following God's will, open to God's guidance, leadership, and trusting that God will provide what God knows we need in this life.

When we pray, we should **pray for our daily needs**: "Give us this day our daily bread." We acknowledge that God is the one who sustains us and provides for us. God knows what we *need* on a daily basis. We cannot stock up on God's provision and then walk away from God until our stores are low. It is by our faith that we know God's provision is there for us where we are, as we are, and when we need it most.

When we pray, we should **pray for help in our daily struggles**: "Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Forgiveness is the cornerstone of our relationship with God. God has forgiven us, now we must forgive those who have wronged us. By doing so, we show God's grace to those around us. We have all found ourselves in a place of temptation. As Christians, we pray for God to deliver us from such bondage. We pray for God's strength to overcome what is tempting us and choose the path God sets before us instead. By doing so, we acknowledge that God's kingdom is the perfect kingdom.

Discussion Questions and Reflection Activities

Prayer is the way that we spend time with God. When we pray, we talk to God, and we listen for God's response to us. Below are several ways we can enter into conversation with God.

1. **Hand Prayer:** Trace your hand on a sheet of paper. In the palm, write the name for God of your choosing (e.g. Father, God, Protector, Healer, etc.). On each finger, write the name of a person, or a situation, for which you would like to pray. If you have more than five names/situations, you can write more than one on each finger. Throughout the day, look at your own hand, remembering the person/situation that was on each finger. Pray for those people/situations.
2. **Breath Prayer:** A huge aspect of prayer is quieting ourselves enough to hear God's response to us. Many of us have trouble with this aspect. Our lives are busy and hectic and finding a time and place to quiet our spirits feels impossible on some days. By using the Breath Prayer technique, we are able to focus and quiet ourselves so that we can listen for what God is saying to us.

To begin, choose a scripture passage on which you would like to focus (e.g. Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God"). Find a place where you can be comfortable and quiet for a few moments. Take a few slow, deep breaths, imagining that you are breathing in all that is good and from God. As you exhale, imagine that you are letting go of all that seems not to be of God. When you are quieted, inhale and "hear" the words, "Be still." As you exhale, "hear" the words, "and know." Continue repeating the phrase to yourself as you inhale and exhale. Other scripture suggestions: Psalm 23, Isaiah 43:1, Isaiah 30:15. You can also use verses from your favorite hymns.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss what methods of prayer people in your group may use (praying aloud, journaling, etc.)
2. Discuss the importance of a prayer life.
3. Think about committing to a prayer challenge as a group. Examples include: committing to praying for your church daily until your next meeting; committing to praying for someone in need in your church or community daily until your next meeting; creating prayer partners within your group and committing to pray for one another daily until your next time of meeting, etc.

Using the **word PRAYER**, write an acrostic poem that helps define the word in the context of our lesson for today.

Prayer:

Ask a member of your group to lead a closing prayer, thanking God for the opportunity to spend time together and alone in prayer. Ask for guidance when we pray, so that we may quiet ourselves in order to hear God's will for us.