

Parramatta baptist church



Bible Study Series

Teach us to Pray

Led by God's Spirit • Compelled to share Christ • Restoring the broken

'The Lord's Prayer was not given as a literary masterpiece to be viewed and admired. Nor is it a beautiful set piece to be recited morning by morning as if the lovely words themselves would infuse a beauty into our lives but had no practical meaning or bearing on the way we live. It was given to be a pattern and a basis of prayer for real people in the real world. It is the pattern our Lord has given His disciples. Even then it is not simply a recitation or a set prayer but truly a whole house of prayer with many rooms to explore. Each room opens to us a different aspect of God's world, the world for which we are called to pray.

Beware then, of rushing around the house from room to room simply 'checking them off'. But rather, take time to walk from room to room and bring before our heavenly Father, the people, the contents and the views, both near and far, of each room in turn.'

- Rev Dr John Belham in *Lord Teach us to Pray*

Introduction to our Prayer series

Welcome to our study series on prayer. As a church committed to being a community that is 'led by God's Spirit, compelled to share Christ, restoring the broken' we know that prayer is an essential part of who we are and how we are to pursue our vision. So for the next 5 weeks we are going to deliberately and slowly work through the Lord's Prayer with the desire: 'Lord, teach us to pray'.

Then we will head into the second part of our series on prayer which is centred around the desire: 'Lord, teach us to listen'. Those 3 weeks will explore the practice of listening to and discerning the voice of God in prayer, and Steve and Kathy will also be running a 6 week course which will run parallel to the sermons. We trust these series and course will equip and inspire you in your own personal prayer life.

You will notice that each week this booklet has a 'prayer challenge' set for the following week to help us immediately put into practice what we have learned and discussed in the study. Ultimately we don't want to simply know things about what Jesus taught on prayer, but to enrich our prayer lives by experiencing prayer as taught by our Lord. I encourage you to fully enter into the series, take up the challenges and share with one another how your prayer life is being impacted.

"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.'*"

Teach Us To Pray – week #1

As we begin our first study for this series, share what you felt God speaking to you through Glen's sermon on Sunday.

Our Father in heaven

Jesus begins teaching his disciples about prayer at the most logical place: who it is that we are praying to.

- How do you address God or think of God when you pray?

Father is a concept we are familiar with in our lives, yet God is also unlike any earthly father.

- What then is Jesus teaching about the nature of God and our relationship with him by using the term 'Father'?

Read together 1 John 3:1-3.

- How does our adoption as children of God form the basis of our motivation and confidence to pray to God?
- What about those who aren't yet adopted into God's family through faith - how do/should they pray?

Ultimately, '*father*' is a term of intimacy, of relationship, of knowing and being known. As Christians we don't pray "dear distant deity" but instead cry out "our Father".

- If prayer is based on such an intimate relationship, how should this affect our prayer life? [*eg: when we pray, how often we pray, what we pray about, the confidence we have in praying to God etc*]

Do you think there is any significance that Jesus instructs us to pray '*our father*'? What is the role and importance of a corporate/communal understanding of prayer?

Hallowed be your name

At the same time that we can call on God as our father, we need to remember that He is so much more as well. Being overly-familiar with relational language (such as father)

can sometimes cause us to forget that we are also praying to the cosmic, sovereign, all-powerful, awesome Creator-God! Read Isaiah 6:1-5 and Revelation 4:7-11.

- How do these passages depict God?
- Do you think you have an appropriate reverential awe/fear of the Lord in light of those passages?
- How would your prayer life change if you recognised fully who it is that you are praying to?

At the time Matthew was written, a person's name was indicative of, or synonymous with, their character. To pray that God's name would be 'hallowed' (ie: proclaimed as holy, set apart, held in highest regard) is like praying that God himself would be revered as holy by us and by all.

- What does that look like/sound like in practice when we pray?

Read together John 12:27-30. The Father is glorifying His name throughout the earth.

- Why then should we be also glorifying His name – whose benefit is it for?

What happens to our perception of ourselves, our problems, our lives, our future, our God when we glorify the Father in prayer?

'Hallowed be your name' reminds us of the enormous privilege it is that we are invited to pray to this great and glorious God as our father.

- How do we keep a balance between relational intimacy and awe-filled wonder in our prayer life?

This week's prayer challenge

Let's put this straight into practice! Every time you pray this week, start by praying "our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" and expand on that in prayer. That is: come to God in prayer with the loving confidence of a child coming to speak to their Daddy, and praying that God's name would be revered throughout your life and the world. From there, continue your prayers as you feel led.

Come next week prepared to share how starting your prayers this way has impacted or influenced the rest of your prayers.

Teach Us To Pray – week #2

This week we pick up where we left off in Matthew 6, but before we jump into week 2 share with each other how praying 'our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name' has impacted your prayer life over the past week.

What did you sense God speaking to you through Trav's message on Sunday?

Your Kingdom come

How do the following verses help us understand the Kingdom of God? Psalm 103:19, 145:10-13, Luke 1:30-33, Matthew 5:20, Luke 12:29-32, Luke 17:20-21, John 3:1-8, 18:33-37, Romans 14:12, Hebrews 1:8-9 (*you might like to break off into groups and take a few each*)

How do we as Christians currently experience the Kingdom of God in our midst?

Jesus teaches us to pray that God's Kingdom would come.

- What do you think He meant by that? How does the kingdom come in our world?

Praying this prayer is partly about aligning our hearts with the things of God and desiring the fullness of God's rule and reign in our lives and in our world.

- What then are some examples of 'your kingdom come' types of prayers?

In the sermon on Sunday Travis mentioned that sometimes we have a tendency to be overly concerned with building our 'little kingdoms' rather than striving for God's Kingdom.

- What have you found helpful in keeping a proper Kingdom perspective in your Christian walk?
- How might the types of things we pray for/about help us keep a Kingdom perspective?

J.I.Packer writes 'the purpose of the church is to make the invisible kingdom visible through faithful Christian living and witness-bearing'.

- In what ways are we part of the answer to our own prayer here?

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

How is God's will done in heaven? Then how would it look for God's will to be done in the same way on earth?

Aldous Huxley comments that this part of the Lord's Prayer is 'repeated daily by millions who have not the slightest intention of letting anyone's will be done but their own'.

- Do you think that's true?
- Do you have trouble submitting your will to God's? Or accepting God's answer to something you have been praying about?
- What would be the impact on your life if you prayed this like you meant it?

Throughout his life Jesus expresses a delight in doing God's will. See John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38 and 8:28-29. So too, do the Psalmsists – see Psalm 40:8, 143:10.

- What is the cause of their delight in living out God's will above their own?
- Can you share a time where you found delight in putting God's will above your own in a specific choice or behaviour?

The prayer 'your will be done' is a full on prayer of submission; submitting our will to God's will, as well as an expression of our trust in our God. See Matthew 26:39-46

- Is there anything you are currently holding on to that you know you need to submit to God's will?

This week's prayer challenge

Let's put this into practice! Go home and read 1 John 5:14-15 and then: Write out 2 strategic "Kingdom prayers" for your own life and 2 strategic "Kingdom prayers" for our world that you know are definitely 'according to His will'.

Pray these every day for the next week and come prepared to share with the group how you went.

Teach Us To Pray – week #3

Before we jump into week 3, share with each other how praying strategic kingdom prayers which you believe are according to God's will have impacted your life over the past week.

If comfortable share what those prayers you felt led to pray were too.

What did you sense God speaking to you through Kathy's message on Sunday?

Give us today our daily bread

The beginning of the Lord's Prayer makes it clear the focus must first be on The Father - His name, His reign, His will. Then He invites us to make our request (needs) known.

- Do you find it easy or difficult to bring all your requests before God?
- When you pray about your needs, do you jump straight to the request or do you first spend time praying and reflecting on God's glory, Kingdom and will?

In Jesus' day bread was synonymous with the physical necessities of life.

- Read Matthew 6:25-34 and discuss how God provides for us.
- Do you have any stories you can share of seeing God provide for your daily needs?

How do you understand the interplay between human responsibility and God's provision when it comes to our daily needs? (see 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 & Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

Read together Proverbs 30:7-9, Philippians 4:12-13 and 1 Timothy 6:6-10.

- How does praying this part of the Lord's Prayer safeguard our own hearts against greed and coveting the possessions/wealth/lifestyles of others?

As holistic beings, we do have needs beyond the purely physical.

- What do you think are some of those other human needs we may have?

How do Philippians 4:4-7 and Matthew 7:7-11 help remind us that we can pray about any and all of our needs?

Is there something in particular that you are struggling with at the moment, that you need prayer for and to see God's provision for? (share if comfortable)

How can our daily prayer life cultivate a day-to-day dependence on God, as well as thankfulness for what He has already given us?

This week's prayer challenge:

This coming week, pray and write down 5 things *every day* that you are thankful for God's provision of (ie: so you have a list of over 30 things you are thankful for by next study!).

Also, pray: 'Lord, give me today my daily bread' before making any purchases this week.

Be prepared to share with the group next week how you went.

Teach Us To Pray – week #4

Last week we were set quite the challenge! How did you go writing down 30 things you were thankful for God's provision of? Was there anything in that list that surprised you, or that you felt you had been taking for granted?

What about praying 'Lord, give me today my daily bread' before making any purchases last week? Was there any noticeable difference in either your attitude or behaviour after praying this?

As we turn our focus to the next teaching on prayer, share with the group what you sensed God speaking to you through Steve's message on Sunday.

Forgive us our sins

How does the Lord's Prayer naturally bring us to this point where we see our own failings and our need for forgiveness? *(in other words: how much of what we need to confess has to do with us not properly honouring God's name, failing to seek first his kingdom and neglecting to do his will?)*

Read Daniel 9:4-10, Psalm 51:1-6 and Luke 18:9-14 and then discuss:

- What is the importance of coming to a deep awareness of our own sinfulness?
- What are the damaging consequences of being too prideful to admit our wrongdoings or of being confident in our own self-righteousness?
- Why do you think it is important for us to see our wrongdoings as sin against God?

What role has confession had in your own personal prayer life?

Read together Psalm 32:1-5.

- Do you find that you normally confess general sinfulness ("forgive my sins") or confess specific sins ("forgive me for _ & _")?
- Do you think that we sometimes have a tendency to gloss over the specifics of our sins because we are embarrassed, ashamed or maybe not truly repentant of them?

Read together the promise of Scripture in 1 John 1:8-10

- What assurance do we have as believers when we truly confess and turn from our sins through prayer?
- What role should thankfulness and awe (that Jesus would paid the price for our sins in full so that we would be freely forgiven) have in our prayer life?

How do you think we can have this element of confession (and thanksgiving for our forgiveness) in corporate settings like church services on a Sunday?

As we forgive those who sin against us

The clear implication of being forgiven much is that we have no real right to withhold forgiveness from anyone.

- What role does prayer have in helping us to forgive others?

Read Ephesians 4:29-32 and Colossian 3:12-14

- How is forgiving others a natural extension of our new identity in Christ?
- How does the difficulty we have in forgiving others give us a greater insight into how amazing it is that our God, in Christ, has forgiven our sins?!?

This week's prayer challenge:

Pray a prayer of confession at the end of every day for the week coming (there's heaps online, one provided below or you can pray your own prayer of confession).

As always come ready to share what impact it has on you over the coming week.

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Teach Us To Pray – week #5

Last week we set the challenge of praying a pray of confession at the end of every day. Share what impact that has had on you – particularly your view towards sin and your awareness of the greatness of Christ’s forgiveness.

Share too what you sensed God speaking to you through Luke’s message on Sunday.

And lead us not into temptation

Is temptation something you think about or pray about often?

Why do you think Jesus includes this in the Lord’s Prayer right after teaching us to pray for the forgiveness of our sins?

Read James 1:13-15 and discuss:

- What is the nature of temptation?
- What is it within us, which causes us to sin?
- Does God have any role in temptation? (cf 1 Corinthians 10:13)
- What are some of the damaging consequences of giving into temptation?

Remember that Jesus was tempted in every way as us, yet was without sin.

- How do Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:15 give us confidence to pray about the various temptations we face?

In several places the Bible tells us that the best way to resist temptation is to flee from it (1 Corinthians 6:18, 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22). Here Jesus is also teaching us to pray to avoid it in the first place if possible.

- How then, should we actively guard against putting ourselves in situations where we know we are especially tempted?
- What are some practical ways we can ‘flee’ temptations when we do find ourselves struggling to not give into them?

There are also more positive and proactive ways to fight against those old-self desires and temptations. What do the following verses teach us about how to grow resistance to temptation?

- Psalm 119:9-11
- Galatians 5:16
- Titus 2:11-14

In light of all the above, how then should we pray about temptation and our resolve to pursue holy living?

But deliver us from the evil one

What does Jesus' teaching about how we should pray reveal about the presence and influence of the evil one in our lives and world?

Is this something you would normally pray about? Why/why not?

Read together 1 Peter 5:8-11 and discuss:

- The present activity of the evil one in our world?
- The response we should have to the presence of the evil one in our world?
- What confidence can we have in the activity and strength of God in our lives within the context of the broader spiritual battle?

This week's prayer challenge

There are specific temptations we know that we face and are particularly susceptible to.

So every morning this coming week pray that God would strengthen your resolve and keep you from temptation, and then pray the armour of God on as your spiritual protection for the coming day (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Come prepared to share with the group next week what affect it had on your life.

What is God speaking?

Here is a space to keep a record of what you sense God speaking to you through the Sunday messages, following studies and weekly challenges. It is a good discipline to get into, keeping a record of what we sense God speak to us.

Week #1

Week #2

Week #3

Week #4

Week #5

How should I pray going forward?

Throughout this series we have explored the Lord's Prayer in greater detail, set and applied weekly prayer challenges and reflected together in small groups. Our prayer for you is that a passion for prioritising prayer and a delight in communing with God through prayer has stirred in your soul throughout this series and will cause a marked difference in the amount you pray, what you pray for and the confidence you have in praying. And that this would all be to the Father's Glory. Lord, teach us to pray indeed!

So at the end of the first part of this series on prayer, or even as we go through these 5 studies, write down how you believe your prayer life needs to change beyond this series.

How my prayer life is called to change: