

Small Group Study Guide

What Praying Looks like to Jesus

Series: God's Stump Speech

Matthew 6:7-15

From Sunday March 21, 2021

Take a moment of silence just to quiet our hearts. Then have someone pray that the Holy Spirit will direct the conversation and that it would be transformative in our lives.

Appetizer:

Question: Have you memorized the Lord's prayer? Are you old enough to have recited the Lord's Prayer in school? Why do you think this was such a value for the country at that time? Why do you think it was removed from the classrooms?

Main Course:

Have someone read Matthew 6:7-15

The Lord's Prayer is submitted in the middle of Jesus' talk about authentic spirituality. Unlike other religions, Jesus says that God is not manipulated by our flowery words, since He already knows what we need before we ask it.

Question: How should this knowledge—that God already knows what we need before we ask it—affect what we think about prayer? (Note: It doesn't say that God knows what we are going to ask; it says that God knows what we need.)

The Lord's Prayer starts with the words, "Our Father".

Question: Who is the "Our" in the prayer? Why is it important to pray "plurally"?

Discussion: Some people have struggled with calling God "Father". Why do you think this is? What does the title of father applied to God mean to you?

The prayer is split into two focuses: (1) An emphasis on God and His authority (2) An emphasis on our need for God in our lives.

The prayer begins by asking heaven to come down to earth. Heaven means a lot of things in Scripture, but

it is most often synonymous with "the place where God rules. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus says that we should pray that God should exist and move and command on earth in the same way that he exists and moves and commands in heaven.

May your name be made holy... (your authority)
May your kingdom come... (your culture)
May your will be done... (your plans)

Be on earth as it is in heaven.

A couple questions:

1. Why is it important that the prayer begins this way?
2. How does a prayer that invites God into our world affect how we think about the future and God's plans for the future?

The second part of the prayer presents three petitions:

1. Give us daily bread
2. Forgive us our trespasses
3. Lead us not into temptation.

Discussion: Why are these three areas (provision, forgiveness, and character development) the petitions that Jesus prioritizes in his prayer?

Discussion: When it comes to forgiveness, the language gets strong. In fact, after the prayer, Jesus talks about how if we don't have forgiveness for others, God has no forgiveness for others. **Why is forgiveness at the root of the Lord's Prayer? Why is this the hardest part of the prayer to pray?**

The language of God leading us not into temptation is complicated, because it sounds like God is the one leading us towards evil and sin. However, this is explicitly not a characteristic of God. Therefore, Jesus is most likely talking about God being with us and LEADING US THROUGH pathways of temptations and tests that could lead to sin.

Question: What does it mean to you to know that, in Jesus prayer, the whole community of Christ-followers is praying for your deliverance from evil? What should that tell us about how we should respond when fellow believers are ensnared by sin?

Dessert:

Experts make what they do well look easy.

The good news about the Lord's Prayer is that it is the same prayer that Jesus prays. And when we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray like Jesus.

Why do you think prayer has become so uncomfortable for people?

Before the evening ends, help people through some of their uncomfortable approach to pray by saying the Lord's prayer in unison. If someone hasn't memorized it, yet, pray the prayer as a group many times over until it's committed to memory.

If you would like, close the evening with the Lord's prayer, having each person pray a part of the prayer and expand on what that means to them.

For instance:

Our Father. God, we all come to you—this small group, our families, our church—knowing that you love us like a Father, and have a relationship with us and has authority in our lives.

Who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. God, make yourself known in this world! Do things that bring you glory! Act in mighty ways!

Your Kingdom Come. Lord, redeem our country, our governance, our policies, the way we interact with each other. May your vision of humanity found in the Sermon on the Mount become our reality here on earth.

Your Will Be Done. God, we know that you have great plans for those that love you, and you are not done with this world yet. Reveal your plans to us, move forward with your plans. Make a difference in our world.

And so on, until the pray is finished. A traditional way to end the prayer that isn't in Scripture is to say, "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the Glory, forever and ever, amen." Perhaps collectively, everyone could say this benediction at the end of the prayer.