



## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE LORDS PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer is divided, thematically, into two sections. They are sometimes described as heavenly and earthly, divine and human, or eschatological and immediate. Either way, verses 6:9-10 make up the first half of the prayer and verses 11-15, the second. This dichotomy mirrors the 10 Commandments in a way too obvious to not be intentional.

Pennington writes, "The Prayer is not the only prayer that a Christian can or should pray, but rather it is a model of what kind of petitions and God-orientation should mark the Christian life. It is the scaffolding around the tower of prayer or the guiding handrails along which the disciple walks in forming his or her own prayers."

The point of the Lord's Prayer is not to simply become a mantra to copy (though it can be just that) or simply a framework to work within (though it can do that as well) but a theological treatise on the kind of God-orientation and dependance that marks a truly flourishing Christian.

### WEEK FIVE:

*"... and lead us not into temptation"*

This last section is the most difficult part of The Lord's Prayer for us to understand. Why would Christians have to pray that their heavenly Father wouldn't lead them into temptation? Why would a good Father ever do such a thing? Commentators have disagreed over the years as to what this refers to, some citing a reference to the Great Tribulation and others connecting it to the Exodus generation and still others positing that it simply means, "protect us from temptation".

The simplest and most likely explanation is also the most consistent with the larger message of the Sermon on the Mount. The SOTM is a sermon about human flourishing in the reality of a broken world. While we know that God will never tempt people to sin (James 1:13) and that sometimes temptations are actually trials that God uses to refine us (James 1:2,3), they are by nature blights on God's perfect world. A world without sin would not have temptation at all and the fact that God can and does sometimes use broken people and circumstances to do good does not legitimize or ultimately restore those broken situations.

Jesus is telling his disciples to pray against the broken people and circumstances that could bring about temptation, even if God can and does sometimes use them as teaching or refining moments. The second half of the verse is key here because he ties those temptations to the work of the Evil One. So we are to pray against the work of the evil one and ask God to protect us from situations that might be temptations to sin.

- 1 *Pastor Justin questioned a common approach to prayer by saying that prayers aren't "magic words" meant to make God do something and that God is not held back by our lack of prayers. How would you describe to a non-Christian what the point of prayer is? How do you personally use prayer?*
- 2 *Justin's first point was the prayer draws us into the presence of God on a daily basis. What are your normal rhythms for prayer? How often do you pray? When and how?*
- 3 *The second point of the message was that praying the Lord's Prayer will cause you to pay attention to things that really matter, rather than trivialities or the most immediately pressing problems. What are some common ways that you pay too much attention to things that are not of ultimate value? What do those things do to you emotionally and spiritually?*
- 4 *The long C.S. Lewis quote that was read made the point that sin is not ultimately Satan's endgame, separation from God is. How does Satan use sins, large and small, to separate you from your intended relationship with God?*
- 5 *The paradox of power in Christianity is that we have access to the greatest power in the universe but it requires us to admit our own personal*

*weakness and powerlessness. What areas addressed in The Lord's Prayer are the most difficult for you to admit weakness and seek the help of God? Why? What would change if you were able and willing to joyfully admit your own weakness and lean more fully into God's strength?*