



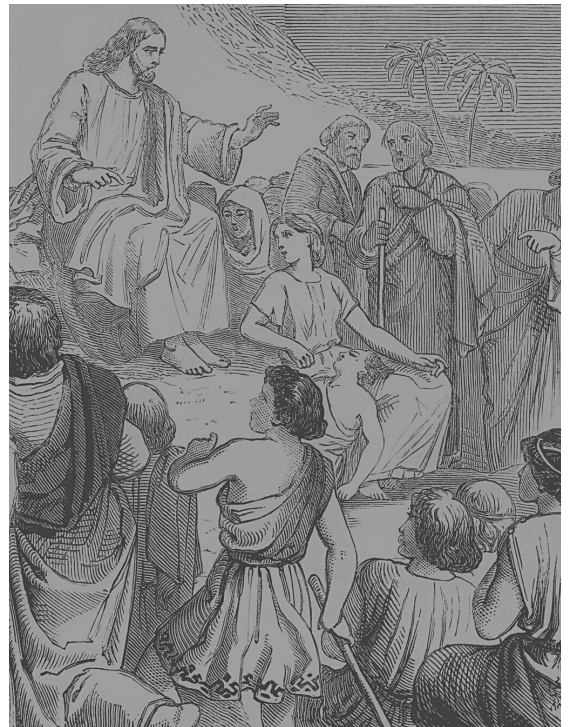
FIVE GREAT PRAYERS FOR LENT

WHAT TO EXPECT

St. Augustine wrote, "true, whole prayer is nothing but love." Why then do so many people neglect to pray? Have we misunderstood the purpose of prayer? Are we unsure what to do when we pray? (I think of Ricky Bobby saying "I'm not sure what to do with my hands.") If only we entered into prayer in the way God desires, we might find our own experience in agreement with St. Augustine.

Throughout the season of Lent (March 2-April 14), we are called to deepen our prayer life. For some, this may mean beginning a habit of daily prayer, setting aside time each day to share our hopes, joys, fears, and frustrations with God. For others, this may mean exploring new prayer practices or devoting yourself to a particular subject that the Lord leads you to pray for.

Join us on Sunday mornings and in Life Group for a series of studies on biblical prayers that are faithful for us to follow in our own prayer lives.



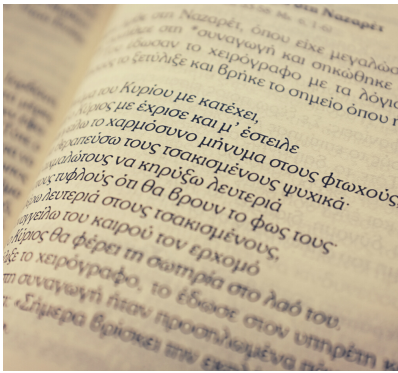
WHAT IS COMING UP?

Women's Ministry:

- Play Dates for Moms with Preschoolers
- Women's Mid-Week Bible Study - Encountering God

Men's Ministry:

- Thursday Night Study - The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry



SCRIPTURE

For this week's curriculum, read Matthew 6:5-13. As you read and discuss this prayer, consult available study material such as Blue Letter Bible for any needed assistance.



CONTEXT

According to Chuck Swindoll, "The gospel of Matthew has been notoriously difficult to date. Several factors speak to a date ranging from AD 60–65. First of all, the book makes no mention of the destruction of the temple, an event which occurred in AD 70. Such a cataclysmic event likely would have received some comment, particularly in a book so clearly influenced by Judaism. The largely Jewish character of the book also suggests it was written at a time when much of the evangelism by Christians was directed more exclusively at Jews, something that became less and less common as the decades passed."

Opening

1) What is your first memory of "The Lord's Prayer?" Why do you think that memory has left an impact? If this is your first time hearing "The Lord's Prayer," what are your initial thoughts?

After Reading Matthew 6:5-13

2) In Luke's telling of this prayer, the Lord responds to the prompting of one of the disciples who asks Jesus to teach them to pray, "just as John taught his disciples." Do you believe it is important to be taught to pray? Why or why not? Does this prayer seem to help you understand what prayer is? Why or why not?

3) What does Jesus' prayer teach His disciples about the nature of prayer? Does this prayer lead you to worship God? Does this prayer lead you to confess sin (or trespasses)? If so, how? Does this prayer teach you about trusting God for His provision? If so, how? Does this prayer help you understand your role and God's role in the world? If so, how? If this prayer does not impact you in any way, why do you think that is?

4) One commentator stated, "*Here is a way to pray that is neither too long, pretentious, nor unnecessarily repetitious.*" In many ways, Jesus is revealing how uncomplicated prayer should be. In what way(s) does it seem like you have complicated prayer (in the past or currently)? What is a greater challenge for you - praying alone or with others? Why is that? How might "The Lord's Prayer" encourage you and equip you to pray more boldly in your own life? How might it encourage and equip you to pray well with others?

5) What does Jesus mean when He teaches disciples to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done?" Is that an appropriate prayer for modern Christians to pray? When was the last time you prayed for God's will and rule to be clearly evident in the lives of people around you? How might you make a simple change (or plan) to pray this more regularly?

6) In the final three petitions of "The Lord's Prayer" (vv. 11-13), we see a shift from "your" (God's) will/plan to "our" needs. As Thomas Constable said, "*This is a prayer for our needs, not our greeds.*" Following the pattern that Jesus gives us in this prayer, what needs do disciples need to pray for? (*daily bread* = *basic necessities*; *forgive our debts* = *forgiveness of sins*; and *lead us not into temptation* = *deliverance from evil and the devil's schemes*) How often do you pray for these three things? Do you feel awkward or unsure of praying for these things? Why is that? What other things should we pray for? Why?

Challenge

7) In his book, "The Lord's Prayer: A Guide to Praying to Our Father," Professor Wes Hill states "*Go find a quiet place where you can relax, Jesus seems to say. Unclench your fists. Breathe deeply. Let your heart rate decrease. Know that you're already bathed in the Father's love, and ask simply for what you need, in the assurance that the One to whom you're speaking is already cupping His ear in your direction. **That's** what prayer should be.*" (Emphasis in the original)

This is our challenge this week, go find a quiet place where we can relax and recognize that we are in the Father's love. Make it a habit this week to practice these steps, and pray "The Lord's Prayer," every day for seven days. Take note of what the Lord does in your heart and mind as you pray this prayer.