Into His Heart

The fullness of God’s purpose for us in Scripture
through the lens of the Lord’s Prayer

Before you begin...

We are excited that you have chosen to take a fresh look at the Lord’s Prayer. We hope that you will hear Jesus speaking whether you are studying alone or in a small group. Each study will take you into a passage of Scripture verse by verse so you will need a Bible such as NASV, NIV, NKJ, NLT, or NRSV to understand it. Paraphrases such as the Message or the Amplified Bible will be difficult to use with the style of this study. *All Scripture quoted is taken from the NIV translation, unless otherwise noted.*

If you are doing this study individually, pray as you read it. Write down your thoughts on the questions, encouragements, and challenges. Afterward, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is Jesus saying to me from his word?
2. How is he asking me to apply it with the help of the Holy Spirit?

If you are using this resource as a group, you will find it helpful to work through each Scripture passage **before** you meet together. This will help with your discussion time and will mean that you not only study the word, but receive it personally. It is very important to read the word aloud, both for whole passages as well as individual verses in the questions.

This resource has been designed so that you can use it with or without the introductory talks; if these are not being read aloud, it will be important to read through them silently before you read the passage for that session.

Receiving the word as a group also includes prayer. It is good to pray at the start, asking the Holy Spirit to speak the word to your hearts and to help you understand and receive it. As you finish the study, split your group into smaller groups of 3 or 4. Have each group ask the following questions, which encourage response to the word as well as offer support through one on one prayer:

1. How can I/we pray for you today?
2. What is Jesus saying to you from his word?
3. How is he asking you to apply it with the help of the Holy Spirit?

After asking these questions, groups should have one person pray for the one who has just shared. Then they should ask the questions to the next person in the group and pray for that person, until each one has been prayed for.

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1. Review

Introduction

Welcome to this series. We are going to look together at the fullness of God’s purpose for us in Scripture through the lens of the Lord’s Prayer. That may sound a little ambitious and maybe too big to comprehend, but things that are ambitious and too big to comprehend can be awesome, life changing experiences. I pray it will be more of an adventure for you rather than just a learning experience. I think this is a journey of discovery that is taken by few, but needed by all of us. It may be risky in parts as we come honestly looking for what is really there, instead of being comfortable with our own impressions and spiritual habits. Along the way we may find old wounds that need healing, misunderstandings and thought patterns that need transforming, or abandoned invitations that we have never answered to know God and go with him into the world. This journey may not be easy but it will definitely be good so I’m ready if you are! I pray that you will allow Jesus to take you by the hand and lead you further and higher in his life-giving truth for you. My hope is that we will walk step by step through every part of the Lord’s Prayer and as we hear and respond to God’s word, he will lead us deeper and deeper into his heart.

Almost all believers down through the centuries have used the Lord’s Prayer. Despite many disagreements, different styles of worship, and extraordinary numbers of church denominations, the words Jesus taught us still stand and are part of Christian faith and worship in countless languages all around the world. These words have been used powerfully across time and geographical boundaries. However, we have understood it in very different ways.

I wonder what comes into your mind as I say “the Lord’s Prayer”? Maybe it’s a memory or a particular emotion. If it is being made to recite the prayer in a very dull manner with no thought for what you are saying or to whom you are saying it, then I’m sorry. I hope this experience will free you to see these words in a radical new way.

If you have ever been made to say or write the Lord’s Prayer as a punishment or to pay for something you have done wrong, then I’m sorry and I pray this study will bring you joy and delight in the words of Jesus.

If you ever got the impression that you can chant the Lord’s Prayer really fast like a lucky charm, then I’m sorry. If you ever learned that you could say it under your breath before any challenge or competition, then you will always be a winner or everything will go your way, I’m sorry. I pray you will no longer see these words as bringing luck but as truth that will help you put your hope in the Lord of the entire universe.

To be honest, whatever your experience or understanding of these words in the past, I’m praying that as you take time to look into Scripture and discover the rich treasures of truth and promise, these words will blow your mind! I pray you will be captivated; gripped by the extraordinary relationship, honor, and power that God is inviting you into.

First we need to look at the gospels when Jesus actually says these words.

***Luke 11:1*** *One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”*

What is going on here? Jesus has been praying, as he did constantly and the disciples have seen the depth of his relationship with his Father, his burden for prayer, and his urgency to pray at all times. On this occasion when he finishes praying, they ask Jesus to teach them to pray. I don’t think they are asking for a seminar or a curriculum or a quick one-page summary of top tips. I don’t think they are asking for a short prayer they can put on key rings and fridge magnets and cute posters for the wall. What we hear is that they want to pray like he prays; they are hungry to know God as Jesus knows the Father. They see in Jesus a completely new relationship, trust, and power that they have never seen in prayer before; and they long to learn from him. If we come to Jesus with that same hunger, we will be drawn into dynamic encounters with God as he gives us himself. He wants us to want more than a quick “how to” guide to making prayer work. If we are to understand and to receive this incredible treasure, we need to come expecting more of him and to come desiring the deeper works that he wants to do in us through his Holy Spirit.

The words Jesus taught us are also in Matthew’s Gospel: ***Matthew 6:5***“*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.* ***6****But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.* ***7****And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.* ***8****Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”*

***9*** “ This, then, is how you should pray:

“ ‘Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,

***10*** Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

***11*** Give us today our daily bread.

***12*** And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors.

***13*** And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.’ ”

In these words, Jesus offers us some amazing promises and gives us the prayer in contrast to other misunderstandings. First, he says praying is **not** about fancy words and what we sound like to others, but prayer is about the mighty God of the universe who invites us into a personal relationship with him. He says that *your* Father sees and hears *you*; yes, even *you*! He tells us praying is not about how many words we say, or getting the right words, but about actually meeting the God who knows us and knows what we need. Then Jesus gives us these words of the Lord’s Prayer that mean we actually live out the reality of the relationship with God which he just promised.

It seems to me that the Lord’s Prayer has become to us like a family relic. It hangs on the wall like a beautiful picture that has been passed down from generation to generation and we all admire its beauty occasionally, from a distance. It is familiar and special to us; we would not want it to be lost and we know it is important but somehow it just hangs there. Now imagine if in that picture there are truths that we have neglected. What if there are hidden details that have been ignored and if we take time to stop and look closely, we get to see something that changes our whole understanding of who we are. How would it be, if what was just a family heirloom turned out to be the treasure that leads us to discover our real identity as the royal family--inheritors of eternity. If we found we were related to a powerful King, everything would change; the way we lived and how we related to the world would be completely different. Maybe that expresses something of how significant the Lord’s Prayer is and how Jesus wants us to take a closer look.

I see people looking all over to find out how to pray, what to pray, and which words to use. Often we look for books, listen to speakers, and try to copy other people. None of these are bad in themselves if they are based on God’s word in the Bible, but we must go first to Jesus. Not only does he want to teach us to pray, but he is waiting and longing for us to receive the truth of all that he has done so that we can know God fully, live in his power, and join him in his purposes for the world. In this series we will take each part and look at other Scriptures that will help us see the depth of these precious words of Jesus. Let’s pray that we will allow the Holy Spirit to work so that these words of Jesus will draw us into who we are to him, all that he wants to be to us, and who he wants us to be for others because we are in him. I believe that if we take hold of this invitation Jesus offers us and of this way of praying, it will lead us into God’s heart for us and into his heart for the world.

1.

**“Our Father in Heaven” – Adopted**

The first words Jesus gives us are, “Our Father.” Already his words take us to the deepest desires of the God who longs for us to come to him first, not as servants, not as citizens of the Kingdom, not even as prayer warriors, but to relate to him as Father. This is an incredible privilege. Can you hear what is really open to you? Jesus is inviting us into the relationship that he himself has with the Father God. Because He stood where we stand in the mess of this world and carried the cross, we get to stand where he stands and call God “Father.” This word that he uses is not of a distant, authoritarian kind of parent but an intensely personal name, “Abba,” meaning, “Daddy,” or “Papa.” Jesus is inviting us into the same relationship that he has with the Father. Some of the phrases Jesus gives us in the Lord’s Prayer would have been familiar from Jewish prayers but this word “Abba” is a completely new, personal way to relate to God. What Jesus is really offering here is all that he has won for us in the new covenant; the new promise and reality in which God tells us, “I am yours and you are mine and nothing can separate us.” Whatever your experiences have been with parents, God longs for you to come believing he loves you and wants to be near to you.

***Ephesians 1:5*** *God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure (NLT).*

We have a Heavenly Father who made it possible for us to be adopted as his daughters through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Adopting a child does not happen by accident. It is a very deliberate choice that takes time and effort and often a great cost. The opportunity for us to know God as our parent did not come easy, it was not cheap. Jesus paid the price for our adoption into God’s family; it cost God his own Son. He didn’t have to but he wanted to; it was his pleasure.

Have you ever heard a song of praise to the God who has adopted you? We have heard that God is Father but there is very little said or sung about the amazing gift of being adopted. The incredible joy and honor of this is that you have a new start. When a child is adopted they get an “adoption certificate” which is a legal document now used in place of their birth certificate. It includes the names of their new parents and the child’s new name. That certificate shows they have a new identity; they are not only who their bloodline had made them to be and that is a great picture of what God does for us. However your family have treated or influenced you and whatever your genetic history, you can have a new Father and a new family name.

This honor of adoption is not for a few of his “favorites,” maybe the people you think are more spiritual than you. God does not just tolerate you because he is stuck with you in his family and you are not an embarrassment to him. No, He chose you. You are wanted and cherished by this Father who wants you to know him as “Abba.” When you come to him, he does not just see you as the world does, measuring you only by what you have done or valuing you for what you might do for him. He calls you to himself as a beloved child; that is who you are now because of his saving love. Ask Jesus to minister the truth of God’s fatherly love to you as you read today.

***John 1:12*** *Yet to all who did receive him (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—* ***13*** *children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*

1. Read these verses from the gospel of John. Look at verse 12. How does it describe who is given the right to become God’s children; what have they done?

**Read Romans 8 verses 14 to 17.**

1. Look at verse 14. What does this verse tell you further about who are the children of God?
2. Read verse 15 again. What does the first half of verse 15 say about what we are **not** because of Spirit have we received?
3. In what ways do we often live in slavery to our thoughts and desires or the past and who the world tells us we are, so that we live in fear and can be afraid of God or his work in us? (Give examples)
4. Read verse 15 again. What does the second half of verse 15 tell us about what we can call God because of the Holy Spirit of adoption (or “sonship”) in us? How does this touch you?
5. Look again at verse 16 and 17. This verse says that it is the Holy Spirit who bears witness in our hearts that we really are God’s children. What does verse 17 promise us we will be for eternity if the Holy Spirit has made us children of God?
6. How do you feel to think that you can be an adopted daughter of the King now and that you have a royal inheritance with Christ for eternity?
7. Look at the last part of verse 17. As children of God and heirs with Jesus, how does this verse say we will we share with him and identify with him? How does this strike you?

2.

 **“Our Father in Heaven” - The Good Father**

The honor of being the children of God is for those who have received Jesus. God loves all of his creation and his own image is in every person, but those who have believed in Christ can be filled with the Spirit of adoption and therefore be heirs with Christ of a royal inheritance for all eternity. The same Spirit that was in Jesus can be in us, and we can call him “Abba,” “Daddy,” “Papa.” This is the relationship Jesus says God wants us to live in so that we come to him and say *“Our Father in Heaven.”* When we are given the right to become the children of God; we are adopted into a new family. It is only when we are sharing in this family--in relationship with our brothers and sisters--that we understand who we are as his beloved children. Jesus invited us to pray, *“Our Father,”* not, “My Father.” We know he wants us to meet with the Father personally but we cannot call him “Father” without recognizing how important it is to be part of his world-wide family and closely connected with our local family.

 Calling God “Abba” is an incredible privilege, as anyone who has experienced any other religion will tell you. Yet so often we have not taken hold of who we are as God’s children or been able to receive the love our Father has for us. Some of us do not want to live as children, we want to grow up and be independent. Our desire to be in charge of our lives can prevent us from coming to God as “Abba.” A part of us just wants to be the boss and we are not ready to give God that first place in our hearts and lives. In coming to him as a close Father, we are accepting that we are not in control of our lives and we are saying we want him to lead us, teach us, guard us and fight for us. If we want to be his children, we need to come admitting that we need God, we are not meant to look after ourselves. Sometimes we find that really hard. We don’t quite trust God and we are not sure we want him to look after us or take charge of our lives. For some of us, we have been taught by people or circumstances to stay strong, hold everything together and not allow ourselves to be vulnerable or dependant on anyone at all costs. We are sometimes scared of what might happen if we admit that we are small and we need a big parent to take care of us. Maybe we are worried about falling apart and being overwhelmed by our brokenness, past hurts or present struggles, if we let our guard down and allow ourselves to be loved as his child. So we keep our distance from the Father God.

The Spirit who makes you his daughter is not a spirit of fear. All of us have grown up in different environments. Our experiences of any of the people who cared for us growing up can influence the way we relate to God as parent. Some of us have had terrible experiences of parents who are abusive or unkind, uncaring, or just controlling and critical. Maybe they were passive, inattentive, distant, absent, or maybe we have felt abandoned when a parent left the family or has died. As a gentle, loving parent, God, understands the brokenness in our earthly families. He also knows when we have felt confused about what is going on in our lives and question, “Why does God not seem to be helping us; is he really a good father?” The God who is Father is also a tender, skilful healer. You can bring him all the places you have felt confused about him and all the experiences you have had of parents. You can give them to him and ask him to fill you with his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, so that you can trust him as “Abba.” He longs to heal every wound, set you free to receive his love and show you his heart for you as your true Father. Some of us have had great experiences of parents. We don’t feel the need to let God parent us so we continue to depend on our parents in a way that means we do not give God any space to father us. We can put all our identity in our good earthly family and miss the truth of who we are as children of God. So a good family can also cause us to hold back from God’s father heart for us.

We need to know that whatever kind of parents we have experienced we must ask the Holy Spirit to free us from expecting that our Heavenly Father is only like them. Although he shows his parent heart through his own image in us, we need to allow him to show us that he wants to be more than our earthly parents could ever be. So just what kind of a Father is he? Jesus tells us a story that gives us vivid pictures of the Father heart of God. Ask him to open the eyes of your heart and free you to see these pictures as a reality today.

**Read aloud Luke 15 Verses 11-32.**

1. Read verses 18 and 19 again. The son realizes the misery he is living in and decides to go home. In verse 19, how does he expect to be received by his father when he goes back and admits his sin?
2. Why do we sometimes live in this same low expectation of God’s forgiveness or the way he sees us, who we are to him?
3. If we think God sees us only as his workers, not beloved children, how does this show itself in our thoughts, prayers and actions?
4. In verse 20 what 5 things does the father do?
5. What the father does here is shocking for the culture of Jesus’ day and his hearers would have felt the father had humiliated himself completely. How does the father’s response in verse 20, even to this wayward son, show you a picture of God’s heart of extravagant love for you?
6. Read verses 21 to 22 again. As the son confesses, what does the father want to put on him that show he is not a servant, but a beloved, honored child? How does this touch you?
7. In verses 23 to 24 what does the father want to do and how does this show you a picture of the Father who celebrates you?
8. Read verses 28 to 32 about the elder brother’s response. In what ways do we often live like the brother, staying with God but missing his Father heart of love and grace, for us as his daughters and for others?
9. In what ways do you need to ask the Holy Spirit to work in your heart so that you are able to respond to God as the father Jesus describes in this parable?

 3.

**“Our Father in Heaven” – Living as His Beloved**

We are no longer slaves, orphans or merely servants, but daughters and heirs of the King. In Luke we heard Jesus describe the Father’s heart for us. We have a Father who waits for us, runs to us, embraces, forgives us and even celebrates us as his own. If we receive all that he has done for us and believe who we are as God’s children, how will that change the way we relate to God and the way we pray? When orphans are adopted into a family they may struggle to receive the love and nurture of their new parents and sometimes they continue in thought patterns of surviving by themselves. Though they are in that family legally, there is a greater work that takes place gradually in their minds and emotions. We too, although we have been adopted by the most loving father, may be unaware of the deep thoughts that shape the responses of our hearts to him.

What are the symptoms and signs that show us we have not yet fully embraced God as Abba, Father? Often we feel like God does not see us or we do not matter to him; that we are one in a crowd of millions. We feel, “Why would he even have time to listen to me when there are far more important things going on in the world for him to deal with?” Far from being a cherished, celebrated daughter, adopted by the King, we see ourselves as a bother and a burden to God. Maybe we feel we are an embarrassment to him, maybe unforgiven. Of course Satan loves to feed us this lie and the whispers of the enemy echo in our thoughts, “Why would God want to talk with you?” “How could he love you?” On the other extreme, sometimes we live trusting in our abilities or in our own strength. Everything becomes about what *we* are going to do to control and hold things together and make sure we have what we need. Our enemy loves that too and joins his voice with the world around us saying, “It’s all down to you! You need to look after yourself.” Then there is the understanding that we are only what our families made us, we are merely a product of our past or we are only worth our successes and abilities and what we look like. The enemy echoes, “Look at your past, look at your family- this is who you are and all you will ever be.”

The Holy Spirit of adoption wants to work in us to heal and free us from these deep misunderstandings that can drive us further from trusting the Father. Jesus wants to lead you out of these lies that rob you of peace and joy and drag you into worry and distance from God. Because the Spirit is able to draw you into the Father’s love, you don’t have to live bound by sin, fear, and self-sufficiency. You don’t have to live outside of his care like an orphan, trying to fight for your own needs, prove your worth, or protect yourself. You don’t need to feel that your identity is only in who your family and experiences have made you or live captive to any other part of your old nature. You are a beloved daughter of the King and an eternal heir with Christ and you can ask Jesus to take all the lies so that you can live in that truth.

What does it look like to live in the reality of who we are as children of God and know him as “Abba”? What does it look like to truly trust and enjoy his love for us? Ask the Holy Spirit of adoption to open your heart to the answers that Jesus gives in his tender words that you will read today.

**Read Matthew 6 verses 5 to 8.**

1. Look again at verse 6. How does this verse describe the attentive Father who longs to meet with you personally in prayer?
2. Read verse 7 again. What does this verse tell you about how you can simply talk to the Father who hears? In what ways do we sometimes put our hope in the words of prayer or in knowing exactly what to pray, instead of trusting the loving and mighty Father himself?
3. What does verse 8 promise you about the Father who sees you? How does this touch you?

**Read the following verses aloud**:

***Matthew 6:31*** *So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’* ***32*** *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* ***33****But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

1. Look again at verse 31. What are the things that we worry about in our day-to-day lives, either because we think we can control them or we fear we can’t control them?
2. Read verse 32. How does Jesus say we are different to non-believers who have to control their own needs and what does he say about the Father in this verse that means we don’t have to live like them?
3. How is coming to God as your loving Father, totally different to living like an orphan or an unloved child, trying to fight for your own needs, make your own decisions, prove your worth or protect yourself? Give examples.
4. Look at verse 33 again. What does Jesus ask us to focus on first in our hearts and lives?
5. In the second half of verse 33, what does Jesus promise about our needs?
6. If we are trusting the Father, who knows our needs of every kind, how does it free us to pray and live for the eternal things of God, see the needs of others and make his purposes our passion and priority?

 4.

“**Hallowed Be Your Name” – Knowing His Name**

Jesus taught us the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer to invite us into a real relationship with the living God who wants us to come to him as Father. The next step Jesus gives us to lead us deeper into God’s heart is, *“Hallowed be your name.”* We come near to him as “Abba,” but this does not mean that we make God smaller than he is or that we continue as though we are just chatting with someone on the same level as us. We start first with God, not only us. His name is not just a word but rather his very character, his heart and the way he gives himself to us. Jesus is inviting us to fix our hearts on him, to raise our eyes above our circumstances and our own feelings and to meet with God in all the fullness of who He is and how he wants to relate to us. If we are honest we so often look down into ourselves and continue to do that as we pray so we leave our prayers even more aware of us, not him. Prayer is not the same as “me time,” and it is not the same as “centering ourselves,” or “focusing on our inner being” as popular culture might lead us to think. Jesus wants to be the lifter-up of our heads, to take our hands and lead us into the presence of the holy God. To pray and live these words, *“Hallowed be your name,”* is to desire to let God be God; set apart, worshipped, and respected as the first in our lives. It is about starting, not with “me” and “I,” but with “you are….” Some of these translations of Jesus’ words help us to understand that word *“hallowed”*:

. . . *may your name be honored* *(JB Phillips)*

. . . *may your name be kept holy  (NLT)*

*. . . uphold the holiness of your name (CEB)*

Not only is God utterly worthy of our praise, but as we focus on his name; his character and his heart, we meet with him. We see that he is *holy*. That means he is totally other, utterly different to anyone or anything in this world; he is higher and greater, purer and stronger, more beautiful and more merciful than everything we know. He is *holy*. Worship that comes out of the truth of all he is and all that he has done, leads us to trust in him and believe that he is able and willing to work in our world. As we lift him up in our hearts, he changes us to see his power and his desire to intervene so our prayers will be radically different.

When Moses meets with God in a burning bush in Exodus 3 and God asks him to lead his people, Moses asks God to give him his name so he can tell the people who sent him. Here is what God says:

***Exodus 3:14*** *“I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel: I am has sent me to you.”* ***15****God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my eternal name,   my name to remember for all generations (NLT).*

This is an amazing moment. God is the great “I AM” who was and is and is to come, yet he reveals his personal name, Yahweh (often spoken as “Jehovah”). In doing so he gives them himself to be their own God, to draw them to himself as his own people. Time after time God shows real people in real situations more of himself and his heart for them and often they respond by speaking his name. Ask Yahweh, the Lord, to meet you as we take time to look deeper into his amazing name.***Psalm 9:10*** *Those who know your name trust in you.*

1. Read the verse from Psalm 9. What does this verse say about how we come to trust God?
2. How does reading Scripture, help us to lift up our eyes beyond our experience to see God as he really is and to know his name?

**Spend time reading aloud the English meanings of these names of God;** all of them show us his heart and his power through real prayers or encounters with his people in Scripture.(Take time later to look up the references for those names that particularly touch you.)

Jehovah Gibbor Milchamah (Psalms 24:8) - The LORD Mighty in Battle
Jehovah Maginnenu (Psalms 89:18) - The LORD Our Defense

Jehovah Goelekh (Isaiah 49:26&60:16) - The LORD Your Redeemer
Jehovah Immeka (Judges 6:12) - The LORD Is with You

Jehovah Jireth (Genesis 22:14) - The LORD Shall Provide
Jehovah Machsi (Psalms 91:9) -The LORD My Refuge
Jehovah Magen (Deuteronomy 33:29) - The LORD the Shield

Jehovah Mauzzi (Jeremiah 16:19) - The LORD My Fortress
Jehovah Mephalti (Psalms 18:2) - The LORD My Deliverer
Jehovah Nissi (Exodus 17:15) - The LORD My Banner
Jehovah Rophe (Exodus 15:26) - The LORD (Our) Healer
Jehovah Roi (Psalms 23:1) - The LORD My Shepherd
Jehovah Sali (Psalms 18:2) - The LORD My Rock
Jehovah [Shalom](http://ft111.com/namesofgod.htm) (Judges 6:24) - The LORD (Our) Peace

Jehovah Shammah (Ezekiel 48:35) - The LORD Is There
Jehovah Tsidkenu (Jeremiah 23:6) - The LORD Our Righteousness
Jehovah Tsuri (Psalms 19:14) - O LORD My Strength

El Roi (Genesis 16:13) – God Who Sees (Me)

El HaNe'eman (Deuteronomy 7:9) - The Faithful God

El HaKadosh (Isaiah 5:16) - The Holy God

El HaShamayim (Psalm 136:26) - The God of the Heavens

El De'ot (1 Samuel 2:3) - The God of Knowledge

El Emet (Psalm 31:6) - The God of Truth

El Elyon (Genesis 14:18) - The Most High God

El Olam (Genesis 21:33) - The God of Eternity

El Echad (Malachi 2:10) - The One God

1. Choose **one or two** names that particularly draw you to worship and honor God today. Share together.
2. Choose **one or two** names that inspire you to pray, trusting God for a specific situation. Share together.
3. Choose **one name** that you find difficult to take hold of fully in your relationship with God. Share if you feel able.
4. Why is it so important to come to God with worship; remembering who God has shown himself to be and honoring his name? What happens in our prayers and our hearts when we don’t do this?
5. How has looking at some of God’s names today helped you to understand why Jesus taught us to pray, *“Hallowed be your name”*?

 5.

 “**Hallowed Be Your Name” - The Name Above All Names**

Jesus taught us to come to God as Father and begin by praising him and praying that his name will be honored. Jesus asks us to start with who God has shown himself to be in Scripture. His name shows us both who he is and his heart- what he desires for us and for our world. Reading the word is the only way to allow Jesus to lift up our heads so that we can see God in all his glory and power and tender love. When we leave out Scripture from our prayer time, we miss out on all that he wants to show us of himself and not only do we not desire to praise and honor his name, but the way we pray and what we pray for ends up focusing on us, our feelings and our own confused expectations of what God might want to do.

But surely God knows sometimes we don’t have time for all that and we just need to come near him as a friend? Of course he wants us to know him near to us at all times and to call out to him all day long, even if we only have a moment. However, we need to be careful that this is not our only way of praying. When we are not reading or listening to the accounts of his presence and not hearing his own voice, it is very easy to reduce God to our own experience and to make him in our own image. We forget his real *name* and rely on who we remember him to be and we begin to focus on ourselves instead of honoring him, both in our prayers and our attitudes. Instead of God being *“hallowed,”* set apart, higher and purer than anything in this world, we bring him down to our own level and make him ordinary. What happens eventually is that we desire to be with him less and gradually pray less. This is because we have our eyes off him and we don’t see his heart for us or his authority and power to break into our lives and our world.

As we look through Scripture we see again and again that even in the crisis moments, and the most dire emergencies, God’s people begin their prayers by praising and honoring God for who he is and what he has done. In 2 Chronicles 20, God’s people are being attacked on every side. It is an impossible situation as the huge enemy troops are approaching rapidly. Yet rather than just panic or plan franticly, the king called all the people together in Jerusalem to pray. God shows them that he is going to fight for them so they go out trusting that the battle is not theirs but Yahweh’s.2 Chronicles 20: 21-22 says, “*After consulting the people, the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor. This is what they sang:* *‘Give thanks to the Lord; his faithful love endures forever!’ At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves”* (NLT).

Did you see that? As the people of God honor his holy name, praise him, and proclaim who he is, God is welcomed to fight for them. As they trust him and look to him, not at the battle itself, he is lifted up, the enemy is crushed and he brings victory. Jesus calls us to lift up his holy name, not just so that we can trust him or because he is so worthy of our praise, but also because there is a power in his name when we worship. In our lifting him up we are inviting Jesus to be our “banner,” his name raised in victory over those who belong to him. And what other name could be higher than the beautiful name of Jesus? Ask him to speak his name to your heart as you read today.

When Joseph finds out Mary is pregnant, he is shocked and plans to divorce her quietly. **Read Matthew 1 verses 20 to 23.**

1. Look again at verse 21. What does the Angel say about why he will be given the name of Jesus?
2. How does this understanding of Jesus’ power and desire to be Savior, inspire you to pray for friends, family, your community and the world?
3. Read verse 23. What is Jesus called in these words that the angel quotes from the prophet Isaiah? What does verse 23 say this name means?
4. How does this name touch you personally today? Think about both what Jesus did for you in coming to earth and how he wants you to know him now.

**Read below what Jesus says about himself in the Gospel of John** (all of these begin with *“I am,”* so Jesus is identifying himself with God’s own name--see Exodus 3)**:**

*John 6:35 – I am the bread of life*

*John 8:12; 9:5 – I am the light of the world,*

*John 10:7 – I am the door of the sheep.*

*John 10:11 and 14 – I am the good shepherd.*

*John 11:25 – I am the resurrection and the life*

*John 14:6 – I am the way, and the truth, and the life*

*John 15:5 – I am the vine, you are the branches*

1. Pick out any of these names that particularly speak to you of the power and greatness of Jesus – share with the group
2. Which of these names encourage you to see the tender heart of Jesus for you?
3. Share the names which challenge you to pray for those who do not know Jesus personally
4. How have these names of Jesus (including the Matthew passage) shown you the power and comfort of beginning with your prayers and praises with focusing on who God is?

 6.

“**Hallowed Be Your Name” – The Promised One**

Jesus taught us to begin our prayers with who God is; his character and his heart for us and for the world. We have looked at knowing the “name” of God as he has shown himself in Scripture. When we meet with the one who has created us, saved us, and holds the world in his hands, how can we come any other way than with awe and humility? Yet when we do not take time to know him in Scripture or to praise him for who he is, we can end up talking to him as an equal or even less. Have you ever begun to explain issues or situations as though God doesn’t see or know or understand? Have you ever tried to use God like a consumer product that should always do what it says on the box? Have you ever limited God to be like you, only expecting him to think as you do? These belittling responses to the mighty, loving Lord are a barren and frustrating place to be and will very likely draw you away from close relationship with God. Looking at who God is and hearing his heart leads us out of these desperate places and into praise; a completely different place where we expect the power and presence of God.

Knowing God’s name and honoring him as holy has to include who he has shown himself to be in Jesus Christ. The gospels give us vivid pictures of the God who stepped down and made himself vulnerable. He has allowed us to see him in all his glory, to bring us grace and truth (see John 1:16-18), to let us see exactly how he wants to meet with people like us. Jesus does incredible works and the people of the gospels come to him as healer, Lord over creation and Lord over all evil. He accepts the names they call out as they exclaim that he is *“Son of the Most High God,” “Messiah,” “the Christ,” “the Lord,”* and he longs for us to come to him and cry out in deep worship to him in the same way. Because he is all that he promised to be and because he has risen and defeated death, when we honor the name of Jesus we get to touch eternity. Isn’t that amazing? Praising the name of Jesus lifts us beyond the day-to-day world of what we can see into his abundant light and life forever. That terrifies Satan, our enemy, just as every form of darkness that ever came near Jesus when he was on earth was afraid and driven out by him. When we honor the name of Jesus, not just in words or songs but right from our hearts, his passionate love for us, his authority and his victory over sin, death and evil will cover us. Like the people of Israel in 2 Chronicles 20, our role is to praise his name and watch him intervene and fight for us.

What we are seeing here is that praying, *“Hallowed be your name,”* is not just an introduction to our prayers or something Jesus told us to do in “the instruction manual.” As well as drawing us into God’s heart and changing how we pray, lifting up Jesus’ name and honoring who he is can be a powerful prayer in itself. Here we join in the songs of heaven and we are identified with Jesus so we are *“in Christ”* and our prayers are no longer just spoken in our “name” but his *own name*. Praying *“in the name of Jesus”* does not just mean putting his name on the end of our prayers, but we also worship him and he prays for us so his name covers our prayers. If we lift Jesus up and praise him as Lord and King over specific places, relationships and situations, then we invite him to come and take control. As we look to him we begin to look at ourselves and our world through his heart. We see more of his desires for the people and issues we are praying for, so we begin to pray more in step with his ways, more *“in the name of Jesus.”* I don’t know about you but I am so grateful that in this way my prayers are way bigger than just me and my own name. As I lift up the name of Jesus, he comes and his mighty, saving name is over me, not only in God’s presence, but in every situation and before every other spiritual power that trembles at his name.

If we are to fully receive God for all that he is and truly know him, then we need to honor him as the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As believers, it is not often we take time to focus on the Holy Spirit. So ask the Lord to pour out his heart into yours as you listen to the amazing promise of Jesus.

In the following words Jesus promises the Holy Spirit, who would come to us when he left earth and went back into glory.

**Read John 14 verses 15 to 21.**

1. Who does Jesus promise the Father will send in verse 16 and for how long?
2. Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as the advocate- a helper, comforter, or one who comes alongside us. How does this promise make you want to pray and lead you in how to pray today?
3. Read verse 17 again. How does this verse show you can invite the Holy Spirit into any lies or distortions you believe and into any confusion about yourself, God, or the situations you are in?
4. How does knowing the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, not recognized by many, draw you to pray for those you know and those around the world who are living in lies about themselves or God? Who do you need to be praying for? Give specific examples of groups or individuals.
5. Read verse 18 again. What else does Jesus promise here about how the Holy Spirit ministers the God’s parent heart to us and how we will never be left alone? How does verse 18 touch you personally?

**Read the following verses aloud:**

***John 7:37****On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.* ***38****Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”* ***39****By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

1. Look at verse 37. In this festival, (which included a pouring of water as part of the symbolism), what invitation does Jesus give us? Why do we often go other sources to find satisfaction instead of going straight to him?
2. Read at verse 38 again. How does Jesus describe the Holy Spirit here?
3. What do you see about the Holy Spirit in this picture of flowing, clean, life giving water that does not run dry? What does the picture show you of what he wants to do in you?
4. How have Jesus’ words about the Holy Spirit challenged you and encouraged you in knowing and honoring his “name”?

 7.

“**Hallowed Be Your Name” – Choosing to Praise**

I hope that you are drawn into the saving power and the loving nearness of Jesus. I hope you know what it is to be overwhelmed by the beauty and majesty of the name of the Lord. I hope that as you are looking at who he is and who he wants to be to you, it leaves you speechless. I hope that you are struck with awe and praise as you have spent time gazing on the one who longs for you to seek his face and look to him in all things. I hope that as you set your heart on him, you are captivated by his heart for you. Yet we all know that is not always the case. The praise and responses of our hearts can seem more like a badly sung out of tune song than like the worship of heaven. If you have ever felt like that, you are not alone. God knows we need songs and prayers from him to help us. The Psalms are full of prayers that lead us to honor God’s name. They take us beyond our own weak, faltering words and feelings to powerful truths that release us out of our ordinariness and into the glory and the joy of worship. There are many Psalms that help us to remember all that God is when our own hearts are struggling to see.

But what if we don’t *feel* like praising? Everything just seems uninspiring, maybe overwhelming, and we don’t know what to think about God sometimes. Once again, you are not alone. Over and over in the Psalms we hear, “This is terrible, everything is so hard, but you are…” Jesus knew at those very times when we feel like that, we need to pray, *“Hallowed be your name.”* We can use the words of the Psalms themselves and their example to us to lead us to focus on God, not just ourselves or our situation. We can pray, “This is too much for me, I can’t stand this, but you are…” Often the people praying in the Psalms start in despair and by the end they are glorifying the name of the Lord and seeking his face. Sometimes we read, *“I will praise you,”* and we hear it as a joyful shout; but sometimes if you read what comes before it, you can see it is an act of determination; *“I will praise you.”* In other words, no matter how we feel and what is going on, we will not stop honoring your name and lifting you up. Or, “I *will* seek your face”- “I am determined to look to you and rest in who you are, beyond whatever else I can’t see or don’t understand and whatever is pulling me away.” It is saying, “You have not changed so however my feelings or circumstances change I will set my heart on you, the Lord who is mighty and faithful, always loving me and always with me. Our heart attitude needs to be to refuse to give up and to be determined not to allow any other “name” to be our focus, our first passion or our hope.

*“Hallowed be your name”* is not only praise, it is fixing my heart on God first, not myself, and meeting with him for who he is. It is also a big prayer. We pray, “Let your name be honored in my life.” “May everything I am and do lift up your name as holy.” “May my life never bring shame on your name.” We can echo the prayer in *Isaiah 26:8 “Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.”* Praying that God would be lifted up in our lives is a big prayer and maybe if we are honest that is not our desire or our longing all of the time. Allow him to search your heart as you ask him to teach you what it means to pray, “Your holy name be honored in my life.”

***Psalm 115:1*** *Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.*

1. Read the verse above. How does this verse from Psalm 115 express the desire to bring honor to God’s name?
2. In what ways do we sometimes want the glory and thanks for ourselves? Where are we more concerned for people to give us attention and recognize our own name? Give examples.

***Psalm 79:8*** *Do not hold against us the sins of past generations; may your mercy come quickly to meet us, for we are in desperate need.* ***9****Help us, God our Savior, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins for your name’s sake.*

1. Read the verses from Psalm 79. What is this prayer asking God to do for the sake of his name?
2. How does this encourage you that even in brokenness, needing forgiveness, you can pray for God’s name to be honored in your life?

**Read this part of Psalm 42:**

***Psalm 42:9*** *I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?”* ***10*** *My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, “Where is your God?”* ***11*** *Why, my soul, are you downcast?  Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.*

1. How is the person praying feeling in verse 9?
2. How does the honesty of this prayer invite you to come to God just as you are, in every mood and circumstance? Why do we often feel we can’t do this
3. Read all of verse 11 again. Despite how they feel, what is the person praying determined to do by the end of the prayer?

1. What is the connection in verse 11 between putting our hope in God and praising him and how have you found praising has helped you to trust God in this way?
2. How can the Psalms help us to pray, *“Hallowed be your name*” (“May your name be honored in my life”)?

 8.

 “**Your Kingdom Come” – The Real King**

As we walk step-by-step through these precious words that Jesus gave us, I hope you are seeing that this is more than a prayer. If we allow his words to penetrate through our traditions, familiarity, misunderstandings, and apathy to the deepest attitudes of our hearts, we will never be the same. At every step and every phrase, Jesus has questions for us: “Do you believe this?”; “Will you allow me to minister to your heart so that you can receive this fully?” “Do you trust me to work in you so that you will live the reality of this prayer?” At every step we have a choice to invite him to heal us, forgive us, set us free and transform us by his Holy Spirit so that these words are not just words but our purpose and identity. If we let him, he will lead us into radical new perspectives in how we see ourselves and the world around us. If we let him guide us in this prayer he will give us a solid, beautiful, expectant and deeply personal relationship with him.

Jesus leads us to pray, *“Your kingdom come.”* But what is the kingdom of God? It is not somewhere we go when we die but the dynamic, reign of God, the mighty, loving king. The kingdom is not a geographical place but about the presence and authority of the true king. It has come already in part and will come fully in eternity. Praying is about what we believe and who we are. Whenever we pray, *“Your kingdom come,”* we receive the truth and live out the reality that what we can see is not all there is. Sometimes it feels like all there is are the daily tasks, aiming for deadlines, working out relationships, caring for others, battling health, and waiting. Yet our daily experience of people and places, struggles and opportunities is not the whole of reality. There is more that we can only catch a glimpse of--or that we may not see at all; there is more than us and there is more than the present.

Psalm 103:19 says,*“The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.”* Yet often it is hard to understand how this is true in the midst of conflicts, power struggles, weakness, mess and pain, both in the world, and in our own personal thoughts. In these words of praying for the kingdom to come, Jesus invites us into believing that we are not simply controlled by our circumstances. He calls us into the eternal truth that no other power or person or environment or events or feelings are in charge, but that God is ultimately the king who reigns, now and forever.

Daniel lived at a time when everything looked as if God was not King. After many warnings to his people that they needed to turn back to him, God allowed Jerusalem to be captured and his people to be taken captive to Babylon. Daniel and his friends had to serve the king of Babylon himself and even their names were changed from the names given to them as God’s people. Yet Daniel listened to what the prophets said, and believed God was in control. He refused to stop trusting God and continued praying. After a disturbing dream the king decided to kill his wise men who couldn’t interpret it and who threatened Daniel. It seemed the lives of Daniel and his friends were literally in the hands of the king. Ask Jesus to open the eyes of your heart to see what is really there as you read this.

 **Read Daniel 2 verses 17 to 23.**

1. Look at verses 17 and 18 again. When Daniel hears the threat against his life, what is the first thing he does in these verses?
2. How does praying with other believers help us see further than our circumstances and take hold of the truth that there is more than what we see and more than now?

As God revealed the meaning of the dream to Daniel, this was his praise: ***Daniel 2:20*** *Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.* ***21*** *He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others.*

1. Read verse 20 and 21. How does Daniel express his praise to God?
2. How do these verses show us what Daniel believed about who is really reigning as King?
3. How did this understanding shape the way Daniel prayed and what he prayed for, in a culture that stood against his God and in dangerous circumstances?
4. In what ways do we feel other forces, rulers or circumstances are in control and what are the things that cause us to struggle to see God as a King who reigns?

Despite the threat of execution, Daniel and his friends remained faithful. As Daniel prayed through the years relentlessly, he was given this vision. **Read Daniel 7 verses 26 to 27.**

1. Look at verse 26 again. In the first half of this verse, how does Daniel see the ultimate truth of what will happen to every earthly power in eternity?
2. Read verse 27. How does this vision of the eternal kingdom show us the truth that we only see what is really there when we look at God’s word or when we close our eyes in prayer?
3. How does Daniel’s story and the vision in these verses encourage you to pray “your Kingdom come,” trusting that what seems to control our world and our circumstances have no eternal authority?

 **9.**

**“Your Kingdom Come” – The King Who Cam**e

The kingdom of God is not bound by what we see with our eyes. The Lord is ultimately King even in the most difficult places that seem controlled by people and circumstances, when we invite him to reign. What God graciously gave to Daniel was a vision that showed he knew every leader that would rise and fall and he knew their hearts and actions. In the midst of that oppressive regime, God revealed that all the rulers and leaders who seem to be in charge in this world, will be stripped of their power before the true King who will reign forever. As we look around us at the corruption, cruelty and deception of many oppressive, violent, power hungry leaders around the world, we need Jesus to open our eyes to this eternal perspective of Scripture. No one is “getting away with it”; any power they think they have is temporary and they will have to stand before the King of all Kings one day. The book of Revelation helps us to see this same certainty: that what we see now is not all there will ever be and ultimately no evil will win. Without this eternal understanding we are constantly confused and discouraged as we look at the world and doubt that God is on his throne. We need to ask Jesus for a new trust in the promises of God’s reign for eternity. If we pray believing he is ultimately king, then, *“Your kingdom come,”* can mean, “Take your throne forever; have your eternal way.” We can pray, “Jesus take your throne, reign over every other authority, spiritual power, personality or circumstance; for ourselves, our families, our communities, and the nations.”

When Jesus burst into our world he brought with him the kingdom of God. He talked constantly about the kingdom, but more than that he lived out the reality of it by his love and passion to welcome people into the kingdom with great urgency. You may not have heard much said about the kingdom of God, but this is the most exciting, foundational truth and if you read the gospels, you will find that Jesus could not stop sharing the kingdom. Wherever Jesus was, his saving love, life and truth, freedom, victory over evil and wholeness were present under the kingdom reign. These are the signs of the kingdom breaking in that were fully revealed in Jesus and these are the things he wants to do today if we will invite him, praying, *“Your kingdom come.”* There is a dynamic tension between knowing that the kingdom is forever, but believing Jesus has already come, died and risen again for us so we can enter the kingdom right now. We live under his loving rule here and expect him to touch others with his kingdom now, in ways that will make a difference for eternity.

Even before Jesus is even born we hear of the kingdom from the angels of heaven and in Mark 1 verse 15 the first words we hear from Jesus in his ministry are, *“The kingdom of heaven is near.”* If this is true there is a need for response and Jesus makes it very clear in his teaching that we cannot live in the kingdom if we have not given our whole hearts to him. He teaches that knowing Jesus and allowing him to be our King is the only way in. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your ears to Jesus’ life changing message of the kingdom as you read today.

***Read these words from the Angel to Mary before Jesus was born:***

***Luke 1:31****You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.* ***32****He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,* ***33****and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.*

1. What does this promise we hear in Luke 1 say about Jesus’ role in the kingdom of God?

**Read Matthew 18 verses 1 to 4.**

1. Look at verse 1. What is the question the disciples are asking Jesus and what does it show us of the attitude in their hearts?
2. Look at verses 3 and 4. How does Jesus use the picture of a child to explain the kind of heart we need to live in his kingdom?
3. Why do we find this kind of humble heart and simple trust of Jesus as king so hard?

***Mark 14:23****Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.* ***24****“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.* ***25****“Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”*

1. Jesus is facing the pain of the cross knowing that the kingdom goes beyond this world. After saying his body will be broken for us and his blood poured out for us, in verse 25 how does he express his certainty that the kingdom will be forever?
2. How do you feel to think that because of the sacrifice Jesus made for you on the cross you are now invited and able to live under the dynamic reign of Jesus as king forever?
3. How does spending time in prayer and reading the word help us have the same eternal perspective Jesus had about the kingdom that has begun now but will go on forever?
4. How does knowing Jesus will reign over the kingdom forever, inspire us to pray and influence how we pray?

 10.

 “**Your Kingdom Come” – King of the Battle**

The kingdom of God has come in Jesus. He is King and his reign has begun now and lasts into eternity. Do you know what that means? It means whether you live in a tropical paradise, a dull small town, a fast, crowded city or a slum; when you come with that humble, child- like trust to Jesus the King, you get to live in the kingdom! Whatever your living conditions and however boring or exciting your daily routine is, when you allow Jesus to reign in every corner of your heart, you are part of a mighty kingdom and you can know the King of Kings personally. This kingdom will never end; long after the leaders you are living under have gone, long after the houses and work places have disappeared, you get to be with him, living under his tender love and awesome majesty forever. What if we really believe that? What if eternity becomes more than something we sing about occasionally on a Sunday or hope for at funerals? What difference does it make to how we see time, our money and possessions? What difference does it make to how we see the people around us?

In every careful parable and every situation, Jesus makes it very clear that in the kingdom, everything looks different. Our time, our needs, our possessions, our perceptions of what is good or what is blessing all change if we listen to the kingdom voice of Jesus. Because we are under his careful, loving reign, we can trust him that if we focus on what is important for the kingdom he will lead us. If we ask him, he will open our eyes to see things as he sees them. When we pray, *“Your kingdom come,”* we are asking Jesus to show us how to live as citizens of his kingdom with our hearts fixed on eternity. We are praying, “Jesus show me where you want to rule; fill me with your love for those who are not under your reign of life and light.” We get to ask the King, “Please make the things that are important to you important to me; let me see through the ordinary and the immediate to what is really there, what matters eternally.” We are his royal daughters and he longs to share his truth and his heart with us.

If we pray like that, we will soon see that Jesus is not the only power at work in the world. If we look through his kingdom eyes, we will begin to see every captive who is bound in darkness, lies, slavery to desires, oppression, destructive thoughts and the distortions of truth. They are all around us. If we stand with the King we will see Satan, our enemy, is the one trying to keep them bound but we will also see the authority and victory of Jesus who has died on the cross and has beaten death to set them free. Whenever Jesus meets with the forces of evil that oppress and destroy in the gospels, there is no struggle; rather, over and over again we see the spiritual forces that bind, totally undone. We see the evil powers that would try to rule, tremble in fear when the King comes near them. When we pray, *“Your kingdom come,”* we are praying for the rule of Jesus the good King and against the *“prince of this world”* (as Jesus calls Satan in John 12:32). Ask Jesus to show you the depth of the darkness and his light and power to conquer it all as you read today.

**Read Matthew 12 verses 22 to 28.**

1. What does Jesus do in verse 22 that causes a discussion about where he gets his power?
2. Read verses 25 and 26 again. As well as God’s kingdom, what other kingdom does Jesus talk about that is at work in the world? How does this strike you today?
3. How do the words of verse 28 show the kingdom breaking into the world now by the authority and power of Jesus?
4. How will it motivate and lead you to pray, *“Your kingdom come,”* if you believe that the kingdom is among us now wherever Jesus is invited to reign over every other spiritual power?

***Colossians 1:13****For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,* ***14****in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

1. Read the verses above. Look at Colossians 1 verse 13. In his mercy and love, what does this verse say God has rescued us out of and what has he brought us into?
2. How does it shock you to think that before we received the forgiveness that brings us into the kingdom of Jesus we were living under the dominion of darkness?
3. Why do we often not think about non-believers in the way Colossians 1 describes?
4. How do these verses from Colossians motivate you to pray for those who have not yet taken hold of that rescue out of darkness through the cross and resurrection of Jesus?
5. In what way does praying, *“Your kingdom come,”* include praying battle prayers **against** the darkness, lies and slavery of the enemy and praying **for** people to come into the light, truth and love of Jesus in the kingdom?

 **11.**

**“Your Kingdom Come” – Going with the King**

Jesus is a mighty King who will destroy evil completely when he wraps up all of history (see Revelation 20:10). The book of Revelation gives us glimpses of what that will mean, so we read in chapter 11, verse 15: “*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.*” Until then, we have a role to pray, *“Your kingdom come,”* as a prayer inviting Jesus to take his throne wherever the enemy is at work. Seeing the final glory of the eternal kingdom draws us to believe the authority and power of Jesus to break through the darkness and set captives free in the world today. From the weary addict to the violent oppression of forced religion, the darkness is insidious in our world. From the girl who loathes herself and thinks God cannot love her, to those caught in the depths of dark supernatural practices and the occult, the same enemy is still out to *“steal, kill and destroy,”* just as he was when Jesus spoke about him (John 10:10).

This is not a cozy kingdom where we come in, close the gates, kick off our shoes, and party. The Jesus who rescued us from the dominion of darkness by his cross and resurrection is not a King who forgets everyone outside his kingdom. Those outside of his light and life are not out of his thoughts. If we want to live in the kingdom, we have to know that the heart of our King is breaking for everyone who has not yet received the forgiveness and freedom that will bring them out of darkness into his kingdom of light. Praying, *“Your kingdom come,”* is risky prayer because we will not be able to remain in our self-protecting, comfortable attitudes any more. Yes, we can enjoy the hope, peace and blessings Jesus gives us but no, we cannot build ourselves a cocoon of niceness to block out those who have no eternal hope, no peace with God and know only brokenness and oppression instead of blessing. If we let him, God is waiting to lead us into his heart for the world.

Knowing Jesus as the eternal King helps us live with our hearts set on the kingdom cause in the in-between time, as we wait with solid hope that we will one day be with him forever. That means rather than just living for ourselves, we live for him and carry his love to the world. This is not for a few super-gifted people but for everyone who knows the King. Jesus tells several parables that give the picture of paying a great cost for the kingdom and recognizing the worth of the kingdom above all over things (e.g. Matthew 13:44-46). Of course it is precious to belong in the eternal kingdom of light and victory and we like the images of the kingdom as great treasure, but are we ready for any kind of cost? All of us are called to share Jesus in our words, our actions, our giving, our prayers, and with everyone in our families and communities. When we pray, *“Your kingdom come,”* we are saying: “Jesus, my desire is to live for you, my King; I ask you to lead me in your ways; I want to serve your kingdom cause.” Our brothers and sisters around the world know that living in the kingdom may bring pain, struggle or death, yet they have to put their hope in the Jesus who will reign forever. In less risky circumstances we need to have that same heart, surrendered in trust and readiness to go with the King to wherever he is reaching out. We are praying, “Jesus I will stay with you and go where you go, whatever it takes for your kingdom to come.” Ask Jesus to break your heart with a new passion to follow him relentlessly in his longing to bring in the kingdom.

**Read Luke 9 verses 57 to 62.**

1. Look at verse 58. Jesus is talking to someone who is interested in following him. It comes shortly after he has chosen to go towards Jerusalem, to face the suffering of the cross. Jesus seems to be saying that following may be harder than the person thinks it will. How does verse 58 show you the truth that Jesus is honest with us and wants to help us to be willing to truly follow him, wherever he leads?
2. Read verse 59 and 60 again. These words seem harsh, but at this point, when Jesus was moving around, the man who stayed for a funeral (which could take several days) would find Jesus was gone when He was ready to follow. How does verse 60 and this picture of the urgency of going with Jesus now strike you?
3. In what ways do we miss Jesus, and serving in his kingdom, because we are distracted or focused on ordinary daily concerns, other passions and priorities before him (think of examples that touch you)?
4. Look at verse 62. What example of a worker does Jesus use to describe what it means to go with him in the kingdom?
5. How does verse 62 shock us and challenge us to put Jesus before everything else in our hearts, choose not to look back in regret or wishing for other things and give ourselves fully to him if we are to be servants of the Kingdom? How does it touch you today?

**Read 2 Timothy 4, verses 7 and 8.**

1. Paul, who writes these words has endured opposition hardship and suffering and like many people today who are willing to give themselves fully for the Kingdom. What does verse 8 say is the eternal hope that will give the strength to keep serving the King, even when it is tough?

**Read 2 Timothy 4, verse 18.**

1. What do you see in verse 18 of the total trust in Jesus Paul had, even in danger and suffering? Why do we need that same trust that nothing will take us out of God’s love forever, in order to be willing to serve his kingdom?
2. What causes us to lose sight of these promises of honor and rest in eternity for those who live for Jesus in the kingdom and to only look at the cost?
3. How have these passages challenged you about what it means for you personally to pray with a willing heart, *“Your kingdom come”*?

 **12.**

**“Your Will Be Done, on Earth as It Is in Heaven”- His Higher Ways**

The amazing adventure in prayer continues as Jesus invites us to pray, *“Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* This is nothing less than asking him to do what he would desire here on the earth, for each country, city, community, church and household. It should blow our minds that such a huge and world changing prayer is for us to pray. As we bow before the King, asking him to take his throne, it would seem ridiculous to tell him to do what we want. We have been drawn in this prayer to the good Father and he is the eternal King whose rule brings light, life, freedom, truth and ultimately his own loving presence. Yet before such a tender, caring Father and a pure-hearted, powerful King we often seem to find ourselves telling God what to do. Sometimes our prayers are more like us giving God a “to do list” or informing of him of the agenda for us and those we love, as though he would not have known how to work in any situation without us explaining to him the way to do it. That is not that we don’t need to bring everything to him and pray specifically, but ultimately we have to hand over each person and circumstance and place and desire, praying, *“****Your*** *Kingdom come and* ***your*** *will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”* He wants us to let him have **his** way that goes beyond anything we could ever imagine.

Jesus asks us to come with all that we are and give ourselves to him. The Father longs for us to pour out our hearts honestly before him and tell him how we feel. We can see how he meets with those who do that all through Scripture. However our prayers are not about saying, “God do what I see is needed and do it my way, in the timing I think best.” He asks us to trust that his eternal will for us is good, his ways are perfect, and he knows what we need. He is outside of time so he intimately knows the past; all that will be and needs to be in the future, therefore his will may look very different to the outcome and timing we long for as we look from where we stand here in the present. God’s heart is pure and not complicated by the personal interests, weaknesses and fears that limit our ideas. He can see the implications for all eternity of every touch of his hand so the ways of heaven are completely different to the ways of earth. In heaven there is nobody who is lost without Jesus, no one who cannot hear the truth of God’s word, no one oppressed by lies and darkness, no one crushed by injustice, no one hurting, no broken relationships; evil has no place and Jesus is the light there. So is there anything better than to pray, *“On earth as in heaven”*? Why would we ever want to pray, “My will be done, in heaven as it is on earth”? Yet that is how some of our prayers go if we are honest. In this prayer Jesus invites us into the very heart of God for us and for the world and we get to be part of the extraordinary work of this passionate, holy God who is Lord of the past, present, future and all eternity. If we really trust him enough to desire **his** will be done in all things as it is in heaven, this will mean our prayers are bigger and more powerful than we could dare to believe. The passage today gives us a picture of all he has for us if we will stop talking long enough to hear. Ask the Lord to open your mind to the beauty and richness of his will for you as you read today.

**Read Isaiah 55 verses 1 to 3 and verses 6 to 9.**

1. Look at verse 1. What picture does verse 1 give of coming to God and seeking in him? How are we to come?
2. Read verse 2 again. How does the first half of this verse describe our lives when we are not really interested in what God desires for us or we think the world’s way is fine?
3. Read the second half of verse 2 and the first half of verse 3. How do these verses describe the promise of abundance when we come seeking God’s ways and his heart?
4. In what ways do we spend on what does not satisfy and miss the richness and the real life God offers because we settle in our own way, look to other ways and do not listen or trust God’s will for us?
5. Read verse 6. How do these verses describe the invitation for us to come to God himself rather than only looking for answers, what we want him to do for us?
6. Read verse 8 again. How does this verse teach us to trust that God’s will and his purposes are bigger and deeper than our ideas and desires, reaching to eternity?
7. Often we pray based on what we understand here in the world as being best, follow our own thoughts and we end up praying, “In heaven as on earth.” When have you seen this at work?
8. What reason does verse 9 give us to always pray, *“Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”*? How does this verse challenge you and encourage you today?

 13.

“**Your Will Be Done” – Not My Will**

I am so glad that my prayers are not about me knowing how to pray for the exact outcome in any situation or trying to work out God’s will before I can even begin to pray. That is often how we can get overwhelmed in prayer and it can hold us back from coming to our Father. But prayer is not a formula; it is a relationship. It is not about me cracking a code or pushing the right buttons; figuring out God’s will to bring about a shift in the heavenly realm. Feeling we need to know what to pray and how to pray can be exhausting and the enemy loves to cripple us by making us believe that is what we need to do. Instead, Jesus invites us to come to the mighty God and lay before him the situations, people, places and even the deepest groans and passions of our hearts, expecting and desiring him to do his will. Romans 8:26 promises even more: “*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”* Phew, what a relief! The Holy Spirit wants to help us, lead us in prayer and pray for us. I don’t have to fathom his ways that are so much higher than my ways; I don’t have to know his will before I can begin to pray. There is a deep peace if we can trust him to be who he says he is and count on him to love the way Scripture shows us he loves us. When we have welcomed the Holy Spirit to live in us, we can ask God to do his will, trusting that he knows what is best. So I don’t have to know everything about what God wants to do when I pray, not only now, but in what he can do eternally. However huge or seemingly insignificant the situation or need, whether crying out to him for years or giving him each moment, we can simply pray, *“Your will be done,”* and he hears us. Yet somehow the humility of us praying like that is so hard for us.

It is only by the work of the Holy Spirit transforming our hearts that we can really pray, *“Your will be done.”* In our own strength we will always be locked in our desire to have our own way or what we think is best for those we love. We need Jesus to transform our hearts and change our minds so that we can see beyond our own feelings. The good news of the cross is that Jesus can free us from self and put his heart and mind in us by his Spirit, so that we can rest in his love and hand over the control. His ways may not be the easiest or the most comfortable for us and we need to bow our self-will to his. To pray, *“Your will be done,”* is therefore not just about words but the deepest attitude of our hearts, to give Jesus the throne of our lives and allow God to have his way. Sometimes it is as though he is waiting to meet us and break into circumstances, relationships and places, but we don’t give him space. By our limiting prayers and our fear of losing control, it is as though we open a window just a crack or talk to him with the door closed when what is needed is to leave the door open and let Jesus actually come in. He longs to come and do so much in our hearts and our families and in our world, if we will welcome him in all his power, wisdom, extravagant love and his authority by praying, *“Your will be done.”* Jesus lived a human life so he knows how we wrestle with this. He has walked this road of surrender, and his cross and resurrection have opened the way for us to walk it too in the power of his Holy Spirit. Expect to meet him where you are and allow him to lead you on in the footsteps where he has already walked.

***2 Corinthians 5:14****For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.* ***15****And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

1. Read verse 14. What connection do these verses make between what Jesus did for you on the cross and you dying to self?

2. Look at verse 15. How does this verse promise Jesus’ love and the power of the cross over sin can free you? Who can we live for now? How does this touch you today?

**Read Luke 22 verses 39 to 46.**

3. On the night he was arrested, Jesus looked towards the cross and the horror and pain of bearing the sin of the world, the “cup” of suffering. Read verse 42 again. How does Jesus pray to his Father?

4. How do you feel to know that Jesus has felt the same the struggle we feel and has gone ahead of us in this prayer of surrender?

5. Read verse 43 again. What happens to Jesus in this verse? How does it encourage you to ask God for help so that you can give yourself to his will?

6. Read verse 44. After being strengthened how does Jesus continue? How does this verse show you it was not easy for Jesus to pray in this way?

7. What are the particular issues or situations where we want to hold onto control because of fear or pride or wanting the most comfortable way?

8. Look again at verse 45-46. What have the disciples been doing while Jesus wrestled in prayer? How do their actions mirror our own response in situations when God’s will seems hard to accept?

9. How have these Scriptures encouraged you to ask Jesus to put his heart in you by the Holy Spirit so that you can honestly pray, *“Your will be done”*?

 14.

“**Your Will Be Done, on Earth as It Is in Heaven”- His Will in His Word**

Jesus prayed the ultimate prayer that God’s will be done and heaven’s plan to save us and reconcile us to God was brought about on earth. When we pray, *“Your will be done,”* we are asking for his perfect heavenly will to impact our very earthly world. His will for us and our world is not a secret that we have to somehow unlock. It is not a mystery to us because he has shared his heart through Jesus Christ and we have all that he desires for us in his word. The big story of Scripture is God’s will for the world to know him and be with him in his love forever. Despite our determination to go our own way and reject his will, he did not give up on us and over and over he shows mercy, gives warnings through messengers, and intervenes through events to show he wants to draw us back to him and back to life. God comes to earth himself in the person of Jesus to fight for us, rescue us, and becomes the way for us to come home to him. Then he pours out his Holy Spirit on his people so that we can have a new heart to accept his will, to live in him as he lives in us. Every page of Scripture speaks of God’s character and our response but in the gospels we see Jesus Christ, the visible image of what it means to live as a human being, fully surrendered to the Father’s will.

The Bible is a rich library of history, stories, law, messages and visions, poetry, and letters. This is important to remember as we read because we need to be careful to receive it for what it is and not try to twist it into what it is not. That is not to say that God is not waiting to meet you and longing to speak truth and life on every page, but we do need to be careful and ask the Holy Spirit to help us and speak the word to our hearts. For example, we might try to read the outpouring of a person who is praying or worshipping in song differently to how we listen to Jesus’ teaching in the gospels.

Sometimes we read like the Bible like a catalog or online store, picking out the parts we like that seem to suit us and fit with what everyone around us says is good, and ignoring the rest. Sometimes we are looking for God to speak to us in a specific issue and we look for an instruction on what to do, while we miss the bigger story of God’s presence, his authority and his love that means he wants to intervene himself, if we will invite him to come. Then there are the times when we have already decided what to do by ourselves and we read the Bible like a self-help book, looking for the parts that make us feel better about ourselves and stronger to go ahead with our own idea. In all of these we are not seeking to meet with God or know him for who he is, we are not listening with a heart that cries, *“Your will be done.”* If we only take the parts we choose and we only read them on our terms it is like looking at a few blurry photos of someone but never actually meeting the person themselves. That can give a false picture of God and we cannot to live in him and him in us when we are not meeting with him. The enemy is pleased when we settle for a few out of focus photos instead of knowing God for who he really is and he can lead us in to lies and mistrust very easily. He is delighted when we do not seek God’s will but try to hold on to Scriptures that make us feel good about living for our own will.

 Sometimes we will need to ask Jesus to lead us in specific plans, but even in these, we need to ask him to form our ideas in line with his character, his passions and his ways that we see in the word.

Ultimately the word and his Spirit lead us into the way of love, resting in God’s saving love for us, a committed, passionate love for God and offering his radical, selfless love to other people. So as we read his word we find that his will for us is colored by love. Scripture itself encourages us to feed on the word and hide it in our hearts, so we must take time to read carefully.

Here are 4 questions that we should always ask ourselves and make sure that any devotional books or bible studies do the same:

1. What does the passage say (who are the people involved, what is going on at the time, what happens, what is spoken, who is speaking, is there a prayer or a vision, what are the images or parables here)?
2. What does this passage mean (what does it say about God and his heart, what does it say about people, or what does it say about the world or the enemy)?
3. What does it mean to me (what is the challenge, what is the encouragement, do I believe this is true – for myself, for others, have I received God in this way, is there something he is asking me to be or do)?
4. How can I pray this passage today? Do I need to respond with praise, ask forgiveness, pray for the Holy Spirit change my heart, pray to know God in this way, or pray for more faith to believe this is true for me and those I know? How does it lead me to pray for others I know, my community, or the world?

Sometimes we only stop at question 1 and so we don’t meet with God, don’t receive the word for ourselves, but read it as information or an interesting story. Other times we skip questions 1 and 2 and rush to question 3 to find the personal message. But without understanding the passage we cannot find the reality of what God is saying to us personally and we can get very confused. Often we don’t pray out what we have read, so God has no place to meet us, show us his heart for us, forgive us, heal us, help us believe, and lead us into his heart for others.

When we plan our time so that we can fully grasp and receive the living word of God through these 4 steps we will be able to seek his will. Devotionals and Bible studies can help us do this but we must make sure that what we take away and feed on is the word itself and not just what someone else has said about it. It helps us to write down specific verses and try to memorize them. When we do need to choose studies or devotionals it is important to look and see if they follow this same pattern of the four questions so we know they will help us in listening to God and receiving his word.

Expect to meet God and let him lead as you read some of a passionate heartfelt prayer to know his word, understand it, trust his ways and live in his will.

**Read these verses from Psalm 119** (notice that same thirst for God’s will in his word described by different words; his *laws, statutes, commands, decrees, regulations, instruction* and *precept)***:**

***64****The earth is filled with your love, Lord; teach me your decrees.*

***65****Do good to your servant according to your word, Lord.*

***66****Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I trust your commands.*

***67****Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.*

***68****You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees.*

1. Look at verse 64 and verse 68. What does the person praying believe about God and what does this cause them to pray?
2. Read verses 65 and 66 again. How do these verses express a longing for God’s will in our lives because his word is the absolute best for us?
3. In what ways do we sometimes miss God’s will and do not have this same desire for his ways because we do not trust that his word is true, relevant or good for us?

**Read Psalm 119 verses 126 to 144.**

1. Look at verse 126 and verse 136 again. What is breaking the heart of the person praying in both these verses?
2. How can reading Scripture welcome the Holy Spirit to give us this same burden to pray for God’s will to be done in our communities and around the world?
3. Read verse 133. The person praying here trusts in God’s word and asks him to keep them walking in it. How does the first half of verse 133 lead us into the second half and invite God to do his will?
4. Look at verse 134. In what ways do we feel like we need God to free us from the influence of other people or our response to them, in order to follow his ways in his word? Give examples that are current for you.
5. Read verse 143. How does this verse show a determination to seek God’s will and put our hope in his word, even in difficult struggles and circumstances? How does this touch you today?
6. Read verse 131 again. Which of the verses you have read today, particularly encourage you and challenge you to ask the Holy Spirit to give you a new trust and a passionate thirst for God’s will in his word?

 15.

**“Give Us Today Our Daily Bread” – One Day at a Time**

Jesus longs for us to come to him hungry for his will to be done in every place, circumstance, person and relationship. He is inviting us to come thirsty for his word that gives us life in the center of his will. These are deep cries of our heart for God to come and have his way in us and in our world. He calls us to welcome him to reign and to transform the daily realities of earth with the beauty of his will that is eternal. He asks us to welcome his glorious kingdom and his higher ways, his perfect purposes for ourselves and others. But does that mean that the ordinary stuff of every-day life is of no concern to him? Does he see the cost of the bills? Does he know how often the car needs fixing or the house needs tidying? Does he see how tired we are because our children, work, study, or stress is keeping us from restful sleep? Does he see the pain and struggle going on in our health? Does he see how hard it is for me to believe and to stand in his truth for every part of my life? Does he see the nitty-gritty, moment to moment, ups and downs of my heart and does he care?

 Remember the words before Jesus teaches the Lord’s Prayer in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 6:7-8tells us, *“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”*We do **not** have a Father who wants fancy words and will only answer our prayers because we pray “correctly.” We do **not** have a Father who is so exalted in a lofty place, way above our world, that he cannot get down to meet us in the depths of our ordinariness. No, Jesus tells us in these verses that we have a heavenly Father who is near. Not only did Jesus live in our world and experience the real stuff we experience, but Jesus promises that God is an attentive Father who takes time to see us and know us. This verse says that he already knows what we need before we even start praying. That is not to say that we don’t need to pray but that he meets us in love and delights for his children to pour out their hearts to him.

The words of this part of the prayer Jesus taught us encourage us to come to him with every need. Not only do we have that privilege to come knowing he wants to hear us, but we are invited to come every day. The heavenly Father who knows our needs asks us to trust him and depend on him *daily*. Often, if we are honest we don’t know how to pray this prayer. What we often say to God is, “Please make everything go well for me so I am self-sufficient and I don’t need to keep depending on you.” But that is not what Jesus asks us to pray here. He says, *“Give us this day”*; give us *today*. God wants to be our Father. He wants us to live day to day in his love and in a deep dependence on him. Jesus is inviting us to come to God in the ordinary, with the real needs of our lives, one day at a time. This phrase “daily bread” had strong echoes of what happened when God had led his people out of Egypt and they were in the desert. There were no other means of getting food and yet they still found it hard to believe God was good and able to give them what they needed. This account gives us a vivid picture of our own hearts and God’s loving desire for us to know that he knows what we need. So as you read that today, ask the heavenly Father to show you where you are trying to be self-reliant and to open your heart to trust in him, one day at a time.

**Read Exodus 16:10-31.**

1. The people had been freed as slaves in Egypt and God used Moses to lead them out in miraculous ways. They had seen God work in power but as the food they carried ran out, they panicked and grumbled against Moses. Read verse 12 again. After they had complained, how did the Lord lovingly make provision for his people to eat?
2. Look at the end of verse 12. When they see the food, what does God say they will know about him and what do you think he means?
3. Read verse 17. What did God do as the people gathered the manna?
4. Look at verse 19. What did God command they must not do?
5. Why do you think the Lord did not want them to gather more than they each needed or to keep food till the next day? What do you see of his heart for you here?
6. Read verse 20 again. What happened when they did not trust that God would keep giving them what they needed each day and tried to store food?
7. In what ways do we try to take control, store up or try to look after ourselves instead of trusting God one day at a time and going to him constantly in prayer?
8. God showed his careful control of what his people needed by giving them twice as much on the sixth day so they would not have to gather food or cook on the Sabbath. Read verse 27. How does this verse show you our relentless struggle to trust God and not rely on our own understanding of how to meet our needs?
9. How does this passage help you see why Jesus asked us to pray, *“Give us* ***today*** *our daily bread”*?

 16.

**“Give Us Today Our Daily Bread” – Truly Asking**

Jesus gives us this profoundly simple invitation to come and ask for our everyday needs; the real ones that dictate how we use our time, the ones that consume our thoughts and burden our hearts. What incredible love and power he shows us, that he wants to hear and he is able to work for us. Who could not reply, “Yes I’m coming and asking!” to such an amazing offer? But that story of God’s people in the desert paints a stark scene of how complicated the responses of our hearts can be to this simple invitation. One alternative to coming to God for our daily bread, can be grumbling and moaning that we have needs instead of asking him to help. God’s people in the desert never actually asked him for food. They just complained to Moses and we often do the same, talking to others first, telling them our lack instead of going to the Father who cares. Maybe we are coming to ask for what we think we need so that we can store up and control instead of depending on him. God promised to keep giving manna and quail every day but they tried storing extra just in case he didn’t give enough. Like the people of God in the desert, we try to control or store up out of anxiety that maybe God won’t keep on meeting us in our needs or out of pride because we want to be independent and self-sufficient. But Jesus teaches us to come humbly every day, trusting that God wants to meet with us in tender heart to heart relationship and listen to every kind of need.

There is another alternative to coming and that is we don’t fully grasp that God sees us, loves us and longs for us to come and receive his goodness. We have to be careful that we don’t listen to the whispers of the enemy, who loves us to think there is no point in praying. Remember those thought patterns that cause us to struggle in receiving the Father’s love and enjoying living as his children? Sometimes our experiences of the people who were supposed to be there for us and were not interested or failed to meet our needs, make us more tuned in to those lies that the enemy plants in our hearts. We often hear, “Why are you even bothering to pray?” “Why would God ever listen to you?” There are other teachings we may have heard which can cause us to have a false understanding of prayer. We may be thinking, “I shouldn’t have needs.” “If I were really spiritual, I would be so blessed in this I would not need to keep asking God for it.” “It is wrong for me to be concerned or anxious about this.” All of these distorted understandings of the truth will keep us from just going to the Father who knows and asking him to give us what we need. Jesus does **not** say there is nothing to worry about or that if you are really spiritual there are no needs. He says he wants us to trust him for our needs; there are many things to worry about, so we need to constantly bring them to him and ask him to meet us. 1 Peter 5:7 says, *“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”* The verb “to cast” is very strong and the J B Phillips translation vividly describes what we need to do with all our needs and worries. “*You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern.”*  Jesus invites us to be determined **not** to fight for our own needs or carry all our anxieties, but to let him fight for us and dump all our worry onto him because he is loving and able to take care of us. Of course he will often meet our needs by leading us to ways of making money for our provision or through other people helping us but we need to be careful that we ask expecting **his** way and we do not limit what he wants for us personally by looking for practical answers. It is often in the struggle, when those usual answers don’t work out that we really come to know his heart and trust him. It may sound obvious but asking him, *“Give us this day our daily bread,”* means coming expectant and genuinely open to however he wants to give it to us. Ask Jesus to help you be aware of your own heart and your responses to his invitation as we look at this powerful picture of prayer.

**Read Matthew 20 verses 29 to 34.**

1. Look at verse 30. The blind men are in a large crowd but what do they shout to Jesus? How does it show you their faith in who Jesus is as Messiah?
2. In what ways do we sometimes feel we are just one in a large crowd and Jesus has many other people and more important concerns to listen to?
3. What do the crowd say to the blind men in verse 31 and what is their response?
4. What are the voices, experiences or feelings that make us think there is no point praying, we are not important to God or we should not keep bothering Jesus and he does not want to meet us in our real needs?
5. In what areas do we need to pray that the Holy Spirit will help us to ignore those voices, refuse the lies of the enemy and cry out to Jesus even louder?
6. Read verse 32 and 33 again. How does Jesus speak with the blind men and listen to them (even though he could see their need)?
7. How does Jesus’ desire for them to tell him what they need show you his heart for you to come to him in prayer?
8. Look at verse 34. How does Jesus respond to the blind men’s need and what did they do as a result?
9. Jesus heard the blind men when others tried to silence them and he stopped, asked their need, listened, had compassion, touched them and met their need. How does this passage encourage you to come praying, *“Give us this day our daily bread”*?

 17.

**“Give Us this Day Our Daily Bread” – The Real Need**

The Jesus who met with the blind man who refused to stop calling out to him is the same Jesus who asks you to call today. The Jesus who had compassion when the rest of the crowd didn’t care is the same Jesus who sees your needs today. There are some needs that we do not bring because they are just embarrassing and we can’t imagine that a mighty, holy God would want to hear them. Sometimes we think of him like a revered dignitary who does not want to know the inside story and likes to keep things respectable and grand. Or we see him as a fragile old granny who is out of touch with the realities of life in this modern age and may faint if we talk about anything too personal or intimate. Our loving Father is neither of those and Jesus has been in this world so he knows all the intimate details of our relationships, our needs, and our bodies. There is nothing too small, nothing too modern, and nothing too embarrassing to take to our God. We can come with whatever is on our hearts and minds, whatever feelings or health struggles are important for us. If it is important to you and your family then it matters to your good Father and he already knows about it. He asks you come to him for who he really is; come trusting his loving heart, bowing to him as powerful King, listening to his word, and welcoming his higher ways. As you open your heart to his will he asks you as he did the blind men, *“What do you want me to do for you?”*

 But what happens when we do come with our needs and we don’t get what we thought we needed? What does it mean when things continue to be a struggle and we don’t see any change? Maybe we are not coming with an attitude of, *“Your will be done,”* and maybe there are times when what we think we need may turn out to be less that God’s best for us, even harmful. At other times we are reminded that this world is broken and temporary, and the total healing--or the absolute resolution we would like--will only come when we are free from this world in his heavenly kingdom for eternity. At all times, not just in those struggles, we need to trust his heart and *“wait for the Lord,”* ;*“put our hope in the Lord,”* as the Psalms repeat many times (e.g. Psalms 31, 33, 37, 27, 130, 42, 43). Sometimes we wait for the changes, the relief, the solutions, we put our hope in the answers but we do not wait for God himself to meet us. The real point is that he cares about us so much that he wants to do more than just supply our needs or give us the stuff we ask for. The God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ is not merely a well-resourced supplier or a skilled helper. He has shown us his extraordinary passion for us in coming himself and pouring out his life at the cross. God has not changed and he does not want to give us any less than all of himself as we pray. When Jesus promises, before his death and resurrection, that the Father will send us the Holy Spirit he says in John 14: 18,***“****I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.* ***19****Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.* ***20****On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”* He is promising to live in you and for you to live in him. So if we keep inviting him into our needs, we will never be alone like orphans, not in any circumstance or any feeling, because Jesus has come to us by his Holy Spirit. Some of those who had seen Jesus supply their immediate needs were not expecting him to be anything more than someone to give them food. Ask Jesus to change your expectations and help you to allow him to be all that he wants to you, as you hear his words.

**Read John 6:25-35 and John 6: 47-51.**

1. Look at verse 26. What does Jesus say to the people who had eaten at the feeding of the five thousand about why they are looking for him?
2. Read verse 27. Jesus tells them the work they need to do for the eternal food is to believe in him, but they continue to ask for bread to eat, just as Moses brought manna in for God’s people in the desert. In what ways do we often come in prayer like them, only for what we think of as our needs to be met and miss meeting Jesus as he gives us himself?
3. Read verses 33 - 34. What does Jesus say about himself as the one who comes down from heaven and how does the crowd respond?
4. Look at verse 35. What does Jesus promise in these verses for those come to him and feed on him in their hearts? How does this help you to think about what you expect as you come to Jesus in prayer?
5. Read verse 51. What else does Jesus say about the hope for those who hunger for him and receive him as the living bread? How does this touch you today?

***Philippians 4:6*** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* ***7*** *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

1. What does verse 6 promise us that we do not have to worry about when we come in constant dependence on the Father who loves us?
2. What does verse 6 invite us to do with a heart of thanksgiving that God will hear and is faithful?
3. Read verse 7 again. If we come to God instead of trying to work out every need on our own, how does verse 7 say he will do more than just supplying our needs?
4. To be *“in Christ Jesus”* is an offer of being hidden and covered in his life, love, holiness and protection. How does this promise of being guarded *“in Christ”* echo the promise of Jesus to give us himself as the *“bread of life”*?

 18.

“**Forgive Us Our Sins/Debts/Trespasses” - The Price Was Paid**

Jesus himself is the answer to our needs. When we come and give all of our needs to him, genuinely welcoming him to lead and provide in his way, he gives us himself. He wants to be to us the bread that satisfies us in our deepest places, the living bread that gives life in him forever. Now he invites us to come with our very deepest need, the one that keeps us away from him and therefore out of eternal life; the need that no one else could have ever answered, our need for forgiveness. Our sin made us enemies of God and kept us bound as slaves to self, our past, our reactions, and desires. Through sin the enemy kept us on the road to death. We don’t really like to talk about the reality because it is not “fun,” but the power of sin in our lives was so devastating to us and our relationship with the giver of life, that it cost God everything. The stain of sin in our hearts was so deep that we could never be clean to come into the presence of a Holy God. No sacrifice could ever be made that could cover the overwhelming debt that we owed and no price could be paid that would buy us out of slavery to sin and death. Maybe sin looks like horrific violence and distorted or abusive behavior. We only have to look around us to see the pain and brokenness of sin in our communities. But sin is not just about the criminal, demeaning, soul destroying way we treat one another. It begins in the secret place of our hearts with the simple desire to be our own boss, to take the crown that should belong to our loving creator and to wear it ourselves. Out of that heart focused on self, come thoughts of anger, bitterness, impatience, pride and a refusal to listen to God or allow him to have his rightful throne in our lives.

But God was not content to leave us as enemies, he would not leave the debt unpaid and he was not happy to keep us out of his love and out of his life. We have a God who was grieved deeply and whose heart was broken by our rebellion and our separation from him. He was ready to cover the debt we owed and to pay the terrible cost to buy us out of slavery, to redeem us. Ephesians 2:13 says, *“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”* He was ready to enter into our darkness so that we could enter into his light of his presence and to change us from his enemies into his friends. (Colossians 1:19) In Jesus Christ God has reconciled us to himself so that now it is not that he just tolerates us from a distance, but instead we can be near him and enjoy his love forever.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says*,* “*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”* In the greatest, most costly exchange the world has ever known God gave his only son as a ransom so that we can go free, no longer held captive by sin. It was not quick or easy. He had to live a human life, be humiliated, misunderstood, rejected, mocked and betrayed by those he had made. Jesus had to suffer death under the crushing load of all the sin of everyone who has ever lived and will ever live. But as he became captive so that we who had been held hostage to sin and death could go free, something more happened. Jesus beat sin and death for us when he died, was buried and rose to eternal life. He took what had been our captors and made them captive themselves so we can live because he is alive. We get to stand *“in Christ”* instead of in our own weakness and our own self. Although the world is still full of mess and our hearts can still stray, if we give ourselves to Jesus, he does not only forgive, but holds us safe in his authority so that we do not have to become captive again. If you want him to, Jesus can lead you in the glory of the cross instead of the living under the control, shame and destruction of sin. Ask Jesus to take you to the cross as you read what he did for you today.

**Read Isaiah 53:3-6, 9-12.**

1. Look at verse 6. What does this picture show you about sin as rejecting God’s leading and living for self?
2. Look at verse 3. What does this verse tell you about the rejection Jesus was willing to endure for us?
3. Read verse 4 and 5. What did Jesus do with our sins as he suffered on the cross in this great exchange? Do you believe this for yourself?
4. The Lord of life was willing to die with criminals in your place. Read the first half of verse 10. What do these words say about God’s will? How does this touch you today?
5. Read verses 11 and 12. How do you feel to think that Jesus not only suffered and died but also won the victory over death and sin for you to be forgiven and free?

***1 Peter 2:24****“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”* ***25****For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

1. Read verse 24. What three things does this verse promise now because Jesus personally carried your sins on the cross?
2. Why is this so hard for us to receive for ourselves and what does the enemy want us to believe instead?
3. Read verse 25. How does verse 25 describe what it looks like to die to sins, freed from self and pride and ready to listen to God?
4. How does coming often to humbly ask for forgiveness help us live in right relationship with the Shepherd, near to him?

 19.

“**Forgive Us Our Sins/Debts/Trespasses” - Accepting the Invitation**

Now Jesus calls us to come, knowing that he is pure in heart; there are not twisted motives or selfish thoughts in him. There are no distorted reactions or weak responses in him. His heart is stacked full to overflowing with love and faithfulness he is all light, there is no darkness in him so we cannot come near to him and continue to be comfortable with darkness. 1 John 1: 7 *says, “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”* To walk in his light is not to go around thinking we are great and everyone else is getting it wrong. To walk with him is not to be apathetic about darkness and think we can make light our personal “life choice” on our own. To live in light is to hold on to Jesus tightly as our only light and ask him to hold on to us so that we do not go anywhere near darkness, not even in our thoughts and desires. To walk with him in the light is not to be proud in our hearts, convinced that we are perfect. Rather, it is to desire his purity in us knowing that we cannot be perfect or good in our own strength. Therefore, coming to Jesus and allowing his light to expose the deepest thoughts and attitudes of our hearts so that we can ask forgiveness, is what keeps us in the light. Jesus is inviting us in this prayer to be honest about the real condition of our hearts. He is calling us to come to the cross, bringing all we have thought and said and done and all that we have not done. He is calling us to come bringing all within our hearts that is not at peace with his heart. Here is the place where we can be real about how we have not loved God with all our hearts and we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves and we have lived for self.

But do we really take Jesus at his word and accept the invitation he has given us? For all kinds of reasons we often don’t. We have become too used to the incredible opportunity Jesus offers us to ask for forgiveness. We have forgotten the price he paid in his blood to pay our debt so it could even be possible to pray, *“Forgive us our debts.”* We have lost sight of the terrible cost of God’s only son, given to cancel the charges written against us. No other religion offers a way to be forgiven and cleansed like this. No one else would or could love so selflessly as to take carry our sin and guilt so that we don’t have to be separated from God forever. No other god would come down into our mess and die our death so that we can live his life. And yet in the face of such extravagant love and such perfect sacrifice for us, we don’t easily turn and confess. We are quick to look at others and convince ourselves that we are not so bad. Surely we should look for the good in us and not focus on the negatives or the past? Or we listen to the whispers of shame and guilt that the enemy, the world, and our own hearts lay on us--the lie, “There is nothing that can be done; we are messed up and broken and there is no hope.” And slowly it becomes uncomfortable, maybe outdated, slightly awkward, too personal, too painful, or too shameful to respond to the invitation that Jesus offers. In our private prayers and our churches, we often do not come to repent and ask for forgiveness. I cannot imagine how God’s heart is broken when we do not take hold of his costly, passionate invitation and miss out on the cleansing, the close relationship, peace, freedom, healing, and abundant life he won for us at the cross. Ask him to speak into your heart so that no fear, confusion, lies from the enemy, guilt, apathy, or pride will ever keep you out of his light.

***1 John 1:8****If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.* ***9****If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* ***10****If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.*

1. Look again at verse 8. What does this verse say we will be doing if we think we do not need forgiveness from God?
2. Look at verse 10. In what ways do we often compare our thoughts, words and actions to the darkness around us and decide that what we are doing is fine or normal? What does verse 10 say about our relationship with God and the place of his word when we do that?
3. Read verse 9 again.In verse 9 what 2 things does God promise to do for us if we are honest about the state of our hearts and come to him to confess?

## Read Luke chapter 7, verse 36–50.

This woman did not stay out to listen in the courtyard (as was expected to respect a teacher) and she had her hair uncovered and loose, which showed she was not trying to appear like a respectable woman of her day but openly admitted her shame.

1. Look again at verse 38.What did the woman do when she saw Jesus?
2. What do her determination to come in with her head uncovered, and her response to Jesus, show about her heart? How does this picture of honesty, forgiveness and extravagant love for Jesus touch you?
3. The Pharisees knew about this shameful woman who had relations with many men. Look again at verse 39.What did the Pharisees think about the woman and the way that Jesus acted towards her?
4. In what ways do we often believe the same lies as the Pharisees—that God will not want to be near us if he sees the true state of our hearts of that there are some things that cannot be forgiven?
5. Look again at verse 45 and 47**.** In this verse what does Jesus say about how the Pharisee (who thought they did not need forgiveness) responded to Jesus in comparison to the woman? In what ways do we sometimes respond like them because we do not understand our need or the cost of forgiveness?
6. Verse 48. What does Jesus say directly to the woman? How does this show you his desire to speak these words to you if you will accept his invitation to pray, *“Forgive us our sins”*?

 20.

**“As We Forgive Our Debtors/Those Who Sin Against Us”**

**The Flow of Mercy**

If we will keep coming to God for forgiveness, if we are accepting his invitation to receive his grace, then there is something else Jesus invites us into. Deep down we would rather not read the second part of the invitation but Jesus says, *“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”* I met a woman who would not turn to Jesus as Savior because she said she refused to pray this part of the Lord’s Prayer. At least she was honest, where many times we claim to listen to Jesus but don’t actually want to accept these words. Often the reason we see this as an inconvenience, and an impossible request, is that we miss the point. Jesus is not commanding us to stop hurting, stop resenting and start forgiving, all on our own. Jesus calls us to bring it to him in prayer, constant prayer, because he knows we can’t do it on our own and he wants to work in us.

If we look at the painful things that have been done to us and our families, we can feel like saying to Jesus, “Don’t you know what I’ve been through?” “If you did would you really expect me to forgive?” When Jesus was here he was mocked and insulted and his words were twisted, by those who claimed to know God and the Scriptures. He was betrayed for money by a close friend. Jesus was lied about, beaten, slapped, whipped, stripped, and he died a tortuous, painful death. He suffered in shame and humiliation; lifted up before the crowds and his mockers without clothes. Not only that, but he bore the weight of our sin, every way that we had ever turned from God. Yet right there Jesus prays, *“Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34). Jesus understands, therefore he does not say, “It does not matter,” and he does not say, “Get over it.” We have a God who knows exactly what it feels like to be wronged, misunderstood, ignored and deliberately hurt. He sees and he hates it. He is a God who is angry at injustice, oppression, and the pain caused by sin. So forgiveness is not saying, “What they did was ok.” When Jesus died on the cross he carried all our sin and all the sin that had been done to us. The good news is that *“by his wounds we are healed”* (Isaiah 53). His blood can cleanse us and heal us from the wrongs done to us. Jesus does not want anything to come between us and him and he knows that bitterness and anger can not only keep us out of his presence, but also out of his healing and his freedom. He knows that chains of bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness bind us in the past. As we hold on to the events and feelings and wounds, we are carrying heavy weights that drag us backwards and crush us in our hearts, even in our health. Jesus says, “Give it to me, let me carry it for you.” In our own strength we are often totally incapable of forgiving but if we are ready to say, “Jesus I cannot do it but I am willing, I give you these burdens,” then he comes and lifts them off us. It can take months or years, but if we will allow him, Jesus can heal every wound, break every chain and take those heavy burdens to the cross. This is in the Lord’s Prayer because we need to keep bringing our hurts and resentments to him and allow him to fill us with his heart of forgiveness.

At the end of the prayer in Matthew 6:14-15 Jesus says,***“****For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.**But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”* There is a connection between the mercy God offers us and the forgiveness of others who sin against us, our debtors. Jesus says we cannot block the flow of his mercy that is like a river. If it is flowing to us, his forgiveness also needs to flow out beyond us. We first come praying *“Forgive us our sins,”* and as we receive his incredible gift of grace we can offer it to others. Then we will be standing in the flow of His mercy, in the power of the cross and only there will we be free. Hear Jesus’ heart for you in this parable.

## Read Matthew chapter 18 verses 21 – 35.

## In verse 22 how does Jesus respond to the question, “How many times should I forgive”?

## Jesus says that we stand before God like the servant who owed a huge debt of millions to the King. Look again at verses 26 and 27. In these verses what does the servant do and what does the king decide?

1. Read verses 28 to 30. What did the servant do when he was angry with his friend who owed him a tiny debt? What kind of heart does he show?
2. Who are the people who hurt us the most when they do wrong and who do we find it very difficult to forgive?
3. Read verse 33 again. When the king heard what the servant did and how he refused to have mercy on his friend what did the King say to the servant in verse 33 before he took back his forgiveness?
4. In what way does God say the same words as verse 33 to us today? How does this touch you?

***Ephesians 4:31*** *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.* ***32*** *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

7. Read the verses above from Ephesians. Look at verse 31. How does this verse describe how our unforgiveness shows itself in our attitudes and relationships?

7. How does unforgiveness and bitterness eat away at us and destroy our peace with God and ourselves? Why do we hold back from coming to him with it and asking him to give us his forgiveness through the Holy Spirit?

8. How does Ephesians 4 verse 32 echo the meaning of the parable? What do they both say we receive first that means we can give?

 21.

“**As We Forgive Those Who Sin Against Us/Our Debtors**

**The Prayer of Rest**

Jesus has said that we can come to him constantly with the situations and people that we find so hard to forgive. He is waiting to heal relationships and to heal us. He has shed his own blood to save us out of slavery to circumstances (past and present) and our reactions to them so he is longing to set us free. Sometimes there will be reconciliation and other times it is not safe to continue in certain relationships, so our good Father desires to lead us in his wisdom. Our mighty protector wants to guard us in the situation and from our own responses to them. And all this is possible if we will only come and bring it to him in prayer. We cannot forgive in our own strength. But how can we pray and why do we often struggle to come to him?

Sometimes when we are powerless to stop the hurt or the wrong being done to us or our family it seems like the only way to have any control is to hold on to anger, resentment, and bitterness and to withhold forgiveness. This is a lie from the enemy; in fact the opposite is true. Ephesians *4:*26-27 say,*“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,**and do not give the devil a foothold.”* Not only does holding on to anger mean we are even more controlled by the situation and pain but we are also giving a doorway for the evil one to come into our hearts and relationships. There is a very powerful picture of all God wants to be for us in the account of how he rescued his people from Egypt at the red sea. Exodus 14:14-20 says,***“****The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still...Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel.”* God comes with his presence to stand between the people of God and their enemies, giving light to them and covering their enemies in darkness. He tells them that he will fight for them. So we can pray, “Lord, thank you that you want to fight for me. Lord, keep me from trying to fight this battle for myself. Help me to trust that you are my Savior; you will fight for me (and my family) and I can rest in you. Jesus, stand between me and them. Guard me with yourself and cover me with your light. Take all that they throw at me on yourself and lead me to see you are in the center of us so that I can begin to look at them through your heart.”

Jesus asks us to come to him, walk closely alongside him like an animal yoked to another walks to plow a field. In that place, next to him he can carry the weight of our hurt and difficult relationships and we can carry his gentle heart. There we can receive his rest for our souls. Matthew 11:28-30 *says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.**Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* So we can pray, “Jesus I’m carrying such a heavy load of pain and anger and resentment. I’m weary of carrying this person (or people) who has/have hurt me. Help me to come to you Jesus. Holy Spirit, release me to hand over these burdens to you. Thank you that you can give me rest when I give you this burden. Jesus, help me to take on your easy yoke and your light burden so that I walk with you, only carrying what you want me to. Lead me to your humble, gentle heart so I can learn from you. Jesus, put in me your heart of gentleness and humility so that I stay with you in every situation and find your rest for my soul in you.”

When we pray we can allow him to put his own heart in us by the Holy Spirit and to forgive through us, giving us his love for others. Listen to how well Jesus knows our hearts as you hear his words to you.

**Read Matthew 5: 43-48.** We have been talking about anger in this chapter and not paying back wrong for wrong; Jesus talks about how we are to treat our “enemies.”

1. Look at verse 43. In what ways does our social culture (inside and outside the church) encourage the attitude that Jesus quotes here?
2. Read verse 44. What does Jesus’ say we can choose instead of hate?
3. In what way does praying for difficult people, invite Jesus into our relationships and allow him to change our hearts? How have you experienced this?
4. Read the first half of verse 45 again. How does Jesus say this forgiving love is part of our new identity as his own?
5. Look at verses 46 and 47. In these verses, how does Jesus challenge the way that we think and act, only loving like the rest of the world?
6. In what ways do we compare ourselves to how everyone around us thinks and therefore feel comfortable with hatred, resentment or bitterness or choose to only love loveable people?
7. Look at verse 48. In contrast to thinking like unbelievers, what does Jesus say he wants to be in us by the Holy Spirit?

***Ephesians 5:1*** *Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children* ***2****and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

1. How do you see Jesus’ words about our new identity and family likeness echoed in Ephesians 5 verse 1? How does this touch you?
2. Look at Ephesians 5 verse 2. What does this verse say about Jesus and why he is the one who can change us and lead us to walk in forgiveness and love as we pray?

 22.

**“Lead Us Not into Temptation/The Time of Testing”**

**The Tempted One Prays for Us**

Maybe you have learned the Lord’s Prayer in old language that is beautiful but makes it seem slightly disconnected from your daily thoughts and challenges in the fast moving, constantly changing 21st century we live in. I hope you are seeing as we have looked at each part in detail that this pattern of prayer is about the very real stuff of life. The Jesus who gave it to us is the Jesus who knows every thought of our hearts and every need. Far from being disconnected, he has given us this pattern, this invitation for depending on God and allowing him to take his throne in every part of our life. When I was growing up I learned some simple ways to think about praying but I discovered that none of them fully expressed inviting Jesus change my heart in the power of the Holy Spirit, to lead me in his ways and guard my heart. All of that is here in the prayer that Jesus taught us. This last phrase, *“Lead us not into the time of testing but deliver us from evil,”* is so personal and practical and crucial, that we must be determined to take hold of it.

Firstly, if we are to pray, *“Lead us not into temptation/ the time of testing,”* we have to make sure that we are praying an honest prayer. Sometimes we put ourselves in situations and conversations or watch and read things that will automatically mean we are tested and tempted to think, speak, and act outside of God’s good will for us. We literally take ourselves into the place of temptation and testing. Those situations, conversations, and things we watch and read may lead us into gossip, judging others, hatred, or anger, making spiritual darkness our entertainment, impure sexual thoughts, desiring sexual relationships or experiences, comparing our husbands with other men, coveting and envy of other people’s looks, possessions or relationships or circumstances, ungratefulness and contempt for our own situation, or self-hatred. When we pray this prayer we are asking Jesus to show us those times and places and ask him to set us free, so we need to be willing to stay away, switch off, or change the conversation. We are fooling ourselves if we pray this prayer unwilling to change anything in our lifestyle.

This prayer is not asking God to stop tempting us but rather asking him to keep us out of the time and place of testing. James 1:13-14says,***“****When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;**but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ”* We are not just asking Jesus to keep us from **doing** bad things. Temptation starts in the deepest place of our hearts with what we believe or think and often we are unaware of it. In Genesis 3 the enemy comes to Eve and says that God has not told her the truth and he does not want good for her so she should eat the fruit that looks so tasty to choose for herself what is right and wrong. She chooses to distrust God’s heart for her and listen to the lie. We may not see a serpent, but this subtle temptation to take the choices for ourselves and not listen to God’s word or trust his heart is coming at us from every angle. Often when we do become aware that we are drawn in, and our thoughts, words, and actions are not right with God we think, “I shouldn’t be thinking this, I must not do this,” and we try to sort ourselves out and “just stop it.” At other times we feel guilt and shame for our thoughts, words and actions or we think that there is no hope of change, so God cannot accept us. Both these responses keep us from doing what Jesus invites us to do here --to come with our temptations to him. Either we feel we are unworthy and unlovable or we feel we can do better by ourselves. The enemy loves to keep us in these lies. Our Father must weep when we stay out of his mercy and let temptation overwhelm us as we keep our distance from him. But Jesus says just come, and to pray, *“Lead us not into temptation.”* As you will see in the gospel reading, when it comes to temptation, Jesus knows what he is talking about. Ask him to lead you in this powerful truth.

**Read Matthew 4 verses 1 to 11.**

1. Look at verse 1 and 2.How was Jesus led into the desert where the enemy came to test him? How does this encourage you that being tested or tempted does not mean we have walked away or God’s Spirit has left us?
2. Look at verse 3 When Jesus was really hungry what did the enemy tempt him to do? What does this show you about the times and ways we may be tested?
3. Where does Jesus find the words to answer him and resist the temptation?
4. Read verse 6. Where does Satan take the words from to test Jesus a second time? How does this show you the importance of knowing God’s word for yourself?
5. The Bible is a powerful weapon to fight temptation, lies and half-truths and spiritual opposition. What does the enemy do in response (in this passage) whenever Jesus uses the word of God in this way?
6. As the enemy tempts Jesus to bow down to him and gain power instead of walking in humility and obedience to the cross, what does Jesus say to him in verse 10, before he quotes Scripture? How does this show you his authority over evil?
7. What happens to Jesus in verse 11? How does this encourage you to ask God for help in times of testing?

 ***Hebrews 4****:****15*** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.* ***16****Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

1. A High Priest is one who stands before God on our behalf, offers sacrifice for our sin, and prays for us. What does verse Hebrews 4 verse 15 say about Jesus? How does this touch you?
2. Read Hebrews 4 verse 16. In what way does reading about Jesus in the wilderness and Hebrews 4:16 encourage you to go to Jesus himself in prayer when you are tempted?

 23.

”**Lead Us Not into Temptation/The Time of Testing” - A New Heart**

This Jesus, who is our High Priest, stands between us and the Father and prays for us. He was fully human, he knew tiredness, hunger, and pain. Jesus was tempted in every way yet in the power of the Holy Spirit, wielding the double edged sword that is his word (Hebrews 4:12), he did not sin. He knows what it’s like to be tempted to listen to the enemy, tempted to take the easy way, to please himself, tempted to want momentary comfort instead of the eternal purposes of a Holy God. So why would we *not* listen to him when he says, *“Come to the throne of grace, receive mercy and find my grace to help you in your time of need”* (Hebrews 4:15)? This same Jesus who was tempted, is longing to fill us with the same Spirit that made him holy and train us how to hold onto the sword of his word, so that we can resist the lies and half-truths and refuse to be dragged away from God by our desires. But it all starts with coming to him and bringing our temptations. We may stay away from the throne of grace out of fear that God won’t want us, or pride that we can conquer alone and we are not weak like those who need him, but either way, the enemy rubs his hands in glee as we stay out of God’s mercy and power. It is only with God, standing hidden in the cross and resurrection victory of Christ, that we can resist temptation and testing.

1 Corinthians 10:13 promises, “*And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it*.” What a relief! Not only is God waiting to meet us, but he will give us a way out. As we read the whole of Scripture we see that this prayer is a huge privilege because even more than giving a way out, he has given us himself; the Holy Spirit to live in us. If we give ourselves to him and allow him to make his home in us, he can give us a heart transplant. Instead of cleaning us up and sending us out alone, he himself is willing to come into our hearts in all his holiness and purity and actually change our desires. The God who asks us to bring him our temptations, has carried our sin on the cross, beaten sin at the empty tomb, and made a way for total transformation when he gave the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus talked about this before his death in John 14 :15 -18 says, *“If you love me, keep my commands.* *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.**I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”* Do you hear this tender love for you? His desire is that you will never be without him, never be out of the truth and he wants to be your “advocate,” the one alongside you, to stand with you in every trial and temptation. The Holy Spirit wants to come in and put God’s own heart in us so that we want the things he wants and we refuse anything that pulls us out of relationship with him and out of his life.

Can you even imagine the possibilities if we really believed this? So many times deep down we believe all kinds of lies about the Holy Spirit and we are often not aware of them. “The Holy Spirit is for special people, but not for me.” “I am not good enough for God to want to live in me.” “I could never be changed.” “What if he wants to change me in ways I don’t like?” Once again by our own fear, pride, mistrust, or by feeling unworthy, we do not open our hearts to him or invite him to transform us. God will not force his way in and take over our hearts as his home. We have the choice to invite him in, knowing that he loves us and whatever he does will ultimately be good; not just easy or comfortable but really good; for now and for eternity. James 1:12says, *“God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”* Hear his incredible words of freedom through his Spirit today.

***Ezekiel 36:25****I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.* ***26****I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.* ***27****And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

Read the verses above from the prophecy given hundreds of years before Jesus was born or the Holy Spirit was given.

1. What is the first promise in verse 25 about what God longs to do for us?
2. Read verse 26. Because we are cleansed what does he want to do with our hearts? How does this promise of a new, soft, living heart, responsive to God, sound to you today?
3. Read verse 27. How does this verse describe the way God’s Spirit in us can transform us to belong to him and be led by him?

**Read Galatians 5 verses 16 to 26.**

1. Look at verse 16 again. What does verse 16 promise we can do in the face of temptation if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us?

1. Verse 18 says that we are not slaves to breaking God’s law if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us. Read verse 19 to 21. When we do not listen to the Holy Spirit or allow him to lead us what does this list say we can be tempted into?
2. Read verses 22 to 23. Look at this description of the fruit that God can bring in our lives by his Holy Spirit. How do you see that the fruit in verses 22-23 are so totally different to anything we are in our own strength? Which words stand out for you?
3. Read verse 24. What is the picture verse 24 gives of belonging to Jesus by his Spirit living in us?
4. Look again at verse 25. In what ways do we sometimes want the life of the Spirit but we don’t want the Holy Spirit to lead us out of our comfortable ways that are not right before God?
5. How have these Scriptures encouraged you to give your whole heart to Jesus and allow him to fill you with his own Spirit to lead you away from temptation?

 24.

**“But Deliver Us from the Evil One” - Standing with the Victor**

Jesus is the one who can lead us out of temptation because he has lived a life like ours, known tiredness, pain, and betrayal, mocking, been lied about, hurt and tortured. Yet in all that, he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). Therefore he is the one to put his heart and mind in us by the Holy Spirit so that we desire his ways. But he is also the one to lead us out of temptation and trials because he can *“deliver us from the evil one.”* There is no other and we certainly cannot free ourselves from the lies, distortions of truth, and destructive thoughts that the enemy will use against us. Jesus, the mighty champion who has beaten death and sin for us has also conquered the evil one, so you can trust him to lead you out of trials or temptation and into his protection from every scheme of the evil one. Often this has been prayed as, “Deliver us from evil,” and in our hearts we pray, “Don’t let anything hard or painful happen to me.” But Jesus said in Matthew’s gospel (Matt 6:13) that we are to pray for him to guard us, rescue, and keep us away, not just from difficulties, but from the real enemy. Jesus wants to guard our heart and mind and rescue us from anything that would drag us out of light and into darkness. He wants to deliver us from the thoughts and events that keep us from trusting God or walking in his life giving ways; those things that block us from praying or sharing his love and truth with others. This is not a call to paranoid fear but a wake-up call to reality. 1Peter 5:8-9 says, ***“****Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith.”* We need to live under the protection of the only one who can fight for us and we can have peace when we know Jesus is our mighty deliverer because we come to him constantly in prayer.

Jesus calls Satan *“the Father of lies”* (John 8:44). His **first lie** that we often believe is that there really is no enemy at all. Sometimes we are unaware of the battle that is raging for our hearts and the hearts of our families and communities. But Jesus asks us to pray, *“Deliver us from the evil one,”* because the enemy is real and we only see the battle when we close our eyes in prayer. The **second lie** the enemy tells us is that we should be afraid of him and that we are powerless to resist temptations or stand strong in struggles. The word we will read (Ephesians 6:10-13) says that what looks like people and circumstances, are higher and deeper battles in the spiritual world that we may not understand or see with our eyes. But Jesus already knows them all, so you don’t have to try to anxiously work it all out or fearfully seek out the enemy around every corner. He is the risen Lord who, even before his victory in the cross and resurrection, had evil spirits trembling at his feet, begging him to leave them alone because they were powerless before his holy authority. This is the same Jesus who will fight for you. The **third lie** of the enemy is that you can resist him without God’s help if you are determined; you have to fight evil yourself. But Jesus calls us to pray because only he can deliver us, rescue us, and shield us in his love. The **fourth lie** says the battle is only about physical danger so if there is no violence, accidents, or suffering in our bodies, the enemy is not at work. But the battle is often for hearts and minds, a fight in our thoughts, feelings, and relationships. The enemy wants to keep us in fear and condemnation through our thoughts about ourselves, God, and others. It is a fight to keep us out of the truth and therefore the abundant life of Jesus Christ. Sometimes the enemy uses physical suffering to engineer that, but we must be aware that physical struggle, violence, or danger is not always what the battle looks like. The **fifth lie** that Satan loves us to listen to is that we can stand strong in this battle, without other believers. But Jesus asks us to pray, *“Deliver* ***us,”*** and the passage we will read from in Ephesians is addressed to a group of believers, not an individual. We can only stand when we come together as an army under the banner of Christ, our deliverer. As you hear this word today, ask Jesus to meet you in truth and light.

***Colossians 2:14****He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.* ***15****In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross*(NLT).

1. Read the verses above. What has Jesus already done to the spiritual rulers and authorities at the cross?
2. How do these verses of victory from Colossians encourage you to trust Jesus to guard you and fight for you?

**Read Ephesians 6 verses 10 to 13.**

1. Look at verse 10 again. Who does this verse say will be our strength and power for this battle?
2. In what ways do we try to stand in our own strength out of fear or pride or unawareness of the battle?
3. Look again at verses 11 and 12. Who do these verses say the real battle is against?
4. Why are we often unaware of this battle to keep us and other people out of the truth, power, and love of Jesus? What do we tend to focus on instead?
5. Look at verse 13. What does this verse promise we will be able to do if we receive the protection God gives us? How does this touch you?
6. What do you think it looks like to overcome the strategies of the enemy (lies, discouragement, fear, destroying faith, temptation) through the protection of Jesus as verse 13 promises? How would it look to stay standing and refuse to run away, in your heart, your life, and your prayers for others?
7. How do these verses in Ephesians 6 encourage and challenge you to put your whole trust in Jesus, praying, *“Deliver us from the evil one”*?

 25.

**“But Deliver Us from the Evil One” – He Covers Us**

Sometimes we picture ourselves as a lone soldier walking out onto the spiritual battle field. If that is true then Ephesians 6 is terrifying. We read, “Be strong,” “Put on your armor,” “Powers in the spiritual realm are against us”! Yet this word is not frightening to us because that is not actually what it says. We are addressed together as believers, not an army of one. We are told to, *“Be strong* ***in the Lord*** *and in* ***his*** *mighty power ”*(Ephesians 6:10). He is the one who fights for you and your Father is a God of *“mighty power.”* This battle is all about him, not about you. The armor is *“of God,”* not *your* armor. He has given it to you as a gift. This picture of the Roman armor does not mean you are like a paid soldier, a number rather than a name, employed to fight. No, you are His daughter, known and loved by the Father. He sees you and you never go alone, without him. This armor is perfectly fitted for you, not one size fits all. The darkness is dark and the devil is scheming, to keep people from the life, light, freedom, and love of Jesus. What we need to do in response is to throw ourselves on Jesus. *He* guards our minds with his salvation; *he* covers our hearts so we can live out *his* right relationship with God. *He* holds us together with *his* truth and we are given the shield of faith to believe in *him*, not ourselves. Holding the shield is not about believing “I can do it,” or “Everything will be fine,” but about holding the full weight of the cross and resurrection of Jesus, believing “He has defeated the powers of darkness,” “He is here,” and “He loves me.” *He* gives us Scripture, *his* own word as our weapon and *his* own Holy Spirit to fight the evil one. Even the way we take up the armor is by praying in *his* Spirit - listening to *his* heart and letting *him* lead us in prayer. It is all Jesus and not us. If we pray taking up the armor God lovingly gives us, we will be covered with Christ, not battling in our own strength, ideas or personality. Therefore we prayerfully stand strong only *“in the* ***Lord****”* and we put on **God’s** armor that he has provided for us. Phew, we thank him for that!

Have you ever tried to persuade a child to wear the right clothes for the weather outside? Whatever you provide and however much you care for them, they have to agree at some point to wear it and keep it on. Ephesians 6 repeats the call to *“****put on*** *the full armor of God.”* It is a deliberate action to receive what God has prepared for us and wear it. When we do not pray and are not aware there is any battle, when we do not take hold of his word by reading and receiving Scripture, or when we are just scared to look at the real things going on, then we are uncovered and vulnerable. How painful it must be for our loving Father to watch us discard his strong protection by our self-sufficiency, fear, or unawareness of the battle. So how do we *“put on the full armor”*? Only by praying to Jesus, *“Deliver us from the evil one,”* will we will be able to *“stand firm.”*

So does “standing in Christ” mean should we keep away from non-believers? Yes, we must reject darkness in our own hearts, but the passage in Ephesians 6 calls us to be ready for battle, not to stay off the battlefield. God wants to fit us with his shoes of readiness to share the good news of peace with God, for all those who are bound and oppressed by the enemy and all those who do not know Jesus. It is often when we wear those shoes as we pray, ready to share Jesus with others, and pray for the places and people the enemy is trying to capture, that the battle will be most fierce. Where we are dangerous to the dominion of darkness by praying, speaking, and working for the kingdom of Jesus, we must be covered with the whole armor. When we pray the blood of Jesus over our hearts, lives, and families, and live in his salvation, truth, righteousness, and his heart for others, the enemy is terrified. As you read of the armor, give all of yourself to Jesus for him to cover you with himself and ask him to lead you into a deeper dependence on him, your deliverer.

**Read Ephesians 6 verses 14-18.**

1. Look at verse 14. How can we make sure we keep God’s truth as the belt that holds our armor together? How do we get distracted, live in half- truths and lies, or allow other things to wrap around us?
2. Why do we need Jesus to protect our hearts with his righteousness that he has given us through the cross, rather than trying to live right with God in our own strength?
3. Read verse 15 again. In what ways do we miss putting on the shoes of readiness to go to anyone Jesus sends us to, through our apathy, fear, and lack of prayer?
4. Look at verse 16. What does this verse promise we have been given to defend ourselves if we put our hope in Jesus, not ourselves or our circumstances?
5. Read verse 17. In what ways does the enemy try to attack in our thoughts? What are the lies and destructive thought patterns that affect how we see God, ourselves, and others?

1. How will it help to let Jesus guard our minds with his saving power and the truth of who we are “in him,” because of the cross and resurrection?

1. In what ways do you personally need to be more determined in taking up the sword of the Spirit that is the word of God as your weapon against the enemy every day? What hinders you from allowing the Holy Spirit to help you receive and hold onto the word in your thoughts, prayers, and interaction with others?
2. Look at verse 18 again. What does this verse say we do to put the armor on and stand in the battle? How does verse 18 explain do we can do it, when, and for whom?
3. In what ways does using the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer help us to pray *“in the Spirit”*- listening to Jesus and his word instead of being led by our own personality and ideas?
4. In what ways does using the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer help us to pray *“in the Spirit”*- listening to Jesus and his word instead of being led by our own personality and ideas?

 26.

**“The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory Are Yours”**

As we come to the end of the journey through this amazing prayer from Jesus, we are reminded to bow before him as king, knowing we have no place to claim power for ourselves. We finish by giving back all the glory to him. We recognize we are not in control, nothing God will do through this prayer is because of us, and we do not deserve the authority, the honor, or the praise. He is worthy of all the authority to rule as king, the power, and the glory; both in our lives and in the world. It’s a good moment to stop and ask him to lead us deeper into his heart, as we bow low and lift him up high. So pray and look back at the Scriptures we have read. Ask Jesus to remind you of those you particularly need to listen to, receive, learn, and live out in your life. Write them out if you can and take time to memorize them.

**Review** – write down the Scriptures that have particularly touched or challenged you for each section:

Our Father in heaven:

Hallowed be your name:

Your kingdom come:

Your will be done, on earth as in heaven:

Give us today our daily bread:

And forgive us our debts/sins/ trespasses:

As we forgive those who sin/trespass against us--our debtors:

And lead us not into temptation/ to the time of testing:

But deliver us from the evil one:

**What has the Lord been saying to you about how he wants you to know him as your:**

1. Abba, Father?
2. Yahweh, the God who is worthy of praise?
3. The King who reigns, now and forever?
4. The King who calls you to be part of his rescue of others, into his kingdom?
5. The Lord over all, who wants you to surrender to his good will?
6. The God who longs to speak to you in his word so he can lead you in his will?
7. Your Father and provider who cares about your needs?
8. Your Savior, the one who wants to forgive you, if you will ask?
9. The Holy Spirit who wants to dwell in you and give you God’s forgiveness and love for others
10. The Spirit of holiness who wants to transform your heart and lead you out of temptation?
11. The victorious deliverer, Lord of heaven’s armies, who fights for you against the evil one?