

There's an old saying that goes "Those who can't do....,,
Teach." And I'm feeling a bit like that today. Prayer, has
never been easy for me. And today I'm feeling, "Who am **I**,
to be teaching **you** how to pray?"

Sometimes I hear certain people pray, and their words are
eloquent, their adoration of God is beautiful, their petitions are
clear and God-inspired... And then I start praying, my heart
begins to race at 100 mph, I get nervous, I stumble, I run out
of words, I end up filling the gaps with the old faithful clichés
that we say when we'd otherwise be left with silence....

Some people have a real gift of intercession. ... I don't have
that gift.

But you know what??? Maybe that makes me just the **right**
person to teach you how to pray.

*Some people have a natural talent for drawing. And if
someone who is a born artist, tries to teach someone like me
to draw a dog, they're never going to be able to achieve it,
because they can't understand why I can't just naturally do it.*

*And someone who's a natural genius at music, possibly isn't
the right person to teach those who find it hard work and a lot
of practice.*

And I think it's probably the same with prayer... Some
people have a Spiritual Gift of intercession – these people
have a supernatural ability from God, to pray the most
beautiful prayers. And the rest of us, might hear **these** people
praying, and get discouraged about ourselves and our **inability**
to pray.... To them, it just seems to come naturally, but to

us...., - well, sometimes we give up praying, because we feel we'll never be as good – we just **can't** do it like them....

Well, I'm here today, as someone who is **not** a natural pray-er, and I want to encourage you, that even if **you** are not a natural pray-er, – to pray. Pray when it's just you and God, and not another soul around. Pray, when you're together with other Christians. Pray, even **when** you feel inadequate... Because I don't feel any different... OK??

Now, the Lord's prayer, I find, is one of the hardest topics to preach on, because for a lot of us, we're already so familiar with it – what is there left to say? A lot of us know it off-by-heart.

And when I realised I was preaching on the Lord's prayer this week, I thought about it, and decided "There's 2 ways to go – we could spend 11 weeks, on 11 different messages, where we could learn about God, learn about ourselves, and learn about how we relate to one another:

1. God as Father
2. What does it mean that our Father is in Heaven
3. Why the name of God is Holy, and how do we glorify Him
4. What does it mean for God's Kingdom to come
5. What is God's will on Earth
6. How is God's will, already done in Heaven
7. How God provides for our day to day physical needs
8. The forgiveness of sins
9. Our need to forgive others
10. Times of testing and temptation
11. Who is evil and how does God deliver us from evil?

That's one way to go, and they're all good lessons to learn... But Jesus' intent, in giving us the Lords prayer, is primarily, to teach us how to pray. And when Jesus taught on prayer, it took Him about 1.5 minutes...

So, we're not going to dissect it up into 11 weeks. *That would be like taking the Mona-Lisa and conducting a chemical analysis on the paint...* Jesus wants us to pray, so let's learn about prayer. And let's begin with prayer.

Heavenly Father, teach us how to pray. Teach us how to communicate with you. Tear down, whatever barriers we have put up, cutting us off from You... Amen

First up, what **we** call "The Lord's Prayer", is actually a bad name for it. We **should** have called it, "The Disciple's Prayer". You see, Jesus didn't need to pray this prayer – it's not His prayer. Jesus didn't need to ask for forgiveness... He taught His disciples "This is how **you** should pray". It's the disciple's prayer – it's our prayer.

Now, we've been working our way through the Sermon on the Mount. And the Sermon on the Mount, is Jesus' great manifesto for Kingdom living. And much of what Jesus is talking about, is about what's in your heart. Our practice – what we do – as disciples of Jesus Christ, should be a reflection of what's in our heart.

So when Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He was **also** showing them what should be important to them in their heart.

As disciples, what should we be praying about? - Well, we need to pray honestly. We need to pray about what's important to us, in our hearts. What then should we be caring about? What should be important to us in our hearts?

- God's holiness
- God's kingdom
- God's will
- Provision of daily necessities
- Forgiveness of sins
- Being transformed to become more like God
- And salvation from trials and evil

If those things are not important to you, you're going to have trouble honestly praying this prayer:

- God's holiness
- God's kingdom
- God's will
- Provision of daily necessities
- Forgiveness of sins
- Being transformed to become more like God
- And salvation from trials and evil

There's not too many luxuries listed in there, is there? There's not much about wealth, or honour, or human achievement... There's not too much about doing well on exams or having bountiful crops, or beautiful boyfriends or girlfriends... Jesus said, ^{Matthew 6:33} ... seek first the kingdom of God.... and his righteousness...., and all these things will be added to you. (and of course He was talking about food and clothing and shelter...) but seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...

Pray, about what's important to you, in your heart. But my prayer will not be a Godly prayer, until my heart values what

God values. The challenge for me, is for me to make God's main thing, my main thing. – it is to value what God values – it is to pray from the heart what is of God's heart...

It's not a matter of just repetition... *You can teach a budgie to repeat the Lord's prayer.. And he can sit there, swinging away on his perch, and repeating it over and over again, 50 times a day, and never have prayed a single word from his little galloping heart....* And **you** can learn the Lord's prayer, and say it off by heart. And that's a good start to get it into your heart... But simply saying it, isn't enough. God wants you to live it, breathe it, desire it, crave it, so much, that when you pray, this is what you pray for.

OK, so it's not about repetition (although that's a good thing too) It's about praying from a God-inspired heart.

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

Disciples of Jesus Christ, need to talk with Him. If you're not talking with God – if you're not praying, then your relationship with God is in deep trouble.

How good is a marriage, when a married couple don't talk to each other? How good is their relationship, really, when silence is easier than sharing in each other's lives?

If you've found it easier, not to pray, because prayer is too nerve racking, or if you feel inadequate to pray, or too dirty, or too damaged to pray....., Jesus gently says, "This is how you **should** pray. **Start** praying. Pray simple prayers. You're not doing it for show. We pray, to communicate with the God who loves us.... So if you've stopped praying, or if you've

never prayed, my challenge to you, is to start praying – this week...

**9 "This, then, is how you should pray:
" 'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,**

Don't feel inadequate, to talk with God. God **isn't** unapproachable. God is your heavenly Father. *As a dad, I can tell you, I love it when my kids want to talk with me. I love it when they tell me what's going on in their lives. I love it when, they feel they can share with me, their deepest fears and emotions – their hurts, their hopes, their dreams... And as a dad, I'm hurt when they won't listen to me. I'm hurt when they don't want to tell me, what's going on in their lives. I'm angry when they ignore me, but I'm forgiving when they come near....*

And we pray to our Heavenly Father. I'm an earthly father, and I'm imperfect – sometimes I'm a bad dad.... But God is never bad. He's the perfect Father.

Peter Shirley sings a song, that a lot of people can relate to:
*Lord I find it hard to call you father,
My memories aren't real fond of the father that I had,
LORD I find it hard to call you father, but would you really mind,
Would you really mind if I just called you friend.*

I heard Peter sing this, 22 years ago... And if my recollection is correct, He wrote that song for His wife, because she didn't have a very good dad, and she didn't have a very good image

of fathers. And so she found it hard to think of God as “Father”.

And, I want to say to you today, “If that’s your story, don’t judge God on the performance of your dad – Let God be the perfect Dad that you never had...” Talk to the one who delights in you. Talk with the one who gave Himself for you. Listen to your Heavenly Father. He’s waiting for you to get in touch.

So when we pray, we do not pray to some unrelational spiritual force. We pray in relationship with our Heavenly Father... Let’s move on.

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

“ ‘My Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give me today my daily bread.

¹² Forgive me my debts,
as I also have forgiven my debtors.

¹³ And lead me not into temptation,
but deliver me from evil.’

Is there anything wrong with that? It doesn’t sound right, does it? Prayer, is communal. Disciples of Jesus Christ, pray **with** each other, and **for** each other.

So, together, let's learn how to pray from a God-inspired heart.

**" 'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,**

Hallowed means "holy". I've already told some of you, I'm currently reading a book – "God is the Gospel" – God is the good news. And the author asks a question that really challenges me,

"Would you be happy in Heaven, if Christ were not there?" If you could have heaven, with no sickness, and with all the friends you ever had on earth, and all the food you ever liked, and all the leisure activities you ever enjoyed, and all the natural beauties you ever saw, all the physical pleasures you ever tasted, and no human conflict or any natural disasters, could you be satisfied with heaven if Christ were not there?ⁱ

That's a compelling question. And he poses that question, to set the scene for the topic of the book...

- Eternal life is good, and it's a blessing of the gospel, but it's not the gospel.
- Being saved from hell is good, and it's a blessing of the gospel, but it's not the gospel.

The gospel – the good news – is God. And if God, and relationship with Him isn't my heart's desire, then I've missed the point of the gospel.

God is wonderful. God is awesome. God is beautiful. God is glorious. To long to be in the presence of God, is the greatest yearning you can have. But there comes a problem. God is holy and we are not. And that's why Jesus died on the cross

– to take away our sins – to make us holy too. So that we **can** come into the very presence of God...

So, what we're going to do, is pray our way through this Lord's prayer.

(don't have to close your eyes to pray)

1. " **'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,**

- Tell God how wonderful He is.
- What does it mean to you, for God to be holy?
- What does Holiness bring to mind about Jesus?
- How does your heart desire for Holy God?

2. ¹⁰ **your kingdom come,**

- How does your heart desire to see the Kingdom of God breaking into this world?
- You could pray for your neighbour – that the Kingdom of God would break into their lives
- You could pray for Christian ministries, because your heart yearns to see the lost, running to the arms of the saviour?

The Kingdom is breaking into the world now, but praying "your kingdom come", is also praying "come soon Lord Jesus"....?

- Tell God, how you want Jesus to come soon.
- Or maybe, you might be in love with this life and don't want it to end?.... And maybe you need to pray, "God, set my heart's desire on you, and help me to long for the return of Christ.

3. **your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

Pray for yourself

Pray for your family

Pray for your church

Pray for your work

Pray for your business

Pray for your community

- Submission.....
- Tell God that you are willing to yield to Him.
- Ask God, in what areas you need to yield your will to his
- Where is pride preventing God's will being done

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

While the Lord's prayer **focuses** on God, **he** knows we have needs to. Don't feel guilty about praying for yourself or for your family.

- Pray for the daily necessities you need.
- Not for luxuries – not for abundance – but enough for today.

Do you know why Jesus wants us to have enough for today? It's so we can depend on God again tomorrow for what we need tomorrow.

- Ask God to help you to depend on Him for everything.

5. **Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

What is the greatest human need?

I'll tell you what mine is – Forgiveness.

As a Christian, I'm supposed to be holy – as a pastor, you probably expect me to be extra holy... But every day, the flesh gets the better of me, And every day, I have to ask God for the same thing again – forgiveness.

But that's OK. That's why Jesus told His disciples, to ask for forgiveness. Don't you dare ever get to the stage where you give up – “Oh God, I've been a Christian now for 30 years, and I'm still sinning – I give up”..... Don't ever give up. And don't give up on your Christian brother or sister either... “Forgive us **our** sins... as we forgive those who sin against us”.

Jesus taught his disciples, “There's no limit to forgiveness.” There's no limit to how much and how many times God will forgive you. Peter wanted to know how many times he had to forgive, and Jesus answered 70*7 (and by that He didn't mean 490 – He meant “Just keep forgiving and keep on forgiving and keep on forgiving”) – because that's what our heavenly Father is like.

- What do you need to ask God for forgiveness for?
- Who have you not yet forgiven?
- Forgive them now
- In what other ways would you like God to transform you to become more like Him? (fruit of the Spirit)

6. **And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

- Tell God the areas in which you feel weakest
- Tell Him how your faith is tested

- Ask Him to keep you strong
- Ask Him to intervene and to prevent this temptation
- In what ways are you attacked by evil?
- Acknowledge God's victory over evil
- Acknowledge the power of the blood of Jesus
- Acknowledge that Satan is defeated
- Pray for God's protection from evil

Amen.

Any questions?

ⁱ John Piper, God is the Gospel, Crossway 2005. p.15