

HOTLINE TO HEAVEN

PRAYER



BIG IDEA: Sooner or later, 99 percent of all people feel a need to pray. But all of us wonder how we should pray, why we should pray, and if our prayers are really being heard.

Jesus saw prayer as central to His life, ministry and character. His life is the model of effective prayer. "Often" is the way the Scripture characterizes His frequency in prayer.

After hanging out with Him for a year, the disciples were so attracted to His prayer life that they asked if He would teach them to pray. What this lesson shows is a format, not a formula, of how to pray. Nothing magical. It's just a way to help guide you and your group members.

Christ's example in the Lord's prayer shows us the importance of knowing WHO you're praying to and WHAT to pray for.



DESIRED LIFE CHANGE: Group members should comprehend the importance of prayer in their relationship with God and begin a practice of prayer in order to communicate with Him.



AUDIENCE: New Christians and less mature Christians who have little regular prayer.



LEADER'S PREPARATION: Read through the entire leader's guide to get an overview. Make sure you understand the flow. Study the Lord's Prayer and the implications of the prayer suggested by the lesson. Be prepared to share your story related to prayer. Let your group see how these truths have changed your prayer life.



AT A GLANCE

As your group interacts in this study, they will observe . . .

This is my **WORLD:** My prayer life can tend to be superficial, meaningless and non-existent.

This is my **NEED:** At a time when I'm making major decisions, I need to know the importance of prayer and how to pray.

This is my **ANSWER:** Jesus' model prayer and His consistency in praying to the Father provides insight for communicating with God.

This is the **DIFFERENCE:** My communication with God will deepen. My confidence in God's provision, forgiveness and protection will grow.

This is what I'll **DO:** I will decide to pray according to God's model and make prayer a vital part of my daily life.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?



When the books of history are opened up, we will probably see that little was accomplished in the Christian realm without the intervention of God in response to the prayers of His people.

On campus today, little can be accomplished without the sustained, godly prayers of Christian college students. Of course, there is always a need for

sharing God's Word and building others up in their faith, but prayer is foundational to all ministry.

Your movement on campus is in great need of prayer, and the vitality of prayer in a movement is proportional to the vitality of prayer in the lives of its individuals.

1 IMAGINE: You're walking along the beach and you trip over this metal thing. What? It looks like Aladdin's lamp. Is this *Candid Camera*? Is this a scene from *I Dream of Jeannie*? What the heck. You rub the lamp and blue smoke pours out--no, it's not Robin Williams transforming before you. It's a real, true genie and he grants you three wishes for releasing him. What would you wish for?

2 WRITE: Your three wishes.

3 READ: The sample prayers in the boxes.

4 ASK

5 ASK: What's the difference between God and a genie?


6 ASK & WRITE: What are some major issues and decisions facing college students during college and after graduation?

7 ASK & WRITE: What are some of the simpler, daily issues that concern us?


8 STATE: We don't have a genie to ask to take care of this stuff. We have someone much better, God—who isn't fictional. He genuinely cares about what we do, and has the power to answer our prayers.

9 READ

10 ASK: Have you ever met someone who's famous? What did it take to have access to him or her? What does it take to have access to God?


VERSION 1.1

HOTLINE TO HEAVEN



IMAGINE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DEAR GOD,

Dear God, Thank you for being the big man upstairs. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Dear Lord, If you heal my mom, I promise I will be more committed.

Dear God, forgive me for getting drunk last weekend. Help me on the next organic chemistry test.

Dear God, Protect me from knowing what I don't need to know. Protect me from even knowing that there are things to know that I don't know. Protect me from knowing that I decided not to know about the things that I decided not to know about. Amen!

Follow Up Prayer
Lord, Lord, Lord. Protect me from the consequences of the above prayer. Amen.

Mostly Harmless, p. 111

WHY

Why would we ask God for stuff like this and ask a fictitious blue puff of smoke for stuff we really want or need?

What's the difference between God and a genie?

MAJOR LIFE DECISIONS

DAILY CONCERNS













MR. PRESIDENT

Liz went to visit her sister Debbie in Belair, California. During her stay she planned on visiting her sister's church. On Sunday Debbie mentioned the President was a member of the church and that he attends services when his schedule permits. Liz thought to herself, "What would it be like to meet the president?"

It was hard to concentrate during church that morning. On that day only 10 rows separated Liz from the leader of the free world. Questions paraded through her mind. Could she talk to him? What would she say? How could she thank him? Would the Secret Service men grant her access to him?

After the service ended Liz decided to take a risk. She walked down the aisle and whispered to one of the security men, "Is it OK if I talk to the president ...?" With a quick nod he motioned yes. For the next few minutes Liz talked with amazement to the president. She was surprised. It was so easy to have access to him and communication was inviting.

TOOLBOX

-  THINK
-  OBSERVE
-  CLOSE-UP
-  WRITE
-  DISCUSS
-  FEELINGS
-  BRAINSTORM
-  REFERENCE
-  PASSAGE
-  ARTICLE
-  BIG IDEA
-  CROSSROAD

1 READ

2 READ

3 **STATE:** The disciples saw Jesus often go away to pray. Their curiosity and hunger culminated in asking Jesus, "How should we pray?" (Luke 5:16).

4 **READ:** Luke 11:1-4

5 **STATE:** Underline the five statements/requests in this prayer.

6 **STATE:** We learn a lot from the way Jesus taught us to pray. Jesus knew God; He knew who He was talking to; and He knew what to ask for. First, let's look at *who* we talk to when we pray.

LEADER'S NOTE: Because the content of this prayer is so obvious to the reader, we will not focus as much on answering, "What does this text say?" as on answering, "What are the implications and applications of this text?"

7 READ

8 **ASK:** What does a positive view of fatherhood tell you about what God is like?

- we see him as loving, kind, approachable, sweet, concerned
- He's glad I'm His
- He welcomes me to come to Him

9 **ASK:** How can a negative image of earthly fathers tarnish our vision of God?

- you can feel only conditional acceptance—you have to perform for His love
- He may leave you
- He's authoritarian—He'll want to squelch all my fun
- He doesn't care or has no power to act
- He's not concerned about you

10 READ

PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER


In Old Testament times, the high priest was the only person allowed to enter the Holy of Holies—the inner court of the temple where God's Spirit resided. A thick curtain separated this portion of the temple from the people. Once a year the priest was allowed to approach God for forgiveness of sin for all the people. It was a time of fear and trembling as the priest would prepare the sacrifice and enter through the thick curtain to submit in reverence before God. When Jesus was crucified, the curtain tore from top to bottom because never again would a priest have to give a sacrifice. Jesus is our sacrifice and now nothing separates us from God. Jesus is our high priest—every day, every moment we can enter the presence of God.

CONTEXT

Prayer is a common theme in the book of Luke. Luke focuses on it more than any other gospel writer, emphasizing both Jesus' life of prayer and his teachings on prayer. In this passage both emphases come together.

LUKE 11:1-4

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."
 11:2 He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be thy name, your kingdom come.
 11:3 Give us each day our daily bread.
 11:4 Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.'"



Know who you're talking to . . .

Father, hallowed be Thy Name

PAPA

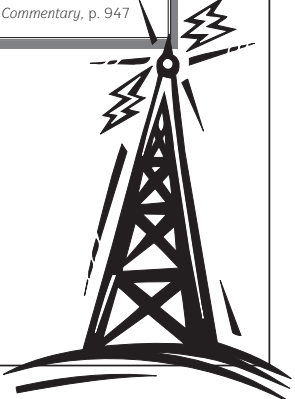
Jesus introduced in His prayers a significant new intimacy with God which far surpassed anything assumed in Judaism. Though the concept of God's fatherhood appears in the Old Testament, never before is the Father-child relationship placed in such tenderness and trust. The Aramaic word Abba (Mark 14:36) was probably the original term used by Jesus in all instances where the Father was addressed. It conveys the idea of familiarity, the kind of chatter a child would use in speaking to his "daddy."

—Robert Coleman, *The Mind of the Master*, p. 46

PRAISEWORTHY

Hallowed means "let your name be regarded as holy. It is not so much a petition as it is an act of worship; the speaker, by his words, exalts the holiness of God."

—The Expositor's Bible Commentary, p. 947



1 READ

READ

- 2 **ASK:** What does it mean to put ourselves under His kingship?
 -submit to His authority
 -yield our will to His will

DESCRIBE: Describe what that would look like in your life?

3 READ

READ

- 4 **ASK:** Do you feel dependent on God for your every need?
FOLLOW-UP QUESTION: Why or why not?

ASK: How would your daily life change if you felt dependent on God for your every need?
 -when you're getting short of money, you would start praying for more
 -you'd pray on a daily basis for God to provide the things you need, not just in an emergency
 -my life would exhibit more peace because I'm not worrying about things

5 READ

READ

- 6 **ASK:** What difference does it make in your life to know that you are forgiven?
 -you know you have eternal life
 -can live in freedom
 -can experience the forgiveness others don't
 -have peace with God and in your heart

ASK: How do you experience the daily temporal forgiveness that God offers you?
 -specifically confess our sin, 1 John 1:9
 -make plans to repent from our sin

ASK: What are the benefits of forgiving others?
 -peace of mind
 -forgiveness from God
 -your relationship with them is restored

7 READ

READ

Know what you're talkin' about . . .

Your kingdom come.

PREMINENCE
 This means we not only request that God's name be honored, but also that His values, ideals, plans, love, ways, and laws be implemented in human beings' relations with him and with each other.

Preeminence:
 1. What does it mean to put ourselves under His Kingship?
 2. Describe what that would look like in your life.

Give us this day our daily bread.

PROVISION
 God urges our understanding of Him as the author of sustenance itself. Bread is emblematic here of all our physical needs—shelter, clothing, transportation, money, etc. It also underlines the basic uncertainty of our temporal life.

Provision:
 1. Do you feel dependent on God for your every need? Why or Why not?
 2. How would your life change if you felt dependent on God for your most basic needs.

Forgive us our sins for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

PARDON
 Since the one praying has called God "Father," he is already a believer. Consequently, he has already received God's permanent declaration of eternal forgiveness at his salvation. The forgiveness he should extend to others, therefore, is not the basis of salvation but a prerequisite for daily fellowship with the father (1 John 1:5-10). Though our relationship with God is secure, our fellowship with God (i.e., the quality of the relationship) is to be daily maintained through confessing our sins to Him. One way our daily maintenance of fellowship with God is evidenced is through a willingness to forgive others who have offended us.

Pardon:
 1. What difference does it make to know you are forgiven?
 2. How do you experience the forgiveness that God has given you?
 3. What are the benefits for forgiving others?

And lead us not into temptation.

PROTECTION
 We are to acknowledge the fact that we can quite easily be tempted; this reminds us that no one is immune. We must be vigilant. It is true that God will not lead us into sin. Therefore, another way to say this is, "Lord, please deliver us from situations in which our risk of yielding to sin is too great for us to withstand."

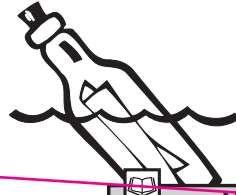
Protection:
 1. Why do you lead yourself into temptation?
 2. Look up 1 Corinthians 10:13. What do you learn about temptation from this passage?
 3. What would happen if you stopped and prayed the moment you were tempted?

- 8 **ASK:** Why do you lead yourself into temptation?
 -there is an excitement to coming close to giving into temptation
 -sin is enjoyable for the moment
 -my sin nature

Look up 1 Corinthians 10:13. What do you learn about temptation from this passage?
 -the temptation you feel is not unique to you
 -God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can handle
 -God is faithful to help

Are you willing to pray like Jesus just prayed?

TRUTH	
GOD	ME
King, control, power, love	I'm subject to Him, yield to sovereignty.
Provides, cares	I'm dependent on Him for my daily needs.
Forgives	I need forgiveness, I need to forgive others, I need to confess/ repent.
Gives us a way out	I am likely; y to stumble, be tempted, I need Him.



MY PRAYER

Preeminence
God you are majestic and powerful. I yield my life to you.

Provision
Lord, give me your guidance in deciding my major.

Pardon
Forgive me for my selfish attitude and daily acts of sin.

Protection
Keep me from giving into the temptations of the world.

The disciples' prayer ("The Lord's Prayer") gives us a basic format with which to pray for both God's interests and our interests and then to discover that both sets of interests are the same.
—Dan Hayes

So which is the greater treasure?
... walking along the beach, finding Aladdin's lamp
or
walking in to the throne room of God, sitting in His loving lap, laying our requests before Him, receiving grace, power and protection ...

God is on His throne. We are at His footstool. There's only a knee's distance between.
—Jim Elliot

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the *New International Version*, ©1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Published by Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

- 1 **ASK & THINK TO YOURSELF:** Are you willing to pray like Jesus prayed?
- 2 **STATE:** Now, let's look again at what He prayed.
- 3 **ASK:** What are you acknowledging about God and yourself in this kind of prayer?
- 4 **ASK:** So what are the ramifications of praying like Jesus prayed?
Personal Intimacy: Father, I know you care deeply about my needs and concerns.
- 5 **READ**
- 6 **ASK:** What's the difference between a formula and a format?
A formula suggests that if you add certain elements together you always get a certain product. A format is more of a general guide or structure to go by.
- 7 **STATE:** Write out your own Lord's Prayer and include each of the elements Christ used.
- 8 **READ**
- 9 **READ**



BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

George MacDonald: An Anthology – C.S. Lewis
(Macmillan)

The God You Can Know– Dan DeHaan (Moody Press)



TOPIC CONNECTIONS

Related *InterACTA* small group studies: *Inner Life; Extreme Love*

DIGGING DEEPER

The following excerpt from Dan DeHaan’s book, *The God You Can Know*, would be an excellent tool for helping your students dig deeper into the subject of prayer. You may want to copy this for each student and give it to them at the end of the study. Encourage them to take it home, read it, think about it during the week, and be prepared to discuss it next week as a review. You could use questions like, What is the main point of this article? How does it increase our understanding of prayer? How might a person apply it?

So many of us barge into His presence and share with Him our shopping list of prayer requests and then get up and leave. We fail to sit and just enjoy Him. We fail to become fascinated with Him, to adore Him and admire Him. We would never do such a thing in a doctor’s office. We would not run in, tell him our problems and run out. We would sit and wait for his diagnosis. Whereas the doctor is always busy, God is never too rushed just to sit and talk. Oh, that God would free the Christian world from treating Him like a spiritual Santa Claus. He longs to give Himself much more than any gift. George MacDonald writes beautifully about why prayer is so necessary:

But if God is so good as you represent Him, and if He knows all that we need, and far better than we do ourselves, why should it be necessary to ask Him for anything?” I answer, What if He knows Prayer to be the thing we need first and most? What if the main object in God’s idea of prayer be the supplying of our great, our endless need—the need of Himself . . . Hunger may drive the runaway child home, and he may or may not be fed at once, but he needs his mother more than his dinner. Communion with God is the one need of the soul beyond all other needs: Prayer is the beginning of that communion, and some need is the motive of that prayer . . . So begins a communion, a talking with God, a coming-to-one with Him, which is the sole end of prayer, yea, of existence itself in its infinite phases. We must ask that we may receive: but that that we should receive what we ask in respect of our lower needs, is not God’s end in making us pray, for He could give us everything without that: to bring His child to his knee, God withholds that man may ask.

Blessed is the one who desires rather than what He gives.

O V E R V I E W O F M E E T I N G T I M E



Planning your group session

Allocating your time

INTERACTION AS A GROUP	INTERACTION WITH THE STUDY & WORD	INTERACTION WITH GOD	UPCOMING INFORMATION	OTHER IDEAS
Ice breaker? Refreshments?	Provided. Add personal story?	Worship / Praise / Prayer time?	Next meeting? Special event?	Music / Video?
_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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