

LENT SERIES

2023

Study Guide

The Lord's Prayer



HOLLAND
VILLAGE
METHODIST
CHURCH

Message from Pastor-in-Charge

Dear brothers and sisters-in-Christ,

The Lord's Prayer is such a well-loved and cherished liturgical element that has been recited or sung at almost every Christian worship service for centuries. As early as the fourth century, we have sources which mention its inclusion in liturgical worship and many traditions use it routinely in regular Sunday worship. Throughout church history and even in contemporary religious practice, parents teach it to their children from a young age and candidates preparing for baptism have memorized the words of this prayer as part of their catechism.

In this season of Lent, we have an opportunity to study these words of Jesus, not only in the way in which they relate to our liturgical use but also through the lens of Jesus' teaching the disciples and all who follow him to pray. Lent is traditionally a season of reflection and exercising self-control through prayer and fasting as the church prepares to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter, and what better season for us to come together and learn from Jesus, how to pray, with the same intimacy that Jesus shared with his "Father in heaven."

So may I encourage all of us to join with other brothers and sisters at HVMC, in Life Groups, Ministry Groups and groups of all forms, to once again discover the spiritual hunger of the first disciples who cried out to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray," and may we as a church grow in our prayer life and increase in our dependence on God for all things as we journey through this Lenten season together with The Lord's Prayer on our lips and Christ's words in our hearts. Amen.

Rev Jeremy Ong
Pastor-in-Charge

THE LORD'S PRAYER (MATTHEW 6:9-13*)

9 "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 this day 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 evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.
(Appears in the KJV).

* All Scripture, unless specified, is taken from the English Standard Version

WEEK 1: OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

Matthew 6:9

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

“Our Father in Heaven”

The idea that God is our Father indicates that we have an intimate relationship with Him. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have become members of God’s household and as members of His household, we are always close to Him. When we know God as our Father and that we are His children, we can approach God with confidence. Just like a child can come to his father without fear in times of need, likewise we can come to our father with all of our needs and requests. Moreover, God is a perfect Father who is:

- Compassionate, gentle and patient.
- Doesn’t lose His temper.
- Doesn’t get bored and look at His phone or newspaper when you are talking.
- Interested in you, and finds your thoughts, feelings, ideas and problems fascinating and wants to hear more about them.
- Always present and loving, desiring to give you His perfect blessing

He is bigger than we can conceive and closer than we can imagine. So, when you pray, you are speaking to the most compassionate, affectionate being in the universe who is also in the room with you, who is as near to you as your own thoughts.

“Hallowed be your name”

“Hallowed be Your name” is a phrase of praise that Jesus gave to His Father in His prayer. It is good to start our prayer by giving praise to God the Father who is our Provider, our Protector and our Peace-giver. Moreover, we thank God not only for what He has done but for who He is. Thanksgiving recognises that everything we have belongs to God whether it be our gifts, health, possessions, jobs or family.

God’s defining characteristic is His holiness. And as God is holy, it follows that His Name is holy and therefore to be honoured or held in reverence.

Traditionally, God's people, the Jews, never said or wrote the name of God. To do so was considered as not keeping the name of God holy. God's name represents His character, His plan and His will.

To pray **“Hallowed be your name”** is to say that there is no one like God, that nothing in this world can compete with the value, goodness, worth and beauty of God Himself. Our Father's name is most hallowed when we live in ways that attract others to Him. (Matthew 5:16)

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Think about your earthly father. What is the resemblance that you can find between your earthly father and our heavenly Father and how do they differ?
2. Before you knew the Lord, what was your understanding of God? How did it differ from the God that Jesus has revealed to us in His prayer?
3. Jesus taught us to give praise to God in our prayers. Why do you think it is important to add an element of praise in our prayers?
4. How does your relationship with your earthly father affect your relationship with your heavenly Father? How can you overcome those negative earthly father experiences so that they don't negatively affect your relationship with your heavenly Father?
5. “Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name.” What attribute of God is most prominent in this phrase? Why is it important to keep this attribute in mind when you pray?
6. How would a conscious knowledge of God as your “Father in Heaven” affect the way you pray? Spend a few minutes alone with God. Speak to Him about what it means to you to be able to address Him as Father.

WEEK 2: YOUR KINGDOM COME

Matthew 6:10

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

This part of the prayer brings out the dilemma that God's agenda might be different from our own. This is more often than not the case. Can we believe in a God who wants something different than what we want? Our will versus God's will? Our desires versus God's desires?

In Augustine's masterful work "The City of God", he describes two cities: The City of God and the City of Man. These two cities arise from two different and opposed loves. He writes: "Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves – the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of the self."

By nature, we are all inhabitants of the City of Man, the human city. We build our own little kingdoms and we rule over them like miniature kings and queens. This is not only true of us as individuals, it is also true of us as a society. It is our own kingdoms that obscure us from seeing God's kingdom and His will revealed in our lives.

It is our Lord's desire and it should be our desire as well that God reigns in this world and especially in our lives. But to let God reign in our lives, we must first let Him be our Lord. That is where we acknowledge Jesus as our Lord when we pray the Sinner's Prayer. When we accept Jesus into our lives, we accept and acknowledge Him as our Saviour and Lord, allowing Him to rule over our hearts and minds. This means consulting God before we make any decision. We want to ensure that the decision we make is in accordance with His will. This is because we are created with free will and our will may not necessarily be in line with His. Therefore, we need to pray that His will be done and not ours.

When we pray "**Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,**" we are reminded of how:

- Jesus surrendered His will to His Father's will in the Garden of Gethsemane; giving up His life on the cross for our salvation and for the renewal of all broken things.

- We are to get out of our own way so that we can see God's will revealed in our life and in that of the world.

This second movement of the Lord's Prayer draws us out of a self-centred way of praying. Many times, we do not know exactly what God's will might be for us. Let's follow Jesus' example in the Garden of Gethsemane by telling the Lord our request / petition and conclude our prayer with these words "... *nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.*" (Matthew 26:39)

For Reflection and Discussion

1. How would you describe the difference between your old understanding of the kingdom and the new understanding offered by this stanza of the Lord's Prayer?
2. Have there been times when God's agenda differed from yours? Whose agenda prevailed and why? Share.
3. What verses in the Bible (OT and NT) speak about our will that tends to oppose God's will? Find and explain the verses, one from the OT and one from the NT.
4. Where have you been able to pray "Your kingdom come, your will be done," and where have you not? Perhaps, you can pray it in your work, but you can't pray it in your relationships. Or perhaps, you can pray it in your family, but you can't pray it over your money.
5. Where have you seen glimpses of the kingdom of God in recent days? Have you seen them in your personal life? Have you seen them in others? Elaborate.
6. How might the understanding of "Your kingdom come, your will be done" change the way that you pray?

WEEK 3: GIVE US THIS DAY
Matthew 6:11
Give us this day our daily bread.

Charles H. Spurgeon once said, “A daily portion is really all we need. We do not need tomorrow’s supply, for that day has not yet dawned, and its needs are still unborn.”

The above quote echoes Jesus’ teaching on the prayer of provision. Jesus taught us to pray to our Father to give us what we need for today. This reminds us of God’s provision for the Israelites when they were in the wilderness. In Exodus 16:14-30, we read that God provided manna for the Israelites in the morning just enough to supply their need for that day. Anyone who kept the manna until the next morning would find that the manna had rotted. Each day, God would provide a fresh portion of manna.

This tells us two things in terms of God’s provision.

God is our Provider

Just as the Israelites cried to God for bread and meat, God provided for them right away even when their cry was a cry of unbelief. We look to no other source than God when we are in times of need. Our God will be able to provide according to our needs.

Knowing that God is our Provider, we should not be anxious even when we suddenly find ourselves without a job or in the midst of financial difficulties. Even God heard the cry of the unbelieving Israel for manna and meat. As we trust Him as our Jehovah Jireh and we call Him as our Father, He will be there for us.

God's Provision is Sufficient

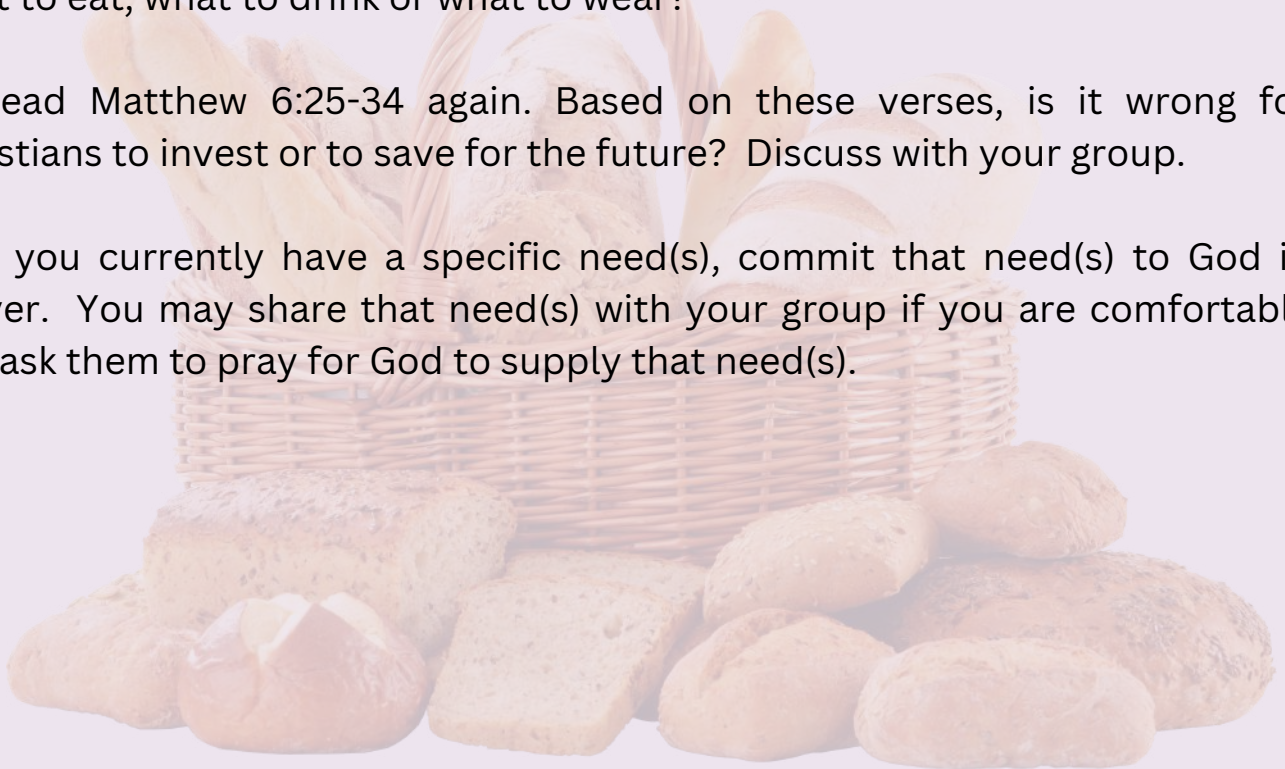
The provision of manna for the wandering Israel is the example that shows that God’s provision is sufficient for us. God can provide for our present needs. God can also provide for our future needs. We see this in the way He provided Israel with a double portion of manna on the sixth day as the seventh day was the Sabbath and a day of rest.

Jesus told His disciples not to worry about tomorrow. Matthew 6:34 says, *“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*

Likewise, we should not worry about our future needs. Jesus has commanded us to put aside our worries and to focus on seeking His Kingdom and righteousness instead. (Matthew 16:33) When we do so, God will provide all our needs, both now and in the future.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Do you believe that God provides for his people? Do you struggle with this belief? How so?
2. Write down/share three personal examples of God’s provision. Share an experience where you were in time of need (any need, not necessarily a financial need). What was your first thought that came to mind to solve that need?
3. When we ask for daily bread, what sort of bread are we asking for? Are we asking only for bread or also for the other necessities of life? What are some of these necessities that we can think of?
4. Read Matthew 6:25-34. Why did Jesus say that we should not worry about what to eat, what to drink or what to wear?
5. Read Matthew 6:25-34 again. Based on these verses, is it wrong for Christians to invest or to save for the future? Discuss with your group.
6. If you currently have a specific need(s), commit that need(s) to God in prayer. You may share that need(s) with your group if you are comfortable and ask them to pray for God to supply that need(s).



WEEK 4: FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS

Matthew 6:12

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

This prayer reminds us not only of our need for God's forgiveness, but also teaches us that we need to forgive others as well. It is God's forgiveness and acceptance of us that enables us to forgive and accept others. In Matthew 18:21-22, Peter came to Jesus and asked a question: *"Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?"* Jesus said to him, *"I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times."* We are hence to forgive others an infinite number of times.

To illustrate this, Jesus then tells the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-35). In this story, a servant has a massive debt forgiven by the king. After the man begs for mercy, the king forgives the debt. Afterward, that same man demands what is owed to him by a fellow servant. The debt is much smaller but when the man is unable to pay, the servant has him thrown into prison. Once the king hears about it, he has the servant turned over to the jailers until he can repay the debt in full. Jesus finishes His parable by saying *"So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."* Jesus makes it clear that God will not show mercy to those who do not show mercy.

Jesus tells this story to illustrate what our debt to God is like compared to other people's debts to us. The staggering gravity of our sin and offence against God is compared to the relatively small offences that others inflict on us. And yet God in His mercy forgives us when we come to Him in repentance. Sometimes, we are unaware of our sins. Therefore, praying for forgiveness requires listening quietly in God's presence that He may reveal to us our sins, acts of disobedience, shortcomings, resentments and unresolved issues.

When we forgive those that have wronged us and do not hold any grudges towards them, we are free from any bondage that may hinder us from coming to the Lord in worship. That is why Jesus taught His disciples to make a reconciliation with whoever they have grudges with before coming to the Lord to give their offering.

23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Forgiveness alone can transform our relationship with God, with others and even with ourselves. Knowing that God has forgiven our wrongdoings, we will be able to forgive others and forgive ourselves when we make mistakes, when we fail and when we fall.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. What do we mean by our “debtors?” Think of some examples.
2. What is your initial reaction to the concept of forgiveness? Do you react in denial, anger, self-righteousness, or judgment? Do you perhaps feel hostile towards the whole idea of forgiveness as a necessity?
3. Share an experience when you forgave someone because of his/her wrongdoing towards you. What was your feeling after you had forgiven him/her?
4. Share an experience when someone forgave you after you had done him/her wrong. What was it like for you to know that you had been forgiven?
5. What characteristics in your life might indicate that you have not fully forgiven past hurts, even if you know in your head what you need to do?
6. Is there someone in your life whom you have a hard time forgiving? If so, admit it to the Lord. Ask Him to give you His strength to forgive that person. Confess that this is not something you can do on your own strength, and that perhaps you even struggle with the desire to grant forgiveness to the one who hurt you. Then, find an opportunity to approach that person and reconcile with him/her.

WEEK 5: AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

Matthew 6:13

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

In this prayer, Jesus showed us that as Christians, we are not immune to temptation from the devil. Jesus Himself was tempted. Matthew 4:1 record that Jesus was tempted by the devil before He commenced His ministry: *“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”*

From this account, we understand that the Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Though the Spirit was the One who led Jesus to the wilderness, the devil was the one who tempted Jesus. God the Father allowed Jesus to be tempted by the devil to show that He is the Son of God who is always ready to accomplish what His Father has assigned to do on earth.

Therefore, God does not tempt anyone. James 1:13 says, *“Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.”* However, there are occasions when He allows His children, as in the case of Jesus, to be tempted by the devil. In such circumstances, we are then to depend on God for our deliverance.

The Greek word for “temptation” emphasizes the idea of testing or proving, rather than simply an enticement to sin. Scripture regularly describes God not as tempting people to sin or maliciously hurting them, but rather as testing people by bringing them into difficult situations where they must choose between obedience and disobedience.

In the same way, we may pray to God not to lead us into temptation (if God is willing). We pray this petition because it is better to avoid danger and all the trouble caused by sin than to have to fight and face the possibility of losing to it! However, if God allows us to go through temptation, we must submit as Jesus did. If we have to go through a difficult time, the Bible gives us an assurance that God will not put us into temptation that is beyond our ability to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The mature Christian accepts the refining process of trials and temptation. We only need to throw ourselves on our Heavenly Father who has promised not to leave us unprotected and exposed to attacks from the enemy (Satan) but to protect, deliver and forgive.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Reflect and share an occasion where you were tempted. What was the temptation and what was your reaction?
2. Give an example of any Bible character from the books of Genesis or Daniel who endured trial and emerged victorious. What was the temptation and how did he/she respond?
3. Read Psalm 91. Please list out all the dangers and threats that the devil can put us through. How can we be protected from those dangers and threats?
4. Identify some of the temptations that are common to man (1 Corinthians 10:13).
5. What should be our attitude when God allows us to go through difficult times?
6. Is there anything that is troubling you now? If there is, please pray for God's deliverance. If you are comfortable, you may share it with your group and ask them to pray for you.

WEEK 6: FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER

Matthew 6:13b KJV

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

This doxology in Matthew 6:13 did not exist in the original text and in the earlier version of the Bible such as Vulgate (Latin) Bible. The phrase was added to the prayer in the context of corporate worship in local churches during the first few centuries. The priest leading the worship service would say the portions of the prayer that are based on Scripture, and the congregation would respond with the closing doxology.

The word 'doxology' comes from a Greek word *doxa* which simply means 'glory.' **"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen"** are words of praise to God to acknowledge His glory and His greatness.

It is interesting to note that the Lord's Prayer begins with giving praise to God the Father in Heaven and ends here with words of praise to Him. This is a good example of how we should pray.

Acknowledging God's glory means acknowledging that He has the ultimate power and authority that lasts forever. This is in contrast with the earthly power of kings or governments of the world. Daniel 4:3 says, *"How great are His signs, how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion endures from generation to generation."*

Unlike earthly kingdoms, God's kingdom will last forever. All earthly kingdoms and political nations of the world will finally come to an end when Jesus rules the world. As such, we can say **"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."** God is the true King and His Kingdom is the true Kingdom that will not be shaken by anything that can shake earthly kingdoms or any world government.

This doxology is the foundation of the entire prayer. We are able to pray as we do as the kingdom and the power and the glory belong only to this our Father to whom we pray. If it were not so, our prayer would be ineffective. But because it is so, our prayer is effective and we can confidently pray.

There is no other way to acknowledge God as our ultimate Ruler and King other than by glorifying Him through our words (giving praise) and our lives (living our lives according to God's Word). Let this be our prayer always!

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Identify something in nature that you can see, feel, hear, touch and taste that point to the glory of God.
2. Why should we give glory to God?
3. What are some ways of giving glory to God with our lives?
4. Read Daniel 7:13-14, 27. Identify the One who was given dominion and glory and a kingdom. What is the characteristic of this kingdom?
5. Read Revelation 21:1-7. What hope do we have as believers when God finally reigns His Kingdom in the new earth and new heaven?
6. The Lord's Prayer teaches us to give praise to God at the beginning and at the end of the prayer. Identify some words or phrases of praise to God. Share them with others.

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