

Week Beginning: 11th August 2019

Worship Series: #1 in series



living sharing growing



Theme Verse

Jesus says, "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

Matthew 6:9

Remember This Week

Who God is reorients everything in your life. Prayer to the Father is a springboard that helps us leap with trust into the arms of our holy God who wants us to experience fullness of life with him. Our Father in heaven loves us, accepts us, treasures us and delights in us. Not only does he want to be involved in our life, he wants to involve us in the fullness of his life and all that his name means for us.



See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

1 John 3:1a

Heavenly Father, we have access to you through your Son Jesus Christ who has taught us to pray. Fill us with such love for you that we may pray devotedly, living every moment of our life with you in praise. Speak to us through your Word today that we may grow in being the disciples that you have called us to be. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

1. *Share your highs and lows since you last met with one another.*
2. *Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?*
3. *How do you address God or think of God when you pray?*
4. *In reading the Bible, it is interesting that Jesus never taught his disciples how to preach but how to pray. What can we learn from this about prayer?*
5. *Brother Lawrence once wrote: "There is no mode of life in the world more pleasing and more full of delight than continual conversation with God." To what extent have you experienced that in your own life, or if you haven't what has been the obstacle or blockage for you?*

How do you refer to God? Is he the big guy or the man upstairs? The Good Lord? Or Father? Names are important. They express relationship. They reflect worth. They give identity. That's what makes the prayer that Jesus gives his disciples and us so radical. For up until the 10th Century, there is no reference in any Jewish writings where God is referred to as Father, other than as the Father of the nations. He's called Lord, Master, the Almighty, the God of hosts but never Father. Yet in the Gospels, Jesus refers to God as his Father 165 times...a name he invites us to pray with him. It's a name that expresses the relationship God desires to have with us. A name that reflects his heart for us. A name that gives purpose and direction to our prayers and our lives for it unveils the fullness of who God is and what he makes available to us. Today in the first part of the Lord's prayer we explore the Father's character.

Read Matthew 6:5-15

6. *What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?*
7. *What do each of the three words—"our," "Father," "in heaven,"—tell us about God's character?*
8. *What is Jesus' expectation of his disciples when it comes to prayer and what repeated phrase in these verses tell us that?*
9. *Read 6:9 again....how does this verse guard against being over-religious on the one hand, and under-religious on the other? In what ways can we become over-religious or under-religious in our praying today?*





10. *The Lord's Prayer has two main sections – three clauses about God, worship of him, and his purposes, then three asking for our physical needs and the relational aspects of our lives. Why is it structured in this order and what is the significance of this?*
11. *Read Isaiah 6:1-8. What does it mean for God to be 'holy'?*

The prayer Jesus gives us is a radical prayer that invites us into a different sphere of relationships with God. We don't get how radical it is until we understand the context in which Jesus says don't be a hypocrite or a babblers when you pray. How were people praying? This famous Jewish prayer, is instructive as it tries to get God's attention:

"Blessed, praised and glorified, exalted, extolled and honoured, magnified and lauded be the name of the Holy One." Now that's what you call covering all bases. What motivated the Jews (and pagans) to address their gods in this way was fear - firstly that they might not be listening, and secondly that they might be angry with the one praying. (Look up Zeus in Greek Mythology - he got angry at Prometheus who showed benevolence to humans for another example of how the gods related to people). The Jews and pagans thought they had to say the right words or do the right thing, otherwise the gods might be angry with them, refuse their requests or even punish them.

12. *To what degree does fear motivate your praying today? Share.*

13. *How do we keep a balance between relational intimacy and awe-filled wonder in our prayer life?*

How different is this prayer Jesus gives us. He invites us to address a God who is close, available, and accessible. Luther writes in the Small Catechism: **With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.** The word that Jesus uses for "Father" is "Abba" which means "Daddy." He gives us all he has, the right to jump up, curl up and cuddle in the Father's arms who longs to embrace us. But at the same time, Jesus is also reorienting our life to its proper relationship with the Father. He directs us to pray that our Father's name is hallowed, set apart, made holy in our own lives. Luther writes again in the Small Catechism, **"God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.** God's name is exalted whenever we live out God's primary purpose for our lives - to exalt and glorify the name of God. Jesus himself showed us that as he prayed ***"Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."*** (John 12:28).

Gregory of Sinai says: **'One's love of God should run before breathing.'** Over the next weeks, we would like you to develop your own breath prayer; a short phrase that you breathe in, before exhaling with another short phrase. A famous breath prayer is called the Jesus prayer. Breathe in as you say, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God" (then exhale as you say) have mercy on me, a sinner." It's a prayer that you can say continuously so that it becomes a prayer which is internalised in you, moving from your mind, into your heart and through your whole body. They don't have to be long - about seven or eight syllables. The inhale is where you address God in a close personal way. The exhale is where you express dependence on God asking him to do something in you. For example, Loving Gracious Father, help me delight in you." Or " Lord Jesus, reveal your grace to me." Refine it over a few days and then let that prayer fill you with the fullness of God. Over time, you may change your breath prayer as it becomes part of you. Or you may make a breath prayer for each week.

14. *Spend five minutes thinking/praying about your prayer and come up with a first go at it. If you are comfortable, share it and explain why this breath prayer is important to you in this season of life.*

- * Praise God for giving us access to all he is in prayer. Thank Jesus for revealing to us what it means to make his name holy. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live in a way that exalts, sets apart and brings glory to the name of our Father in heaven and reveals his holiness to the world.
- * Pray for our parliament as they consider important issues of life, that they may see that all life is a gift from God and sacred to him.
- * Pray that we may have the confidence and boldness to come into the presence of our heavenly Father who delights in us.

Turn to the person next to you and make the sign of the cross on the palm of their hand or forehead as you say:

Name, your Father in heaven always has time for you. Amen.

