

The Lord's Way To Pray

By Mark Jarvinen

Kids have some interesting takes on the Lord's Prayer.

Listen to 3-year-old Reese:

*"Our Father, Who does art in heaven,
Harold is His name. Amen."*

Three-year old Caitlin, after working with her Dad on it as her bedtime prayer, got it right until the final petition when she said:

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from E-mail."

Another four-year-old prayed,

"And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."

We could do a lot more of these, but for now, let's look into God's Word. Our text for today is Luke's version of what the church for centuries has called "***The Lord's Prayer.***" Perhaps it would be more appropriate to label this prayer "***The Disciples' Prayer,***" because **it's what Jesus taught his disciples** in response to the request one of them made - "***Lord, teach us to pray.***" Luke's version of the prayer is slightly different than the more familiar pattern cited in ***Matthew 6***, but we will, nonetheless, consider **Luke 11:1-4** as our text today. Notice that the request was not "teach us a prayer," but "teach us to pray." Each petition is packed with meaning, which Jesus intended to give to His disciples as **a pattern or outline for prayer**, more than mere words to recite by rote, which Jesus refers to in **Matthew 6:7 (KJV)** as "***vain repetitions.***"

It seems clear that saying the Lord's Prayer verbatim is far more meaningful when we first understand the **pattern for prayer**

Jesus intended to communicate to His disciples as He taught them these petitions. Therefore, let's consider this model prayer from our text as a pattern that will give structure and substance to our prayer lives today. Listen as I read **Luke 11:1-4** -

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."

He said to them, "When you pray, say:

***" 'Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.***

Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation.' "

This model prayer in **vv. 2-4**, breaks down into two major parts:
I. Praying For God's Glory and II. Praying For Our Needs.

I. PRAYING FOR GOD'S GLORY

A. The Paternity of Prayer – "Father."

"Father" is probably the most common term we use to address God in prayer, and rightly so, because this is how Jesus addressed His prayers, using the term **more than 70 times in the gospels**. The only prayer that Jesus ever prayed without using the term, **"Father,"** was when He was on the cross and cried out, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** In other words, only as Jesus bore humanity's sins on the cross did He feel separated from God to the point where He couldn't use the relational term, **"Father."** On the cross Jesus felt the full weight of sin on mankind's behalf, yet without ever having sinned Himself.

The term, “**Father**,” indicates a **childlike trust** in our heavenly Father, who not only hears us, but who also longs to listen to our requests. Those of us with grandchildren know what it’s like to hang on every word they say, especially when they’re first learning to talk. We’re all ears. I’m imagining our Father God being the same way with us. I vividly remember the time last summer when Stella jumped into my arms while I was swimming in a lake near Brainard. It took no coaxing and she seemed secure. “Hold me, Papa,” she said to me. She even fought to stay there in my arms when it was time to get back on the boat and leave. Similarly, It follows that the more comfortable we are in the Father’s love, and in the knowledge that He’s all ears when it comes to our requests, the more we will also readily leap into His arms in prayer and make ourselves at home there.

When we are brought to faith in Christ, **Romans 8:15** says that we receive the Holy Spirit who makes us children of God, “**and we cry, `Abba, Father.**” This word “**Abba**” means “**daddy**,” and communicates both the **intimacy** and **nearness** of God. He is not **indifferent** or **detached** from His children. Because this is true, we don’t have to approach God with lofty language or churchy sounding words when we pray. As our Father, He’s eager to hear our prayers. Therefore, we can come to Him with confidence and boldness.

B. The Priority of Prayer – “Hallowed be your name.”

After acknowledging God as our Father, as if to provide balance, Jesus then instructs His disciples to regard God as holy: “**Hallowed be your name.**” He is **intimate** like a Father, but He is also **infinite** in holiness. God’s nature is like a daddy, but His name

is also holy, or awe-inspiring. As our Father, we have open access to Him, but this must not diminish our respect and adoration for Him in His majestic glory and greatness. God is not to be thought of loosely as **“the big guy in the sky”** or **“the man upstairs,”** as so many do today. What was true for the prophet in his temple vision in **Isaiah 6**, should also be true for us. Because the six-winged angelic beings called to one another in Isaiah’s vision saying:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory,” there also ought to be for us a sense in which the holiness of God causes us to tremble with deep respect and a profound sense of awe in His presence.

To make something **“hallowed”** carries two basic ideas in the Bible. The first idea is that ordinary things (including us) are made extraordinary, merely by being brought into contact with something extraordinary. For example, in **I Peter 1:16**, God says, **“Be holy, for I am holy.”** As humans, possessing a sinful nature, we’re unholy, but when brought into contact with a holy God through faith in Christ, a oneness with Him is created by which we are made holy, first **positionally**, with a righteousness not our own, but that which is gifted to us by grace, and then **experientially**, in a process of daily renewal through repentance and faith.

Secondly, **“to hallow”** something means to treat it as **“set apart”** or **“separated.”** To hallow God, therefore, is to view Him as sacred and like no other. In other words, yes, God is our Father, with the intimacy and closeness of relationship made possible through faith in Christ; yet we don’t define Him merely on our own terms, as a kind of **“get out of jail free card”**. Rather, we regard Him with the

reverence and awe that His exalted position deserves. We also honor Him in our attitudes and actions, allowing His love to flow through us in service to others.

C. The Program of Prayer – “Your kingdom come.”

When we pray this third part of this prayer, “Your Kingdom Come,” we are saying, ***“Father, take control of my life and do what you will in and through me for your glory.”*** Prayer is not asking God to do our will, it’s submitting to His. Conversely, neither is prayer our attempt to overcome God’s unwillingness to bestow His blessings and gifts upon us, but rather to lay hold of His highest willingness. As we daily die to self, we, by grace, are raised daily to newness of life, and are brought into conformity with His agenda. Through the gospel of Christ, we’re led to realize that although we matter greatly to God, we’re not the main point. The main point is His Kingdom plan. We remember the scene from the gospels, taking place in the ***Garden of Gethsemane***, with Jesus contemplating the suffering that awaited Him. He said, ***“If it be your will, let this cup pass from me, but not my will but your will be done.”*** Sometimes we act as though we’re doing God a favor by including Him in ***our plans***. We need to cultivate a prayer life that says, ***“It’s not all about me, Lord. It’s all about you.”*** What would happen if we became preoccupied with God’s agenda for our lives, our church, and our community? It still wouldn’t be heaven on earth, but we’d see extraordinary changes for good taking place in the lives and infrastructures of our homes and communities.

Having contemplated praying for God’s glory, now let’s consider ...

II. PRAYING FOR OUR NEEDS.

A. *The Provision of Prayer – “Give this day, our daily bread.”*

Once God is given His rightful place in prayer, then we have the proper perspective toward ourselves, and our own needs. This section of the prayer covers our **body, soul, and spirit**, asking God to meet our needs in these three areas.

Let’s consider first the needs of our bodies – **“Give us this day, our daily bread.”** In America, the land of plenty, this request may sound irrelevant. After all, isn’t hunger a third world problem? The people running our local **Open Door Food Shelf** would beg to differ, but this request isn’t limited only to having enough food. More broadly, it refers to the entire spectrum of our physical needs, such as home and family, health and government, friends and neighbors, and the like. We’re acknowledging that God is the source of provision for all our earthly needs and we affirm our trust in Him to meet these needs.

Notice that our trust in God is for **the needs of each day**. In Jesus’ day, bread had to be made each day. You didn’t make up a bunch of loaves and put them in the freezer for when you needed them. May we never get to the point of saying, **“God, I’ll handle the small stuff, like meeting my more mundane daily needs, but I’ll leave the really big stuff to You.”** Operating this way leaves the door open to pride and an ungrateful spirit. It’s God who provides all that we need physically and we are called to trust Him and thank Him for meeting each day’s needs.

B. The Pardon of Prayer – “Forgive us our sins for we also forgive those who sin against us.”

The forgiveness of sin is the greatest need of the human heart. Just ask a person who is bound by guilt how hard it is to feel like life is worth living. We kick ourselves for our failures and punish ourselves relentlessly for our shortcomings. Sin always turns us inward on ourselves, moving us to play the blame game. But the gospel turns us outward toward a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. God gives us grace to believe words like **Romans 8:1**, which says, **“There is therefore, now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”** Believing these words breaks the bonds of guilt and shame and releases us to live a new life of freedom in Christ.

But there is a **caveat** imposed in this petition. ***It’s not just about Jesus and me on the vertical level. Life in Christ impacts the horizontal level as well. The forgiveness God freely gives to us moves us to freely forgive others.*** Is there anyone in mind right now whom you have wronged? Are you holding a grudge against someone who has wronged you? In either case, Scripture says **meet with that person face to face.** Express yourself. Then let it go, by giving the gift of forgiveness – the same gift that God in Christ gave you. This is how a loving community thrives. This is how unity in the body of Christ is sustained.

C. The Protection of Prayer – “And lead us not into temptation.”

We realize early on as Christians that we live in a fallen world that pounds against us with temptations to go against God. In this petition, we're asking God to keep us from falling under the weight and the power of temptations. We are not strong enough to handle them on our own. **1 Corinthians 10:13** gives us a wonderful promise: ***“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”***

Brothers and sisters, ***ask God to lead you away from temptation.*** When you're faced with an enticement to sin, look for the way out. God is faithful and will not leave you to face your temptation alone. God's Spirit will be with you to fortify and strengthen you, but often, God answers this petition by sending another Christian to pray for you and lovingly hold you accountable. Either way, we're not alone and we're strengthened to carry on.

CONCLUSION

Father, we thank you for giving us this pattern of prayer, the same pattern Jesus, taught His disciples. We give all glory, thanks, and honor to You, and humbly ask You to meet all our needs, even as we trust in You to work out all things according to Your good and perfect will. In Jesus' Name we pray. ***A-men.***