

## Prayer

In the beauty of this day, teach me something of Your majesty, Lord Jesus. Show me Your smile in the faces of other people and show me Your joy in the glories of nature; show me Your love in the solutions to problems and show me Your generosity in the salvation of the world! I am Yours, Lord Jesus, to teach as You will; You student, forever. AMEN

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: World Politics

*Pray for the Arab nations of the world; many of them are Muslim, but a wide variety of people including Christians live in them. Pray for tolerance love and understanding.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for solutions in Zimbabwe*
- *Give thanks for the technologies which aid communication*
- *Pray about scientific work on the very edges of knowledge*

## Meditation

This is a day of great liberty, O Lord;  
You have set me free!

This is a day of amazing miracles, O Lord;  
You have healed my soul!

This is a day of glorious service, O Lord;  
You have given me my work!

This is a day of infinite opportunity, O Lord;  
You have set the world before me!

This is a day of powerful insight, O Lord;  
You have opened my mind!

This is a day of divine judgement, O Lord;  
You have set Your standards!

This is a day You have given me, O Lord;  
Your love will bring me through!

## Bible Study - Matthew 6:7-15

<sup>7</sup> *When you are praying, do not vainly repeat your prayers as the Gentiles do; they think that because they use many words their prayers will be heard.* <sup>8</sup> *Do not be like them, for your Father knows your needs before you ask him.*

<sup>9</sup> *This, then, is how you should pray:*

*Our Father in heaven;  
may Your Name be kept holy;*

<sup>10</sup> *Your kingdom come;*

*and Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

<sup>11</sup> *Give us this day our daily bread;*

<sup>12</sup> *Forgive us our sins,*

*as we forgive those who sin against us;*

*<sup>13</sup> And do not lead us into temptation,  
but save us from the evil one.*

*<sup>14</sup> Now, if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins.*

## Review

This wonderful passage contains the fascinating teaching of Jesus which we know as the 'Lord's Prayer'. This has been recited by Christians since it was taught, and it means a great deal to all who use it. The comments I make about it now can never exhaust the wealth of learning to be found on this passage, and there are many strong opinions about the words used in its translation, let alone what it means; but there is no substitute for spending time with this great text in order to go beyond the mere memorising of it.

The Lord's Prayer is part of the same block of teaching as the previous sayings of Jesus (6:2,5,7); and is therefore about the righteousness Jesus taught which exceeded that of the 'Scribes and Pharisees' (5:20). In the Roman world of the day, the primary purpose of prayer was to cajole the gods to do what you wanted them to do for you. Such attitudes had penetrated Judaism and some people in the church even pray like this today, but Jesus taught a different way. No-one would be heard for their 'many words' (6:7) as if to try and persuade God of their concern, but the Lord responds to someone who is attuned to His will; 'your Father knows your needs ...' (6:8). In addition, it should be borne in mind that whilst the Lord's Prayer is profoundly personal in nature, the word 'you' within it is always plural. This means that the prayer is intended for communal use; the disciples firstly, and then the church. Neither does the prayer include what we call 'intercession', because the prayer reflects people's relationship with God from which all else comes, including our concern for others.

In giving us this model prayer, Jesus appears to follow a technique used by rabbis who created a memorable prayer which summarised their teaching. Certainly, the Lord's prayer does summarise much of Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom, but it begins by pointing to God, exclusively. God is addressed as 'Father', and then there are three requests; firstly, 'may your name be kept holy' (5:9), secondly, 'Your Kingdom come' (5:10), and thirdly, 'Your will be done ...' (5:10). All of these are different ways of talking about God as both very close and intimate, yet also very big, holy and awesome. This reflects Jesus' first sermon (4:17) in which Jesus announced that the awesome 'Kingdom of God' had come very close. For Jesus, God was real, touchable and accessible, and His prayer indicated a personal relationship with God which was completely new!

The Lord's Prayer then continues with three requests. All of them are rooted in real life, and they are as much communal as they are personal. The first is simple; 'give us this day our daily bread'; but there is great debate over the meaning of 'daily bread'. Could it mean 'bread for the day' to preparing for the Lord's coming? Because Luke says something different (Luke 11:2-4 - 'bread for each day') it is more likely that Jesus meant the basic food stuffs required for living. In ancient times far more than today, life was focussed around the routine of obtaining and preparing food, and this prayer commits this basic human activity into God's care.

In verse 12 the prayer moves on to 'forgiveness'. Here, the word for 'sin', is often debated, because some prefer the 'trespasses' or perhaps 'debts' (which is closest to the Greek). Unfortunately, too much discussion is focussed on the nature of 'sin', when in reality, the prayer is about the all embracing nature of God's forgiveness and our mutual obligation to

forgive, because the Lord has forgiven us (6:12). Forgiveness is indeed at the heart of the Lord's Prayer, and is like the 'golden rule of the Kingdom of God, representing both the highest moral standards of human relationships and also pointing forward to the way in which Jesus Himself would create a way for us to be reconciled to God the Father.

There is also debate about how to express verse 13; 'lead us not into temptation', because the Greek word for 'temptation' is closer to 'trial'. But whatever path is being described it is a path which leads to separation from God, and our prayer is for the Lord to stop the 'evil one' and prevent us from being led astray. For this reason, the word 'temptation' still helps us to understand the prayer best. It is vital that we understand that a simple prayer such as this has power in heavenly places to thwart the intentions of the evil one and bring our lives back under the Lord's authority and control.

Jesus' final words about forgiveness make a powerful conclusion. They are not part of the 'prayer', but they are like a summary of it, and they emphasise forgiveness. Forgiveness was undoubtedly on Jesus' mind as He taught this great prayer, and it was a key feature of His path to the Cross. The old rules of forgiveness through sacrifice used by Jews in ritual obedience to the Law had never broken the barrier of sin between people and God. It was Jesus' great work to break this barrier of sin through forgiveness on the Cross, and we should remember this when reading or reciting the Lord's Prayer.

## Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Which parts of the Lord's Prayer speak most forcefully to you?
2. Would you agree that 'forgiveness' is the key to our understanding of the Lord's prayer? In what way would you agree or disagree?
3. How does God provide for our daily needs today?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*The Lord's Prayer is a most wonderful passage of scripture which has more to say to us than can possibly be written in a few paragraphs. All of us will benefit from using it frequently, but we are used to saying it in church and with others. Although there is nothing wrong with that, if we develop ways of saying this prayer by ourselves, then we may find it has even more to say to us.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Each day of next week, say the Lord's Prayer as part of your daily prayer routine. Allow it to teach you things about God and about Jesus that you did not know, and treasure this great blessing of God's Word.*
- *If you have the necessary artistic skills or computer skills, create a copy of the Lord's Prayer in a form which can be mounted (or printed out and mounted). Place this prayer in a frame on a wall in your house.*

## Final Prayer

Protect us, Lord Jesus, from those who seek to manipulate God's people for their own ends, either from within the church or from without. May such evils be exposed for what they are, and may all Your people live according to the Gospel and in the freedom of Your Holy Spirit; AMEN