



Talking to our Father

Praying and living
the Lord's Prayer

by Tim Chester

Talking to our Father

The Good Book Guide to the Lord's Prayer

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Published by:

The Good Book Company



thegoodbook.com | thegoodbook.co.uk

thegoodbook.com.au | thegoodbook.co.nz | thegoodbook.co.in

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ISBN: 9781784985202 | Printed in Turkey

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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the "big picture" of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to "break the ice" at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. The **Leader's Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional "follow-up" questions.
- 🗨️ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗨️ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

Why study the Lord's Prayer?

"Lord, teach us to pray."

That's the question the disciples once asked Jesus (Luke 11:1). Perhaps it's a question you ask. *How should I pray? What should I say? How can I pray better?*

Jesus' answer to the question posed by his disciples was the prayer we call "the Lord's Prayer". In Luke's Gospel Jesus introduces it with the words, "When you pray, say..." It suggests a form of words we can repeat. Perhaps you say it in your church each Sunday. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus introduces it with the words, "This, then, is how you should pray". This suggests a pattern or framework we can use to shape our own prayers. One great way of praying is to go through the Lord's Prayer line by line, expanding on each phrase in turn with your own specific words of praise, confession or request. It's something you can do on your own or with a group.

This study guide is designed to help you to do this. We'll study the Lord's Prayer—along with other passages from Matthew's Gospel that shed light on it—so that we can repeat it more intelligently and so we can allow it to shape our own prayers.

But prayer is also a great window onto who God is and what he's done for us. This works in both directions. A better understanding of God helps us to pray. But prayer can also be like the training ground where we discover more about God and his purposes. Prayer embeds the knowledge of God deep into our souls.

The Lord's Prayer is a *short* prayer. It takes less than 30 seconds to say and that's without rushing. We've all got time to do that each day! But the Lord's Prayer is not a *small* prayer. If you say it with meaning, then this prayer will enlarge your vision, expand your horizons and transform your life.

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

Common Worship*

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the
glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.

* This is the version used in many churches. From *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (Church House, 2000), page 36.

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Matthew 6:5-9 and 7:7-11

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN



talkabout

1. What words do you associate with the word “prayer”?

- What attitudes are revealed by those words?



investigate

▶ **Read Matthew 6:5-8**

2. Twice in these verses Jesus says, “When you pray, do not...” What wrong ways to pray does Jesus identify?

DICTIONARY

Hypocrite (v 5): someone who says one thing and does another.

Synagogue (v 5): a Jewish temple.

Pagans (v 7): a believer in Greek and Roman gods.

3. Why do the people Jesus describes pray this way?

4. How does the way that Jesus describes God serve to correct those wrong ways of praying?

➔ **apply**

5. When you pray as a group, how might you be tempted to pray...

- like the hypocrites Jesus describes in verse 5?

- like the babbling pagans of verse 7?

6. How can you avoid doing so?



getting personal

God the Father delights to hear us pray. Do you delight in praying? What do your prayers suggest about the way you view God? Does the way you pray in private reflect the way you pray in public?



📄 investigate

7. If God already knows what we need (as 6:8 says), why do you think Jesus encourages us to pray?

▶ Read Matthew 7:7-11

8. What is the promise in verses 7-8?

9. What is Jesus' argument in verses 9-11?

Many of us have prayed prayers which God has not answered in the way we wanted. Often these prayers are prayed in times of turmoil and grief.

We need to remember that God is a loving and wise Father who is committed to our ultimate good and that he has displayed this commitment in the gift of his Son on the cross.

So, although God does not always give us what we want, he does always give us what is good. We must not let these qualifications blunt this big invitation to bring our requests and questions to God.



10. How does this relationship with God as Father differ from the expectations of the hypocrites and babblers in Matthew 6:5-8?



explore more

optional

- ▶ **Read Galatians 4:4-7**

How does God the Son change our relationship with God?

How does God the Spirit change our relationship with God?

How does this affect our praying?



apply

- ▶ **Read Matthew 6:9**

11. How will our prayers be shaped by knowing that God reigns from heaven?

12. How will our prayers be shaped by knowing that God is our Father?





getting personal

Pause to pray now. Start by hearing the words of Matthew 7:7 as an invitation to you from your heavenly Father: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”



pray

- Praise God that he reigns from heaven and so he *can* answer our prayers.
- Praise God that he is our Father and so he *will* answer our prayers.
- Share the needs for which you would like prayer and then let these truths shape your requests.

