

## The Lord's Prayer: Matthew 6: 5-15

This term we are going to be looking at a much shorter passage in some detail. The Lord's Prayer, as we know it, is introduced in Matthew chapter 6 and Luke Chapter 11, as Jesus taught his disciples as the pattern for "how to pray".

### Warm up 1: What is prayer? How do we pray?

These are huge questions: there are whole books written trying to answer them! Spend 5 minutes with a partner, to see what ideas you can come up with to start off with, and then your leader will ask you to share some of them with the group. Not everyone will have an answer, of course, and that's fine. We will come back to your ideas later on, and next week to see if you want to add to them.

"Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through his Word, and his grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with him. ... The more true your knowledge of God, the more fruitful your prayers become and the more sweeping the change in your life." (Tim Keller)

### Warm up 2: "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance. It is laying hold of His willingness." Martin Luther:

I wish someone had told me this when I was at school! It means that when we pray, we are *not* trying to persuade God to do something that He doesn't want to do, or has forgotten to do! He already wants to care for us, to look after us, to guide us and bless us. When we pray, we are opening ourselves up to His willingness to do all of these things and more.

What does it mean to 'lay hold of His willingness'? How do we know His will? We don't need to guess (as we most likely will get it wrong anyway, or come up with ideas that are focused on our selves rather than God!) – we know God's will through the Bible. Jesus gives us a fantastic promise about prayer – this is one you can memorise!

*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 5:7-8*

As we pray according to God's will, in Jesus' Name, He will always answer. The aim of prayer is God's glory - not our comfort or convenience – but God's glory is also how we know fullness of life.

The passage we are going to study this term is below. It's short but very, very important:

Matthew 6:9 "This, then, is how you should pray

'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 today 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 the evil one.'

#### Task

We are going to try something a bit different this term and think and talk about just 2 lines each week. We will look at some key words in the Lord's Prayer, to find out what they tell us about God - and about ourselves. We will also look at some other places in the Bible where we have met these words or ideas, to make sure that we have really understood them.

Christians believe that the Bible is God's Word and is perfect and therefore explains itself - you can understand what words in the Bible mean by referring back to the Bible (remember it is 66 books by the same author – God!), and learn how the Bible explains itself.

Let's start with the first line: **Our father in heaven**

**Q1.** Below and on the back of this sheet you will find four headings. For each of the important words – which are already filled in, in the first column for you think about/jot down what it means – literally what does it mean? Then think about what it means for *you*, which might be slightly different. Finally, can you think of any stories or verses from the Bible which tell you more about the meaning of that word?

In these columns the most important is the last one, what the Bible verses tell you. It is good to think what about the basic meaning (column 1) and the meaning for me (column 2) and then to compare and check columns 1 and 2 by the truth of the Scriptures in column 3.

It is always important to look at a text in its context. When you are looking at a verse, think about where it comes in the Bible and how it fits in the passage it is in.

Key word	Meaning	Meaning for me	Bible verses or passages which tell us more
Father			Clue! Can you remember the parable of the Lost Son and what it tells us about God as our father?
Key word	Meaning	Meaning for me	Bible verses or passages which tell us more
Our			
Heaven			

Q2. Now let's try the same with the second line. This one is a bit more challenging, so help each other to think of ideas.

**Hallowed** be your **name**

Hallowed			
Name			

Finally, what have we learned from this very short extract about our God, and praying to Him? Can it help us to add to our ideas from earlier on - What is prayer? How do we pray?