

How to Use the Lord's Prayer as Your Personal Prayer Prompter

I am a firm believer in praying Scripture. I learned the practice years ago as a college student, and I have continued to use Scripture in my prayers through my adult life.

The Lord's Prayer is one of my favorites to use in my personal prayer time. It provides a pattern for my prayers that many in the universal church have followed for years. I've probably recited it thousands of times in church. But beyond reciting it, how do you make it personal? Here's an example of how to do just that:

"Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matt. 6:9b).

In your own prayer life, begin by focusing on God as your Father. For many, this is difficult because earthly fathers often abuse, abandon, ignore or neglect. That wounding can shape our view of God as our Father. We imagine God scolding, frowning or disapproving of us as His children. I understand. I had my own father issues. But Father God continually loves, pursues and offers grace. He's not emotionally cold or distant.

I have found it helpful to address God as "My Abba." I then go on to praise Him for His character traits as my Father. For example, He is my Father who is loving, kind and pure. He is my Father whose every intention towards me is good. He is my Abba who is always available and never distant. As I praise Him for who He is, my faith in His loving nature grows and my ability to trust Him expands.

"Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in

heaven” (Matt. 6:10).

In heaven, God’s will is executed perfectly without a hitch. Here on earth, I want to do His will as obediently as I will in heaven. What about you?

Think through different situations that you are praying about and ask God to align your heart with His. Ask that His perfect will be done in those circumstances. I don’t know about you, but sometimes there’s a battle in my soul. I want *my* will to be done, and I want God to accomplish *my* plans. But in prayer, I submit to King Jesus, and my heart cries out, “Lord, not my will but yours be done! Rule in this situation as fits your will. Bring my soul into alignment with yours. You’re the King—I am not.”

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11).

Father God invites us to bring our needs before Him. He wants us to ask. He doesn’t get annoyed with our asking. When my grandkids are over, they’ll ask for a cookie or crackers or some other treat. I never mind them asking. I delight to give them what they need as I can. Father God delights to give us what we need. Circle the word *daily*. It’s a great reminder that God wants us in constant communication with Him. *Daily*, we need to have conversations with Him, asking for the needs we have and trusting Him to provide.

“And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12).

Did you notice that the prayer for forgiveness is qualified by a willingness to forgive others? Ouch. We are so often reluctant to forgive others when they hurt us, and yet we beg God for forgiveness when we mess up.

Here’s the thing: If you are a child of God, the forgiveness journey will be ongoing in your life. Relentlessly, over and over again, God will call you to follow His example and

forgive those who hurt you. It's sobering to think there's a correlation between our forgiving others and God forgiving us.

Friend, nothing will rob you of your joy and peace faster than unforgiveness and a bitter spirit. The verses following the Lord's Prayer remind us again, "For if you forgive men for their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men for their sins, neither will your Father forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:14-15).

Ouch! Is that as sobering to you as it is to me? God takes forgiveness pretty seriously. Keep short accounts. Ask daily, "Lord, who do you want me to forgive today?"

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13).

Just as Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), we'll be tempted. Learn to pray, "Lord, when I am faced with temptation today, remind me of the power of Your Holy Spirit within me. Help me to stand strong in that power and resist the antics of the evil one."

Friend, Jesus Himself gave us this prayer so He could teach us how to pray. This week, try to use the Lord's Prayer to guide your prayer time. I think you'll find blessing in using the words He gave us to talk with Him. {eo}

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