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**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

What Does It Mean When We Pray, “Our Father”?

Monday, August 21, 2017.

The Bible is such an amazing book for a whole host of reasons. You can read a chapter, a story, or an entire book and learn something. Or, you can break it down to a word or two and still derive mind-boggling, astonishing truth. Try that with any other book!

Today, we are going to look at two words. Two words! But, the amount of meaning packed into these two words is immense. These two words are the start of what is referred to as the Lord’s Prayer: *Our Father*.

First there is the word “Our.” It is plural, not singular. If you will notice in the Lord’s Prayer, every reference to humans is plural. Why? Because we are not alone in our faith. We are part of an enormous family of brothers and sisters. Not only this, the word “our” denotes the relationship we have with the God of the universe. He is not some distant god of other people. He isn’t cold and unloving toward us, he is *our* father. He is personal to us.

Next is the word “Father.” A father is typically the head of a family. God is the head of our Christian family. The Bible also refers to the father figure, God, as *Abba*, which translated is a more personal name for God, similar to our word “daddy.” Above all, however, let’s not forget that this Father God we are talking about has always existed, created everything, and our very next breath and heartbeat are solely at his discretion. We don’t take another breath unless he allows it. People in the Bible feared perishing if they were ever in the presence of God due to his power and greatness. Yet, we are allowed to speak with this powerful, but loving, being who knows us personally and intimately.

Finally, we need to remember why we are even allowed to approach and talk to God the Father. Jews didn’t dare mention the name of God in conversation out of extreme reverence. There was a Most Holy Place in the tabernacle that only the high priest would enter once a year to approach God. This Most Holy Place was closed off by a large curtain. When Jesus finally succumbed to the ravages of torture he endured for us, that curtain was torn in two. We were now allowed individual, one-on-one access to God.

I try to use the example of a pastor, Francis Chan, who stops before he utters a word in prayer and focuses on whom he is about to address - God - He is powerful and almighty, but he is also our *Abba*, daddy. When you do this, and praise him that you are even able to speak to him, the God of the universe,

without fear of punishment or death, you may find that what you originally intended to pray for has drastically changed in that moment.

Matthew 6:9:

"Our Father in heaven."

Why did Christ instruct us to begin our prayers with this phrase?

How should knowing the significance of the phrase, *Our Father*, change the way you pray.

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, I know you are my father. I know you love me and you want to be in a close relationship to me. Whatever I will be praying for today, please let it be influenced by the fact that you are a close, personal father to me. Help me to remember that you always want what's best for me and that you've allowed me this incredible opportunity to approach you one on one.

This post was written by David Vernier, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

How God's Name Should Affect Our Prayers.

Tuesday, August 22, 2017.

To learn how we should pray, we are taking an in-depth look at the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Yesterday, we looked at how our God is a personal God who desires a relationship with each of us. Today we continue with the Lord's Prayer by looking at the second part of verse 9: "may your name be kept holy."

When we read the Bible, we see that names meant a lot more in biblical times than they typically do today. In ancient Jewish culture, a name held deep meaning for what a person's purpose in life should have been.

God's names all mean something specific about who he is. Whether we call him Immanuel, God, Father, Abba, Elohim, Protector, Provider, Creator, or anything else, his name is to be held in the highest regard because it - in a sense - is a part of who God is.

When we pray, "May your name be kept holy," we want to live that out entirely. We want to - in every facet of our lives - keep God's name holy.

How should this affect the way we pray? It reminds us to be respectful in our prayers. We should not be flippant when we are praying. It is acceptable, and even desirable, to express our honest feelings - hurt, anger, frustration, hopelessness - to God. But we should take care to do this in a way that still shows respect to God. It also means we should reflect on who God is and what his name reveals about his character. The same way we talk to friends about the qualities we admire in them, we should talk (pray) to God about the qualities we admire in him. We should express our gratitude for God's grace and love and mercy. We should reflect on his wisdom and power. My prayers take a dramatic turn when I pause the busyness of my thoughts and shift my focus to God. My whole attitude is affected when I focus on the positive and wonderful attributes of God's character. Once my attention is on God, it is suddenly easy to recognize the blessings all around me, and I make sure to thank God for every one of them. Read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Now think back about some of the names for God in the Bible. What do those names reveal about God's character?

Reflect on three qualities of God and what they mean to you.

What are some ways you can be respectful of God's name, both in your prayers and in your everyday life? What is one area where you need to show God more respect?

How is this series changing the way you pray?

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. God, thank you for giving us an example of how to pray. Help me to remember the nature of your name and the different things it means. I know it means you're with me, that you care, and that you're personal. With so many distractions in life, it is hard to pause and reflect. May you use these next few weeks to teach me how to pray. Help me make this a priority in my day. Amen.

This post was written by Kaye Althaus, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

C.S. Lewis and Praying for Eternity.

Wednesday, August 23, 2017.

In his book, *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis guides us on a journey through the narrator's dream. The narrator travels on a bus from a place called "grey town" to heaven.

While he and the other passengers are there, they are like ghosts compared to the other beings who are solid. In fact, there is pain in their feet when they walk on the grass.

Because of this discomfort, most people return to a far more comfortable place, "grey town." What they didn't realize, though, was that it *was* heaven. And they could stay if they wanted to and eventually become like the other beings, whole and solid.

If we were to visit heaven just for a day, I imagine we would live our lives much differently. I presume that we would spend less time on meaningless and trivial things, which is the majority of what composes our days.

Instead, we would focus on the relationships in our lives and pointing others to Jesus. The kinds of things that we are commissioned to do as followers of Christ anyway. **(Matthew 28:18-20)**

We are called to **"come out and be separate" (2 Corinthians 2:17)** and to **"be in the world but not of the world" (John 17:14-16)**. However, somehow, we have instead turned all of our focus onto the things that are happening in the here and now.

We are to pray, **"Your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."** Does that mean that we just throw our hands up in desperation, since nothing that we do matters in the end?

No, it means that we need to live our lives with eternity in our hearts. We should be expectant. God's promises are going to prevail, Jesus is going to return, and he will establish his kingdom. How do we know that? Because he always keeps his promises. He tells us in **John 14:3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."**

God is in control. He is deeply concerned about us, and he wants to know everything about us. All we have to do is tell him. Jesus tells us that we have a place prepared for us. Our lives must be lived with this in mind every single day.

When I pray this way, my perspective is changed. My focus shifts from my present circumstances to a future with Jesus. Once I have done this, everything

else seems just to fade away. Problems seem insignificant, and relationships become the most important thing.

When I don't pray like this, I become extremely self-focused, problems become mountains. I become bitter, angry, and frustrated. I start living in "grey town" and miss out on the opportunity to grow and be transformed.

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. Your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Jesus, you are working even when we don't see it. I earnestly pray for your return and choose to live my life with that in mind. Help me to turn my eyes upon you and stand on the promises that you have spoken. I know you are perfect, and your plan will be made complete. Amen.

This post was written by Stephen Dull, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Pray For the What You Need, with Eternity in Mind.

Thursday, August 24, 2017.

“How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?” The Lord asked this question to Moses as he was leading the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity, but he could just as easily be speaking to us right now. Today’s element of the Lord’s Prayer comes from **Matthew 6:11**:

“Give us today the food we need...”

Depending on your upbringing, or Bible translation, you have heard the Lord’s Prayer is various forms. I grew up Catholic and always asked for my “daily bread,” while others seek “the food we need.” Either way, the origin of this verse comes from Exodus 16, which recounts the interactions between Moses and the Lord during their trek across the desert. The Israelites were tired and hungry, to the point of cursing Moses and wishing for death. They were blinded by their short-sightedness and their desire to be satisfied in that moment. God heard their cries, and though the Israelites complained, he provided meat and bread for them. But he did so with a caveat.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to *go out each day and gather enough for that day*. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.” (Exodus 16:4)

Like he did for the Israelites, God gives us what we need, when we need it. In the busyness of everyday life, there are so many things that carry over from day to day: the “to do” list that is never quite completed; the chores that we decide can wait until the weekend; the emails that pile up; the lurking feeling that you are forgetting something. Regardless of your version of the Lord’s Prayer, my encouragement is to ask God to “Give us today.” Included in his promise to provide is the empowerment to take control of today. When we ask God for what we need just for today, we are freed from the worry and distraction of tomorrow, “for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” **(Matthew 6:34)**

My stage of life is different than yours. What I need is not what you need, so comparing my situation to yours is a waste of time that leaves me feeling empty. I’ve been there, and it is no way to live. God gives what he wants to give when he wants to give it. We must be ready to receive whatever he wants to give, even if it is not what we would have asked for. He knows what we need for today.

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. Your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need...God, give me today. Give me the food I need to sustain me. Let me be satisfied with what you have for me, as everything you give is a gift given freely out of your love. Give me today. Amen.

This post was written by Ryan Cook, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Why Praying for Forgiveness is Essential.

Friday, August 25, 2017

What is sin? The answer to this seemingly simple question may be far more involved than you appreciate.

There are three primary types of sin. First is inherited sin. This is the sin Adam and Eve committed in the Garden of Eden against God's commands. This sin has been passed down through generations since we are all descendants of Adam. As a result of this sin, we all will die because "*the wages of sin is death*" **Romans 6:23**. Second is imputed sin. This type of sin occurs when something is taken from one and given to another, in financial and legal matters. This transgression of sin came into being after the Law of Moses was given. The third sin is personal sin, which people commit every day. These sins violate the moral law. They can range from the sin of omission to any of the Ten Commandments. Everyone has sinned. **Romans 3:23**: "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" If you ever talk with someone who claims they do not sin, they are only fooling themselves. Sins of omission, not doing something we should do, are still sins. Failing to pray regularly, failing to help another person, failing to provide for our family, failing to be a faithful steward of our finances, and failing to engage in fellowship are all examples of sins of omission. Sins of commission, doing something we should not do, are the sins we are most familiar with. Adultery, theft, murder, physical abuse, gossip, lying, and manipulating are all examples of sins of commission. Our sin prevents us from experiencing the life God wants for us. We know that if we earnestly declare our belief in God and confess our sins to him, we will be forgiven. But unforgiven sin eternally separates us from God. Even forgiven sin still has consequences here on earth, but unforgiven sin has vast consequences on earth and in eternity!

This leads us to today's scripture passage:

Matthew 6:12:

"and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us."

In this passage, Jesus is instructing us to confess our sins and ask the Lord for forgiveness. He is also telling us to model the forgiving character of God by forgiving others. **Ephesians 4:32**: "*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*" The greatest need we all share is the need for forgiveness. To be an unforgiving person indicates you are not walking as a Christ-follower, and God will not forgive you of your sins. **Matthew 6:15**: "*But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*" Forgiveness is the evidence of a Christian life. You need to let others forgive you as well. In the Bible, the Greek word translated "forgiveness" literally means, "to let go." To forgive means to release the anger or

resentment and give up your desire for revenge. We may have a hard time forgiving others because we have a hard time receiving forgiveness. We cannot forgive ourselves. If you cannot forgive others, you are the one struggling with bitterness. **Hebrews 12:15:** *“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”*

Forgiveness does not mean that you condone the offense, pretend the offense did not occur or allow someone to take advantage of you. **Hebrews 10:26:** *“For if we practice sin willfully after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left.”*

Through forgiveness, we receive the blessings of God’s grace so we can extend God’s grace to others who sin against us. Christianity is the only world religion that is based on grace. All other religions require some kind of act to be forgiven. Jesus paid for all our sins, past, present, and future, on the cross. The cross is where mercy and justice meet. Jesus is our mediator, so we need to honor and worship him.

In the last 19 months, I have had back surgery, lost both my parents 12 weeks apart, been through a divorce, moved to a condominium, and had eye surgery and a heart ablation. During this time, I have sinned against others and have endured others sinning against me. Because of the grace that Christ has shown to me, I have been given the strength to forgive both others and myself. I have a constant dialog with him because, as is stated in **Philippians 4:13**, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

Is there any better news to hear than we have been forgiven of our sins?

Is there a cost associated with your forgiveness of others?

Have you forgiven someone who has sinned against you? Have you forgiven them freely?

Prayer:

*Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. Your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, **and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.** God, thank you for not recalling our sins that have been confessed and have been forgiven - those from the past that we have committed or those that have been committed against us. We know that forgiveness is not always easy. Please reveal who we need to forgive and grant us the power and grace to forgive them. Help us to recognize our daily sins, and we ask for forgiveness of*

those. Thank you for the blessing of Jesus Christ and allowing us to transfer the burden of our sins to him. Through his precious name we pray, amen.

This post was written by Jenn Macke-Harden, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

What to Do About Temptation:

Saturday, August 26, 2017.

Matthew 6:13:

*“And don’t let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.”*

Temptation. It comes in many forms, and everyone who ever lived has faced it, starting from the very first humans and continuing through every human since. Similarly, everyone has succumbed to it at some point, except for Jesus Christ himself.

In other words, unless you’re perfect and the literal Son of God, you have a high risk of falling for temptation. It’s no wonder why *“don’t let us yield to temptation”* is included in the Lord’s Prayer; what *is* a wonder is why we don’t pray this more.

If you’re like me, you struggle with temptation in one form or another on a daily basis. If you’re like me, you also fail to pray for help resisting temptation on a daily basis. Does that make sense? No. Of course, if you’re like me, you probably act nonsensically on a daily basis.

But I digress.

Most of us have our personal "pet temptations," our recurring battles. We win some; we lose others. They can range from the arguably more innocent temptation to eat a second slice of cake that we know we don't need, to the deeper temptation to hold a grudge against those who've hurt us.

I’d been struggling with a pet temptation for a long time - months, at least. Every time it came up, I’d “try my hardest to resist,” whatever that means. Then I’d get frustrated with both myself and God when I failed. I knew he didn’t want me to give in, so why hadn’t he made it easy for me to say no?

It wasn’t until I read the Lord’s Prayer during a study of Matthew that I realized part of my problem. Despite dealing with this temptation for months, I’d never actually asked for God’s help resisting. *Maybe* I’d say a quick prayer when I felt tempted, but most of the time I was relying on my strength alone. That wasn’t enough. As for praying *before* I felt tempted? Forget it. I wasn’t that proactive.

Realizing my (suddenly rather obvious) error, I began to add this section of the Lord's Prayer to my daily devotions. As I said, I don't pray for help resisting temptation every day; however, I do try to. Did this completely cure me of my pet temptation? No. Did I start winning all of my battles? No again. But I did start winning more of them. And that was the start I needed.

Temptation is a part of being human; Jesus' temptation can attest to that. Knowing this, we have no right to start our day without properly preparing ourselves to face temptation. And there's no better way to prepare than by asking for God's help.

We can do nothing by our strength, but through God, we can do all things. So why would we ever try facing our temptations on our own?

Prayer:

*Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. Your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. **And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.** Thank you for the strength of your guiding hand in wrestling with temptation. I know that as a human, I will encounter and occasionally fall prey to the lures of this foe. But I also know that when I come to you in prayer, I am better prepared to resist temptation and walk in step with you. And for this gift, I am eternally grateful. Amen.*

This post was written by Payton Lechner, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Everything is for God's Glory.

Sunday, August 27, 2017.

"It is for your kingdom, your glory, and your honor forever and ever, amen."

If you look in your Bible, you will see that this sentence is not included in Jesus' teaching on what has now been called "The Lord's Prayer." It is prayed in 1 Chronicles 29:11-13, which is King David's doxology - or song of praise - as he was praising God for the honor he had bestowed upon David and his family.

Many early churches added this sentence to the end of the prayer. Some earlier manuscripts included the doxology in the Matthew text, but it did not make it into most of the translations we read today. So why do we add it? If you reflect back on the components of the prayer we have studied this week, you have found that the prayer can be broken down into three sections: a preface, petitions, and conclusion, which is the doxology. When we recite or sing the Lord's Prayer, it is, I believe, one of the most moving, important parts of the prayer - sort of a summing up in regards to our acknowledgement of who God is, what he does, how long he has been doing it, is doing it, and will continue to do it. In fact, when I attend a service in which this last sentence is not included, I feel there is much left unsaid.

The prayer modeled is powerful. As we've seen, it acknowledges that we can call on the God of heaven and earth, our Father. What an amazing thought! We honor him and ask that his kingdom come to earth, so we can begin right now, to live as we will live in heaven. We ask him for that which he has promised - what we need every day, and we ask him to forgive us as we forgive others who have offended or hurt us. We ask him to protect us from temptation and the lies of the enemy. But how is all that to be accomplished? It is then we must ascribe the awesome, amazing attributes that God alone possesses! If we cannot know and trust that this kingdom, power, and glory belong to God, and God alone, how could any of our petitions be realized?

As a child, I grew up in a wonderful, loving family who made sure my brothers and I learned early and often that God was our Heavenly Father. I was so blessed to have a mom and dad who loved me and cared for me. It made it less difficult to believe that after all my wanderings, my Heavenly Father would welcome me back with open arms and a loving heart. My part, then, was to submit to God's kingdom, and power, and glory. Why would I not?

In the song "Closer" by Hillsong United, the chorus says:

I want to be close to You
I want to be close to You

There's nothing in this world that compares to all You are.
My sole devotion, my only focus, to worship You
My life surrendered, my heart abandoned for more of You.

When we come to the end of our prayer, whether we have prayed the Lord's Prayer word for word, or used it as a model for our more personal and heart-wrenching prayers, if we cannot trust that God is able to do all he has said he would do, what has been the point? I pray that having spent time this week in silence and reflection, sitting with this prayer model given to us by Jesus, that you have come to a greater confidence that his truly is the kingdom - "the sovereign right of all things that are or ever were created: the power - the executive power, whereby He governs all things in His everlasting kingdom: and the glory - the praise due from every creature, for Your power and Your wondrous works, and the mightiness of Your kingdom, which endures forever and ever." John Wesley (1703-1791) - Wesley's Notes on the Bible.

One of my favorite verses is **2 Corinthians 1:20**: ***"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "yes" in Christ. And so through Him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God!"***

The doxology at the end of our prayer turns ALL glory and honor and power to God, trusting that all his promises to us are 'Yes' in Christ. It is our submission to God. To him alone belongs the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

What has praying like this looked like in your life?

Prayer:

*Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. Your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. **It is for your kingdom, your glory, and your honor forever and ever, amen.***

This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.