

Session 5

CANCELLED

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13

As we mentioned in the last session, Luke 15 is about celebrating what was lost and has been found. The prodigal son story includes a wayward son, an older brother who is lost as well, and the Father who welcomes both back to the party. How can a Father love two wicked sons with this kind of never giving up, never ending type of love?

Have you ever met someone who loves people generously to the point of their own personal sacrifice?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT:

Read Matthew 6:9-13. This is the template by which Jesus teaches us to pray. Notice what He says about forgiveness as a fundamental aspect of prayer.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

The Template Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

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.**

The Lord's Prayer is not a magic formula or a checklist to tick off. It's a guide, a springboard for our own heartfelt communication with the Father. Now, some might think, "Why do we need instructions on prayer? Isn't it just talking to God?" Yes, but Jesus understood that humans often have difficulty coming to the Father, just as the older brother did in the story of the Prodigal Son. Just so, Jesus gave us guidance in approaching the Father.

The prayer Jesus gives us, often called the Lord's Prayer, isn't meant to be a rigid formula. It's a beautiful model, a framework for a conversation with our Heavenly Father. "Our Father in heaven," establishes our relationship with God, not as a distant judge, but as a loving parent. We approach him with reverence, yet also with the confidence of a child seeking their father's embrace. "Hallowed be your name," signifies our deep respect and awe for God's character. We acknowledge his holiness, his perfect goodness, and his power beyond our comprehension.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" is a surrender to God's plan. We express our desire for his will to be done in our lives and in the world, just as perfectly as it is carried out in heaven. "Give us this day our daily bread" is more than physical sustenance, though that is important. It's about trusting God to provide for all our needs, both material and spiritual.

But the prayer turns a corner in the next part. "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." We acknowledge our shortcomings, our "debts" to God. But crucially, we link our forgiveness to the forgiveness we extend to others. Only when we release those who have wronged us can we truly expect God's forgiveness. Now, what Jesus does next is important. Having just taught us to make forgiveness a regular part of our prayer life, Jesus joins the idea of forgiveness with the idea of temptation. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Why does Jesus teach us to ask God for strength to resist temptation? Is it just about ensuring that we keep evil from entering our homes and our hearts? Maybe. But I suspect there is more here that Jesus wants us to learn about the link between forgiveness and temptation to do evil.

Jesus likely has something like The Prodigal Son story in mind. He knows that when it comes to forgiveness, temptation to be selfish is just around the corner. Jesus wants us to come to the Father. He wants us to stay in communication with the Father. He wants us to forgive and to remember that we are forgiven. And, Jesus wants us to avoid becoming a hard-hearted religious person – just as the older son had become.

Jesus is serious about forgiveness. In fact, The Lord's Prayer concludes with "Amen," meaning "so be it." He wants us to not only pray the words but to be in agreement with The Father that The Kingdom way is the best way and the way of our hearts for those who follow Jesus.

What do you make of Jesus including forgiveness alongside of temptation in the Lord's Prayer?

Prayers of Forgiveness: Read Psalm 51 together. Scholars think this psalm is David's prayer from his journals after his sinful episode with Bathsheba. What themes of forgiveness and temptation do you notice in this Psalm?

ANOTHER BROTHER DISCOVERS FORGIVENESS.

Joseph, though sold into slavery by his own brothers, had experienced God's faithfulness throughout his life. He rose from the depths of despair to become the second-in-command of Egypt, saving countless lives from famine. Now, he assures his brothers that even their evil intentions were ultimately used by God for good.

Joseph's story is not just about personal vindication; it's a testament to God's faithfulness to His promises. He had assured Abraham that his descendants would become a great nation, and through Joseph, that promise began to take shape. Even

the actions of those who intended harm were ultimately woven into the fabric of God's redemptive plan.

The narrative paints a vivid picture. Joseph, now a powerful ruler in Egypt, stands before his brothers, the very ones who threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery. Fear grips their hearts, for they know the depths of their wrongdoing and anticipate Joseph's vengeance. But Joseph, his voice thick with emotion, utters words that echo through the ages: "Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God?" (Genesis 50:19).

These words, dear friends, hold a profound message. Joseph, despite the immense pain inflicted upon him, refuses to play God. He acknowledges that vengeance belongs to the Lord, not to him. He chooses to forgive his brothers, not because they deserved it, but because God's grace had transformed his own heart.

This act of forgiveness, however, is not merely a personal triumph for Joseph. It serves as a powerful testament to God's redemptive plan unfolding throughout history. Even amidst the ugliness of sin and betrayal, God's purpose prevails. Joseph's forgiveness foreshadows the ultimate act of forgiveness offered by Jesus Christ on the cross.

Just as Joseph, though wronged, extended compassion, so too does God offer forgiveness to all who repent and turn to Him. No matter how deep our sin, no matter how great the hurt we've inflicted, God's love and forgiveness are boundless.

How do you see Joseph's story of forgiveness connected to the story of the Prodigal Son?

THE BIG IDEA

- Grace is terrible math.
- As God forgives us, so we are called to forgive one another.
- Forgiveness when paired with the guarding against temptation are great helps in our prayer life.

How does today's study challenge the way you are currently praying?

How might an intentional effort to pray and guard against temptation help you in your personal ministry to others?

Prayer Needs
