



ROSE VISUAL
BIBLE STUDIES

6 SESSIONS

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Bible Study



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Rose Visual
Bible Studies

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The Lord's Prayer
Rose Visual Bible Studies

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Author: Titus O'Bryant, ThM, Teaching Pastor, Grace Fellowship Church

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*“This, then, is how you
should pray...”*

Matthew 6:9

The Lord's Prayer

Pine processionary caterpillars are fascinating little creatures. They trail after one another in long lines, head following tail, looking something like a very long snake.

The nineteenth-century French naturalist and botanist, Jean-Henri Fabre, took an interest in these little creatures and conducted an experiment. He placed the caterpillars onto a line he created around the rim of potted palm plant and then watched to see what would happen. As one might suspect, they formed a line and marched in an endless circle around the rim of the pot. Fabre tried to draw them away from their circle. He put pine needles (which they like to eat) on the ground, but for seven days the caterpillars still just followed one another in their endless march.

Finally, on the eighth day, one caterpillar struck off across the inside of the pot and climbed to the top of the palm plant, but then he went back down and around the edge of the pot again. A little while later, another led the group down the outside of the pot and then turned around to come back up to the rim and continue the circle. Eventually, one intrepid caterpillar made it all the way to the ground and the rest followed as they found their way back home in the pine trees.



Now what are we to learn from Fabre and his unusual experiment? (Well, besides the obvious fact that nineteenth-century French botanists are cruel and likely to perform strange experiments with caterpillars.) If there's any kind of lesson to take from the similarities between humans and caterpillars, it just might be that change is hard. Most of us find security in predictability. Even when that predictability leads to endless circles that we'd like to escape, it can still be difficult to break our harmful patterns.

Jesus came into our world bringing change. He changes everything: our relationship with God, our view of the world, our carefully constructed priorities, and our understanding of ourselves. His teachings were a radical departure from everything that came before—the way he talked about God as our Father, about forgiveness, about our relationships with one another ... and about how we *pray*.

Each of the six sessions in this study will focus on one particular phrase from the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9–13, combined with a passage from Jesus' experiences and teachings from the Gospels. Along with questions to guide your study, you will also find optional Bible readings that can contribute to your prayer life, as well as prayer exercises to build your relationship with God. Just as Jesus challenged his first disciples, every line in the Lord's Prayer challenges us today to set aside our predictable notions of God and our harmful habits that give us a false sense of security, and instead to turn our gaze upward in prayer to our Father in heaven.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

(Matthew 6:9–13 NIV)



OUR FATHER

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done
on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Amen.

(traditional wording)





OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

*Hallowed Be
Your Name*

Our Father in Heaven



What is prayer? How does it work? Why should we pray? Is God moved to take decisive action that alters our reality because of prayer, or as the sovereign, all-knowing Lord, doesn't he already know exactly what the future holds? These questions tug at the edges of our imagination as we talk with God in prayer and study about prayer in the Bible.

While some element of mystery will always exist around prayer, we know that God has chosen to work through prayer to change us and to change our world. There is no question that prayer establishes a relational link between us and God, and that God works through that connection to re-order and re-organize our life just as he also changes the world in which we live.

Jesus taught his followers how to pray by giving them a model prayer recorded in Matthew 6:9–13. This prayer has been called the Lord's Prayer and it is far more than mere words we repeat. It provides a pattern to follow as we form our own personal prayers to God. Think of this prayer like a photographer creating a collection of portraits by zooming in, zooming out, then zooming back in on his subject. Our model prayer begins with a singular focus on God himself; then zooms out to God's plan and work in his world; and then zooms back in to specific needs we experience and our petitions for his help.



Read It

Key Bible Passage

For this session, read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9–13.

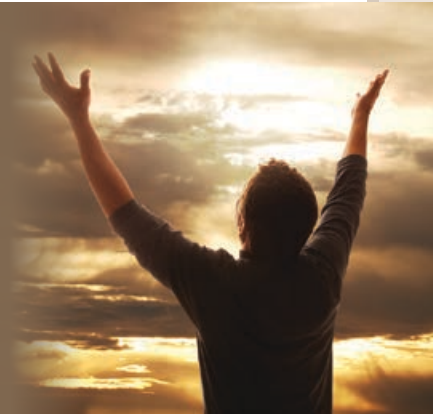
Also read Jesus' prayer in John 17:20–26, along with his teaching in John 16:5–15.

Optional Reading

Observe how the disciples Peter and John (who were taught how to pray by Jesus) prayed when they experienced persecution in Acts 4:23–31.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed
be your name.”

MATTHEW 6:9





Know It

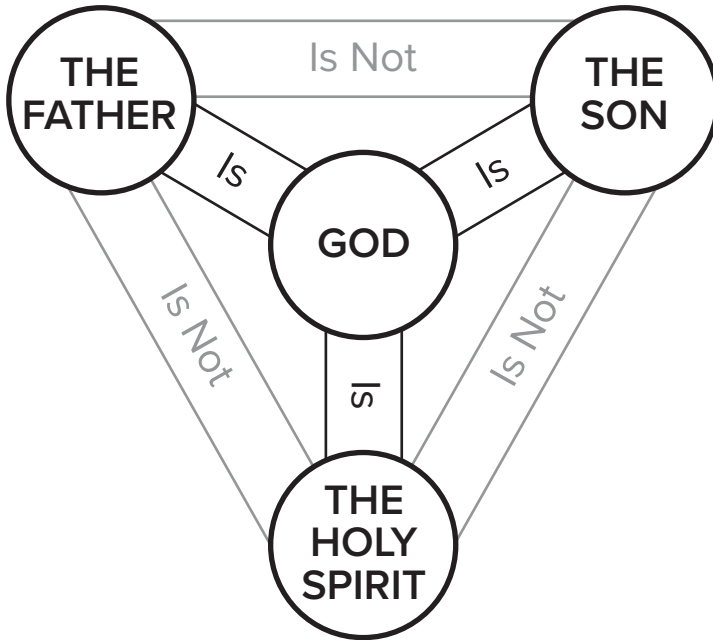
1. Why might the Lord's Prayer begin with a request concerning God himself: "Hallowed be your name"?
2. In John 17:20–26, who is Jesus praying for and what are his specific requests?
3. From John 16:5–15, why would Jesus say that it's better for the disciples if he goes away and sends the Holy Spirit?



Explore It

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

As Christians, we believe in one God who exists eternally in three Persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We do *not* believe in three gods, nor do we believe in one God who only manifests himself in three or more different ways. These three Persons are all equally God. One Person is not a little more or a little bit less God than the others. They are equally God. This is what we call the Trinity.



This diagram, called the shield of the Trinity, helps explain the unity and diversity of the Trinity. You can see that the Father is God, but he is not the same Person as the Son or Spirit. In the same way, the eternal Son of God (Jesus Christ) is God, but he is a different Person than the Spirit or Father. The Holy Spirit is God and is not the same Person as the Son or Father.

While each member of the Trinity is fully and equally divine, each Person also has distinct roles.

- **THE FATHER** is portrayed in the Bible as the planner and the source. He sent the eternal Son of God into our world. God the Father is the originator of all things, who was active in creation along with God the Son and God the Spirit.
- **THE SON** (Jesus Christ) existed in eternity past with the Father and the Spirit, but he took on humanity, was born into our world without ever having been made, and demonstrated to us the character of God. He revealed through his life and teaching who God is most clearly. His death and resurrection demonstrated his supremacy and make a way for us to enter into relationship with God.
- **THE HOLY SPIRIT** has been sent into our world and our lives by the Father and the Son. He is active and present in our world right now. When we trust in Jesus' finished work on the cross, the Spirit indwells us, taking up residence in our lives. He empowers us with gifts and strengths for service. He places us in the church, the body of Christ, and he guides us and leads us throughout life. He provides comfort when we grieve and strength when we are weak.

What Does It Mean to “Hallow” God’s Name?

To *hallow* means to make holy. To hallow God’s name means to honor it as sacred. When we pray, we enter the presence of God with reverence, worship, and thanksgiving. We thank God not only for what he has done, but also for who he is. God’s greatness and glory alone are worthy of praise. In this way, we recognize that everything we have belongs to God.

While these three Persons are distinct, they exist in unity. Wherever one is present, the others are also present. They exist and work in an interpenetrating relationship. That's why Jesus could say, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father" (from John 14:5–14). That's why we can refer to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ—because where one member of the Trinity exists all three are present.

It's also important to note that there is no fourth member in this Trinity. We are not on a journey to become gods; that is an impossibility. However, we are called into relationship with the eternal God through the Person of the Holy Spirit. We receive eternal life as a gift from God when we respond to him with faith. As we grow in our Christian life, prayer is a vital link in our relationship with God.



The Seven Petitions

The seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer emphasize various attributes of God that help us place our needs and desires in proper perspective. The first three center on God. Only by focusing on our Father in heaven can we find the attitude that puts our own needs in perspective. The next four center on our needs—body, soul, and spirit—and the needs of others.

PETITION		THE LORD’S PRAYER	GOD’S ATTRIBUTE	MEANING
		Our Father in heaven,	God’s Love	God is a loving Father.
“Your”	1	Hallowed be your name,	God’s Holiness	God’s name is holy.
	2	Your kingdom come,	God’s Sovereignty	There is no one above God our King.
	3	Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.	God’s Authority	God’s will is perfect.
“Us/Our”	4	Give us today our daily bread.	God’s Providence	Our needs are met by our heavenly Father.
	5	And forgive us our debts [trespasses], as we also have forgiven our debtors [those who trespass against us].	God’s Mercy	Forgiveness is our greatest need.
	6	And lead us not into temptation,	God’s Protection	Trials prove our faith and develop character.
	7	But deliver us from the evil one.	God’s Deliverance	We are more than conquerors through Christ.



Live It

Jesus taught us to pray starting with the words, “Our Father in heaven.” Perhaps you’ve repeated those words so often that they roll from your tongue in an almost-commonplace fashion. But this way of addressing God was nothing less than revolutionary in Jesus’ day.

Pagan peoples who worshiped idols and myths—such as the Romans worshiping Jupiter or the Greeks worshiping Zeus—may have sometimes referred to their god as “father.” However, they used the term to indicate their god was the origin or source of all things, not to imply a family relationship with the deity.

Although Old Testament passages occasionally refer to a notion of God as Father (Deut. 14:1–2; Ps. 103:13; Jer. 31:20), Judaism by the time of Jesus considered calling God “our Father” to be presumptuous and blasphemous. Jesus, however, repeatedly called God *Father* (this was one reason the Jewish leaders wanted to execute him). When we speak to God as *our Father*, we use the intimate language of a child communicating with a loving parent.

We pray to God as our Father because that is what Jesus taught us to do and because we have been adopted as children into the family of God. We become children of God by faith in his Son, Jesus Christ (John 1:12), and so we can boldly approach God in prayer. Our Father is near to us and accessible; but he is also “in heaven,” which reminds us that he is above us and greater than we are. He sees our end from the beginning and is worthy of our trust.

3. Reflecting on John 17:20–26, have you experienced any gaps between *knowing* that God loves you and *receiving* God’s love emotionally or *extending* that same love to others? If so, what makes it difficult for you to let the reality of God’s love sink deep into your life and being?

4. Read Hebrews 4:16. Do you approach God’s “throne of grace with confidence” when you pray? Why or why not?

5. How does our world see God's love in Christians today? How is that view of God's love obscured at times—and what can we do to change that?

6. How could you become more aware of the Spirit's presence in your daily life and especially in your prayers?

Exercise in Prayer

Praying the Scriptures

There are many ways you can pray the words of Scripture, but try this: *paraphrase* and *place* yourself in the story. The words of the Bible give us an opportunity to direct God's words back to him in the form of prayer. Take a verse or two from your devotional time, a favorite Bible passage, a prayer recorded in the Bible, or perhaps a psalm; then, rephrase the words to compose your own prayer to God.

- Praying Psalm 23 can bring peace to a troubled mind.
- Praying Psalm 100 can inspire sincere praise.
- The optional Bible reading in each session of this study provides a passage that can be turned into your own paraphrased prayer.



Finding yourself in a familiar Bible story can also incite your soul to prayer. Stories from the Gospels about Jesus are particularly helpful for engaging your imagination. Here are five simple steps you can take:

- 1.** Read the story, such as the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) or the healing of the woman who bled for twelve years (Mark 5:25–34).
- 2.** Place yourself in the story as a bystander observing or as one of the characters.
- 3.** Ask questions to become part of the story: What do I see? Hear? Feel? Smell or taste?
- 4.** What words, themes, or images come to mind as you reflect on this story?
- 5.** How are you now moved to pray and talk with God?

Involving the creative capacities of our imagination in prayer can open up new avenues for spiritual growth and depth in our relationship with the Lord.

Notes

