



Trinity Church Adelaide and Trinity Church Brighton  
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The concept for this series of studies arose out of the preaching program for Trinity Church Adelaide where a series on eschatology was planned, followed by a series on prayer. These two topics are rarely brought together in our thinking and yet it is clear that in the New Testament they are rarely far apart. This led to a series of studies written by me to be shared by both churches and a preaching series at Trinity Church Brighton by the same name. As such, while the emphasis is on prayer and the structure is provided by the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6, the overarching theme of the series of studies is to learn how our place in 'these last days' shapes the way we pray.

The reality of a new pastoral role means that these studies haven't been 'field tested' to the same degree that we'd usually aim for when they're going to be so widely used. Perhaps this is an encouragement for Growth Group leaders to make sure they treat the studies as a tool not your master as you engage with the authoritative word of God!

I hope you're as encouraged in using these studies as I have been in their preparation.

Simon Marshman  
Senior Pastor  
Trinity Church Brighton

# 1 – Our Father In Heaven

Big Idea: to see the incredible privilege of approaching God as our father, which informs our understanding of prayer as fundamentally relational not transactional.

Q1-3

For wider context you might like to begin the reading from 6:1, where Jesus sets the agenda for this block of teaching: our relationship with God rather than our desire to impress people. The reason for stopping at v10 is to keep our focus on the character of God – our father in heaven whose kingdom and will rule over all. But of course you could read through to the end of the prayer if you like.

Q1 –

The contrast made in v5-6 is between people who want to present well to others vs people who are primarily concerned with their relationship with God. There is a play on the concept of who is looking on: the crowds or your father.

Q2 –

Jesus describes the pagans (literally 'the nations' ie, gentiles/non-Jews) as babbling in the hope that they can influence the gods through the right use of enough words. It's an image of trying to manipulate the gods, which is contrasted with prayer that knows God already knows. Of course, this begs the question of why you would pray if God already knows. Which is a significant aspect of the rest of this study.

Q3 –

We see the primary focus is on God in relationship with him as child to father.

While this prayer is packed full of content, it is also very concise.

And while they are genuine requests, they model prayer that is calling on God to fulfill his promises, not attempting to manipulate him to fulfill our desires.

Q4-6

This next block of questions engages with a point about the original languages that the Bible was written in, which can be tricky to handle in a Growth Group. However it seems that this was an important point for Mark and Paul and the early church, so it seems worth making. To avoid confusion, we're not suggesting that the only time Jesus used the word 'Abba' was in the Garden of Gethsemane. He Jesus used the standard Aramaic word Abba, or the related Hebrew word Ab whenever he spoke about or to God as father. It's just that this episode clearly made an impression on the disciples and the early church.

Q4 –

Jesus demonstrated his reverence for his father in affirming God's sovereign rule (everything is possible for you) from a position of submission (yet not what I will, but what you will). His intimacy and familiarity is highlighted by the address 'Abba' and the vulnerable honesty of his request.

Q5 –

- a) When he is referring to the three persons of the Trinity Paul frequently uses the name 'God' to refer to God the Father, in contrast to the Son and the Spirit. Christians are described as Children of God (14, 16), who we call out to as father (15), being also heirs of his inheritance (v17)

- b) Christians have received the Spirit (v15), who leads us (v14), makes us children through adoption (v15), conferring on us and the freedom to call God father (v15) and then making sure we know this freedom (16)
- c) Christians are made like the Son in as much as we share sonship (v15), which has an emphasis on our sharing in what is rightly his, but now ours by adoption (v17), such that we are united with him in his relationship to his father (v15) and in his suffering and glorification (v17)

Q6 –

You could say as much about this question as you like. It's designed to engage our emotional responses more than just rehashing intellectual comprehension, because that seems to be a significant goal in Paul's writing here and in the following paragraphs.

Q7 –

'father' vs 'God' emphasises relationship

'our' vs 'my' emphasises union with Christ and each other. Familial relationship rather than a cluster of individuals, and a relationship that is only Christ's by right and ours by God's amazing grace of adoption.

Q8 –

The irony is that many Christians have treated the Lord's prayer in a pagan way. Presuming that it's the formula to use to make sure we're heard. Or that it's a good way to show your religious credentials if you've got it memorised and you can say it in church without reading the screen (or the book).

There are many other ways that we fall into this trap in every context of the church from high-church ritualism to pentacostalism and lots of places in between.

The point is to contrast our tendency to fall in to the same traps described in Matt 6:5-8.

Q9 –

The main take home points of this study would be: relationship not transaction, a conversation with God not impressing others, delighting in the access we have to God as father. But there could be many other helpful reflections too.

Q10 –

This is to encourage our groups to avoid the temptation to sit on the things we've learned, and grow in our desire to speak with others about what we've learned of God. It's a good thing to try and build into all of our studies.

Further Comment on the language of God as Father:

It's helpful to note that calling God father may trigger all kinds of emotions for people depending on their experience of their earthly fathers. Some points that may be helpful to note:

- The Bible is clear that God knows just how bad human fathers can be. See Lot, Judah and David as three examples of men who are significant characters in God's salvation history and yet were terrible fathers.
- The language of God as Father doesn't affirm the many and various unhelpful patterns of fatherhood that different cultures have developed. Jesus was quite comfortable to subvert and overturn all kinds of cultural norms, but he was clear in affirming God as father.
- The point is not that God as father is modelled on human fathers, but that human fathers should model on God. (This seems to be the context of Paul's comment in Ephesians 3:14-15)
- Thus we should allow scripture to inform our understanding of what it means for God to be father, which in turn defines what good fatherhood looks like. This is clearly

beyond the scope of this study. In short though, it might be helpful to affirm that anything good in our relationship with our earthly fathers points us forward to the far greater good of our heavenly father, while in an opposite but still significant way the pain of broken relationship with an earthly father also points us forward to the far greater good of our heavenly father.

A brief but quite technical summary can be found at

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/gods-fatherhood/>

A longer but wonderfully rich and pastoral discussion can be found in JI Packer's classic *Knowing God*, chapter 19 'Sons of God'

## 2 – Hallowed Be Your Name

Big Idea:

To pray for God's name to be hallowed is to pray that God himself would be glorified. The passage in 2 Thessalonians helps us see the ultimate expression of this in light of the return of Jesus.

A brief note:

Field testing of this study has highlighted that it is far more complex than it needs to be!! Suggestions to simplify it are outlined below.

Q1 –

Dictionaries are fine to use at this point! We're just trying to make sure people know what the word is saying. 'made holy, consecrated, greatly revered and honoured' are all pretty sound definitions. For the Bible geeks, the word comes from the same root as 'holy' which itself has the idea of being 'set apart' 'different from the common'. Of God it brings all kinds of other words to mind: pure, perfect, sinless etc. It's a recognition that God is fundamentally different from everything else. He alone is Creator not created; infinite not finite; just not unjust; faithful not unfaithful etc etc. For one brief expression of this you might like to look at Exodus 15:11 to see how Moses summed this up in his song of praise after God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt.

Q2 –

This question is to help us notice that this phrase is not a statement "your name is holy", but a request "make your name holy". There's actually a massive concept sitting behind this: that God pursues his own glory and that this is a very good thing! Because it is hard for us to get our heads around this, we're using the passage from 2 Thessalonians to unpack this a bit further.

Q3 –

Growing in faith in Christ  
Growing in love for others  
Persevering under persecution

Q4-6

This is where we get distracted having to exegete the question before we exegete the passage. You might like to replace these three questions as follows:

*How does the faith of the Thessalonians in v3-4 show God to be right (v5)?*

Their faith, love and perseverance are the expression of God's work in them. If there is any doubt that maybe God can't be trusted to bring justice, Paul is about to address that in v6-10

*Paul goes on to describe God's just judgment that is to come. How does he describe the people who will suffer this judgment and how does v8 describe their core problem?*

Paul addresses the specific issue of the persecution and suffering the Thessalonians face, and God will bring just punishment for the perpetrators of that suffering. However the broader category in v8 is 'those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.'

Two points to note: First; in the Bible generally and the NT in particular ignorance is not innocence. We are wilfully ignorant, having chosen to ignore the evidence of God and stand condemned for this (see Rom 1:12-20, 28). Second; the gospel here is not something to be believed but obeyed.

*In v10 we read that Jesus will return 'to be glorified in his holy people'. What is the core attribute of these people that is summed up in v10?*

'you believed our testimony to you'. i.e. the gospel.

*From what we've read from v1-10, how will Jesus be glorified in his people on that last day?*

Their belief in the gospel (v10) has overflowed in transformed lives of faith, love and perseverance (v3-4). This is evidence of God's work in them (his gift of grace and peace, v2), which has made them worthy of his kingdom (v5).

The thing that distinguishes Jesus' holy people from those who will be cast out is ultimately his work in and for them.

*How does Paul connect the future return of Jesus to his present prayers for the Thessalonians in v11-12?*

"With this in mind" captures the future perspective of Jesus' return to be glorified in his holy people. That's the scene that Paul has in mind as he prays for the Thessalonians.

His prayer is that God would continue to do the work he has begun and indeed has promised to do in them.

While he prays for 'success' in their endeavours, it is not for their own glory, but for God's glory as a demonstration of his work in them.

Q7 –

2 Thess 1:11-12 should get us thinking about how differently we might pray for each other if we were really concerned for God's glory.

Q8 –

We can still pray for temporary and material concerns, but they're all framed by a desire for God to be glorified in and through the lives of his people.

Q9 –

This aims to make this more tangible for us. What would it look like to pray for exams or work or even an upcoming family holiday with this perspective in mind?

### 3 – Your Kingdom Come

Big Idea: Jesus teaches us to lift our eyes and pray for the big things of God's kingdom. But that isn't any less personal or detailed. It plays out in the small things of life and the attitudes of our hearts.

Q1 –

The are about God. *'Your name... your kingdom... your will'*

Q2 –

All three of these requests recognise that things on earth are not as they should be – that there is a higher ideal: *as in heaven*

Heaven is not just a mystical place 'up there', but the realm in which God's rule is expressed and experienced in full.

Technically this phrase could be applied to only 'your will be done', but it seems to function more as a bookend to these three requests as a cluster.

Q3 –

Too often we make ourselves the centre of our prayers. The prayer is not 'let us hallow your name and bring your kingdom and do your will'. We're asking God to accomplish these ends. This is a rebuke to our self-focus, and an encouragement that these are his tasks to accomplish.

Q4 –

All three request are future oriented and framed around the idea of God's rule being expressed on earth as it is in heaven. This happens in part in this present age whenever Jesus' rule is seen in the lives of his people, but it will be fully expressed when he returns and finally rids creation of sin and its consequences. This future orientation with present implications is seen throughout Jesus' teaching. And we're jumping into the famous Beatitudes to see how it plays out there.

Q5-7 –

The Beatitudes are a wonderful summary statement of Jesus' teaching. They clearly have a poetic element to them, so we should expect they use imagery and repetition to make their point. And we should expect them to make their point as a whole passage, not just separate ideas in isolation. As such, the overarching theme of the kingdom of heaven clearly frames them.

Q5 –

The whole passage is a recognition of the present (the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful etc) and a promise of future hope (they will...)

Q6 –

God's kingdom frames this whole collection: v3 and v10 serve as bookends "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" which connects all the other promises with this coming kingdom.

Q7 –

This is a rich picture of the coming kingdom. It's much more than just cocktails on the beach under palm trees. It's a kingdom of reversal and restoration and blessing that is so good its hard to imagine. But it's also a kingdom that is deeply involved in our hearts. These things are internal to a person: meekness, mercy, purity of heart, mourning and rejoicing. To pray for the kingdom to come is to pray for something that is deeply ingrained in our character.

Q8 –

This is deliberately open ended. But surely we begin by allowing God's word to inform us of how good God's kingdom is.

Q9 –

God's kingdom is visionary! Ie, it's big, its future, and it's wonderful. Asking him to bring his kingdom is to ask him to bring all the rich blessing and transformation of the kingdom.

Q10 –

Note that a big picture of the kingdom doesn't mean we can't pray for the small things. But perhaps it shapes the way we pray for them. For example, not just praying for the conflict situation at work, but asking that we'd be a peacemaker in the midst of it, reflecting our status as child of the king.

Q11 –

If life in the kingdom is this good now and even better when it is fully realised, what greater thing could we want for anyone. Not just healing from their current illness or provision for their current need, but ultimate experience of the coming kingdom of God.

## 4. Give Us

Big Idea: God cares about our physical as well as our spiritual needs, which should grow us in joyful dependence and contentment.

Q1 –

- a) We can't secure our daily needs – even such things as simple as our 'daily bread' are a gift from him.
- b) He provides us with our daily bread. Jesus said that man cannot live on bread alone, but the correlating truth is that man needs bread to live. God knows, he cares, and he provides.
- c) It's daily bread that we ask for today, which implies that this is a daily prayer.

Q2 –

There is plenty that could be said and you don't need to fish for anything in particular. It's just good to see that the big vision of God's coming kingdom is quite compatible with the daily needs of his creatures.

Q3 –

The warning of 9 and 10 is that the love of money and the desire to get rich (two ways of saying the same thing) leads to a terrible outcome: wandering from the faith (v10). Nothing could be a greater loss. So on this measure alone, contentment brings great gain!

Q4 –

Goal 1: Pursue wealth!

Goal 2: Pursue the fruit of the Spirit in the present and eternal life in the future.

Note that there is a godly form of discontentment in this. Wanting something is not bad, it's a question of wanting the right things!

Q5 –

The Teacher in Ecclesiastes (Ecc 5:15) had a very similar perspective to Paul's comment in v7, and his conclusion was that if this life is all there is then you might as well just live it up. However, the reality that Jesus will return means that persisting in contentment is worth it. What is more though, our present riches are an opportunity to invest in things of eternal significance. So it's not just 'hold on till he comes back' but 'invest with an eternal horizon in mind'.

Q6 –

He knows we are fragile, finite creatures and he teaches us to turn to him for our physical needs. Jesus will go on to talk about the wider categories of food and drink and clothes (Matt 6:25-24) which points us beyond the specific prayer for 'daily bread'. This is a model for daily dependence on God in all our daily needs.

Q7 –

It's a reminder that even the simple things come from him.

It's a reminder that we don't need to be consumed by our consumption. We can hand it over to him as an extension of our desire for his name to be hallowed, his kingdom to come and his will to be done.

## 5. Forgive Us

**Big Idea:** Asking God for forgiveness is a daily part of the Christian life that is an expression of our deep appreciation of his grace to us.

Q1 –

Our sin places us 'in debt to God'. Sin is our failure to give God the allegiance, obedience, and honor that is rightly his.

V10 frames this as a pattern for daily prayer, which means the request for forgiveness is equally frequent as an regular expression of our ongoing dependence on God's grace.

Q2 –

The obvious misunderstanding here is to think that Jesus means we must earn God's forgiveness by showing forgiveness to others.

This is a great example of the importance of reading the text in context and in this case the wider context is of God's unmerited grace and his initiative in our relationship with him.

However we must not gloss over the difficult teaching of Jesus here. As he says, persisting in unforgiveness excludes us from receiving God's forgiveness. This will almost certainly throw up lots of questions for the group, which is good! We turn to Matthew 18 to explore them further.

Q3 –

Clearly the servant didn't really appreciate the grace he had been shown. The footnotes of most bibles will clarify that the servant owed his master the equivalence of about 20 years wages, while his colleague merely owed him one day's wages. It is the height of ingratitude to quibble over a dollar when you've been gifted a fortune!

Q4 –

Surely the answer is no!

This question aims to join the dots for us back to Jesus' words in the Matthew 6. The servant's lack of mercy demonstrated that he didn't appreciate the grace the master had shown. The parable uses an absurd situation to imply that the experience of grace from God should overflow in grace towards others.

Q5 –

Peter had asked in v21 how many times he should forgive his brother or sister who sins against him. He probably thought he was being generous with the suggestion of seven times. Jesus answer highlights the magnitude of God's grace to us in comparison to the grace we are called to offer one another.

Q6 –

Jesus point in Matthew is that Peter has already been forgiven so much. And we should read the Lord's prayer with this in mind. It is a prayer for people who have already experienced the grace of God, which should be transformative in our lives. It's an indicator the sincerity of our acceptance of God's grace to us in Jesus if we exercise forgiveness towards others in our lives.

Q7-8 –

These are really just trying to get people to engage in personal reflection on this.

Q9 –

It's helpful for us to know that even before the cross, Jesus based his teaching on a platform of grace. This is because the Old Testament did too. God's grace is evident from the opening

chapters of Genesis right through sacrificial system of the tabernacle and the teaching of the prophets. It all pointed forward to the cross of Christ. However, we have the great privilege of looking back at the cross of Christ. Standing before Jesus as saviour surely intensifies the imagery of Matthew 18:21-25 and our attitude to those who sin against us.

Q10 –

Both the prayer of Matthew 6 and the parable of Matthew 18 have the future judgment of God in view. We pray for forgiveness now because we know that one day we will stand before Jesus as judge then. The daily request for forgiveness is an expression of the daily prayer for God's name to be hallowed and his kingdom to come.

## 6. Lead Us

Big Idea: Jesus taught us to pray for God's leading in life with the concern that we would not stumble in sin but enter into his kingdom glory.

Q1 –

The first three requests of the Lord's Prayer are all about God: *your* name, kingdom, will. The second three requests are about us give, forgive, lead *us*. They sum up the daily needs of the Christian in terms of material provision, forgiveness of sin that we've done, avoidance of sin we've not yet done.

Q2 –

We're profoundly fragile: physically so fragile we need his daily sustenance, spiritually so fragile that we're constantly prone to sin. Our inclusion in his coming kingdom is only possible by his divine intervention!

Q3 –

Sin clearly mattered to Jesus! It's significant enough that it is with respect to sin that Jesus taught us to ask God for his leading.

Q4 –

The first half of the verse implies that there is a danger within us.

The second half of the verse recognises that there is a danger outside of us.

Both come together to render us vulnerable to sin and in need of God's intervention if we are to avoid it.

Q5 –

- a) Jesus is described as the 'pioneer and perfecter of faith'. These are essentially the two opposites. The one who starts it and finishes it. The beginning and the end.
- b) He endured opposition from sinners, ultimately expressed in the cross. He has taken his seat of glory.
- c) He now sits (ie. the work is done) at the right hand of God (ie. an image of his power and authority)

Q6 –

We need to throw off 'the sin that so easily entangles' if we are to run to the finish line. The implication is that sin easily distracts or entangles. It's our natural state to get caught up in it an an active move to throw it off. But if we don't throw off sin then we won't make it over the line. It's a big deal!

Q7 –

The goal is our life in the kingdom of God. Note the imagery of the throne room – Jesus sits at the right hand of the throne of God. You could say that while the first half of the Lord's prayer asks for God's kingdom to come to us, the second half asks him to get us to it.

Q9 –

It seems incredibly rare for prayer time in Growth Group to include the request for ourselves or each other to avoid sin. What would it look like for that to be added to the common prayer points shared "I'm feeling anxious about (x), please pray that I'd avoid temptation and sin in this area"

Q10 –

We often ask for prayer for important decisions. But how often do we ask that in those decisions we would avoid temptation and be strengthened against the schemes of Satan?

Q11 –

This is a question that is more about group life and the conviction of spurring one another on to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24). It highlights just how important relationships of trust and care are to a healthy Growth Group, but it also highlights how important it is that our Growth Groups are saturated in the gospel of grace. Otherwise we'll never feel inclined or able to share about our ongoing need for grace!

## 7. The Kingdom is Yours

To avoid confusion, no one is suggesting that 1 Chronicles is definitely the source-text for the doxology that has traditionally been included in the Lord's Prayer. It is simply a pretty good example that has lots of similarity.

Q1 –

The God and father of Israel. God is acknowledged as father of the nation. However even David is not bold enough to address him directly as father, but reverently as Lord (Yahweh).

- a) He is addressed by his personal name: LORD (Yahweh). He is addressed in relation to his people as father of their father.
- b) He is 'from everlasting to everlasting' – ie. There is no such thing as 'before him' and no such thing as 'after him'. God is beyond time – eternal.

Q2 –

Notice all the kingdom language: greatness, power, glory, majesty, splendor etc. In a word God is sovereign.

Notice his generosity as king: "wealth and honor come from you" v12, which also affirms our dependence on him because any wealth we have has come from him and not ourselves.

Q3 –

'In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all' This is an expression that future security is found only in God. Even King David, or his son Solomon, are dependent on God to lift up and give strength.

Q4 –

The point here is that God is described as powerful, but that power is only comforting if he is also loving. That loving relationship is summed up in the use of God's covenant name Yahweh (translated as LORD) and in his relationship to his people as father.

Q5 –

The doxology at the end of the prayer underlines the appropriateness of everything that has gone before. We pray for his kingdom to come because he is truly king. We express our dependence on him because everything comes from him. It is also an expression of deep assurance, acknowledging that he is the God who has the power to act on our requests.

Q6 –

As Christians we look back to the demonstration of God's kingdom, power and glory in the death and resurrection of Christ, as well as looking forward to it's ultimate expression when he returns.

Q7-10

These questions don't need to be worked through in detail, but could simply be summed up in one that might ask something like "How does this prayer reflect the priorities and concerns of the Lord's Prayer?"

Q7 –

That through growing knowledge and depth of insight (key phrases for Paul's description of knowing God's word by his Spirit) they would know what is best. This seems very closely related to avoiding temptation, and a key aspect of how God would deliver his people from evil.

Q8 –

That they would remain godly through to Christ's return, overflowing in good fruit.

Q9 –

Paul's desire is for their present knowledge and godliness to persist and grow right through to Jesus' return, which will be to the glory and praise of God (as he summed up in 2 Thess 1:10)

Q10 –

Paul prays confident that if God does v9, then v10 and 11 will follow. See 1:6 for another expression of this confidence.

Q11 –

It's a big picture of God's glory and rule into all eternity, which is also a present reality so we pray daily.

Q12 –

Praise in our prayers helps orient our perspective on who we pray to.

'Our father' reminds us of his personal concern and the relationship we have with him through Jesus. 'In heaven' reminds us of his glory and power to act.

The acronym of 'ACTS' is a helpful framework: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. The Collect prayers of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer are further examples that address God in such a way that frame the perspective of the one praying in relation to their request.

Q13 –

Just as we look forward to ultimate Kingdom experience in the life to come, it's good to keep asking for kingdom snippets here and now: healing, provision, reconciliation, justice etc, but always remembering that they'll only be experienced in part.