

Creative Living Bible Study

Connecting With God

Insights into the Lord's Prayer

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Part 1: Focus on God and His Will

Lesson 1

The Lord's Prayer is perhaps the best known passage of the Bible. It is recited millions of times each week around the world. Concise, profound, simple, serene--the 66 words of what has become known as the Lord's Prayer reveal the deepest truths about our relationship with God and fulfillment in life.

Jesus gave His disciples this exemplary prayer when one of them asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). The disciples were all Jews and familiar with prayer, but perhaps they saw Jesus' communication with His Father to be different and the secret of His amazing ministry. They must have observed that His frequent times of prayer actually linked Him with the unseen world. One author states:

It became clear that Jesus had a link with eternity. Though He moved through time, there was something transtemporal about Him, something in Him that brought people into confrontation with the deep issues of life. I'm sure He was fun to be with--natural and joyful, a good companion--but somehow His manner and His words tended to pitch people's attention onto Connecting With God important things, matters of depth and permanence. He was a man with one foot planted in time--for God truly intersected history with His incarnation--but with the other foot in eternity.¹

So perhaps the real desire of the disciple who asked, "Lord, teach us to pray," was to discover the secret of Christ's powerful life. Jesus responded with a brief prayer meant to be a guideline for all prayer. The Lord's Prayer is made up of two parts. The first focuses on God and His redemptive work in the world (Matthew 6:9-10). The second emphasizes personal needs and help in daily struggles (Matthew 6:11-13). This order shows that prayer should begin with turning from self to focus on God's majesty and will (His kingdom or lordship) in our lives. This prepares us to desire His will above our own as we pray about concerns and needs.

Perhaps most important to remember is that Jesus gave the Lord's Prayer in the context of teachings that strictly censored hypocrisy. The prayer was never meant to be a liturgy, but rather to exemplify sincere communication with a loving heavenly Father about everyday needs.

Only as we pray the Lord's Prayer from the heart do we bring joy to God and find fulfillment ourselves.

Yet how easy it is to recite the Lord's Prayer without even thinking about its meaning. The purpose of our study of this great prayer is that we might more fully understand its meanings and be able to pray it with absolute sincerity. Another purpose is to learn principles from this exemplary prayer that direct our overall prayer life to be like that of Jesus, that we also might know the power and joy that comes from having one foot planted in time and the other in eternity.

Having a Perfect Heavenly Father

"Our Father..."

What a privilege to address God as "Our Father." It was Jesus who taught this familiar way of conceptualizing God. Throughout His ministry, Jesus modeled and encouraged such an intimate, personal, family-like relationship with God. The gospels record Jesus referring to God as Father over seventy times.

The Scriptures up to the time of Jesus rarely mentioned God as a Father. However, other human terms were used to reveal the character of the transcendent Almighty God of heaven and earth. For example, Old Testament passages speak of His face looking at us with grace, His ears hearing our prayers, His eyes seeing all things, His voice communicating His word to us, His fingers creating us, His hands saving, guiding, providing, protecting and disciplining His children. The Psalms especially are filled with the love, goodness and faithfulness of God depicted in human terms.

In spite of these descriptions, the world at the time of Christ, as today, wondered whether the One behind the universe was a hostile, indifferent or friendly being. The incarnate Son of God answered these questions as He introduced the omnipotent One who called all things into being as a loving Father--perfect in compassion, wisdom and justice--who desires an intimate relationship with each of His children. The Scriptures reveal that God, unlike imperfect earthly fathers, is dependable, loyal, available, understanding, strong, and uncondemning. He looks with compassion and deep concern on our struggles and is moved by our least effort to resist evil and do good. By His Spirit, He extends His grace to help and lift us above sin's pull. His thoughts and inner attitudes toward each of His children are good, gentle, kind, perceptive and affectionate. In His love, He is always strongly opposed to things destructive to our lives, but in any situation welcomes us into

His presence with a sympathetic ear. He is not temperamental or moody, but consistent and even-natured.

The whole concept of God as our Father is filled with incredible love, meeting our deepest need to be fully known, with all our faults, and fully loved. Through teachings such as the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus demonstrated that even when we have broken God's heart by our actions, He will receive His repentant child with forgiveness and an open-handed, greathearted welcome.

To relate to God as an affectionate, loving child is a great privilege and

brings the deepest sense of security and fulfillment in life. We will begin our study of The Lord's Prayer observing biblical truths related to knowing God as a perfect heavenly Father.

Lesson 2

What Heaven is Like

"Our Father in heaven . . ."

Heaven is mentioned over 400 times throughout the 66 books of the Bible. Sometimes it refers to the earth's atmosphere. "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven..." (Isaiah 55:10). Sometimes heaven is used to speak of outer space. "The heavens declare the glory of God..." (Psalm 19:1). Certainly God is in these places because He is spirit and omnipresent. "Do I not fill heaven and the earth?" is the declaration of the Lord recorded in Jeremiah 23:24.

But the heaven Jesus refers to in the Lord's Prayer when He prays, "Our Father in heaven," is the third use of the word heaven in the Scriptures. It is the place where God dwells and from which He reigns eternally. In the New Testament, it is sometimes described as a heavenly country, a New Jerusalem, a home prepared especially for God's children. Being a realm we cannot see, it is hard to imagine, and many questions surround the concept. In his book, *Living the Lord's Prayer*, Everett Fullam states:

Imagine you have a blackboard in front of you, and we have drawn a line across it halfway between the bottom and the top. Everything below the line represents the world within our experience--the absolute limit of our human reasoning, even of imagination. Then we place the Lord God above that line, beyond the reach of human knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Our finite minds will not penetrate that area, no matter how hard we try. Now this would be a true picture were it not for the astounding fact, the most central and sobering teaching of the Christian faith, that God at a real point in history came down below that line and entered the world of our experience. In this boundless universe of galaxies, quasars and formations surpassing our wildest imaginations, this tiny little globe on which we live became, in the words of J. B. Phillips, "the visited planet." God Himself, in the person of His Son, came among us.¹

Jesus, the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1f), came to reveal truths of the unseen world to us, but even He found it difficult to explain to mankind in terms we could understand. In the context of our experience with human fathers, the word *father* to describe God falls short, but the phrase *in heaven* places Him in the realm of the infinite and eternal... absolutely unlimited and unfettered by the conditions in this world that restrict us humans. He is heavenly, not earthly. Jesus wants us to see that the Father is transcendent, omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing) and omnipresent (everywhere present), even though our humanness makes us incapable of fully comprehending those descriptions.

In the words, "Our Father in heaven," Jesus reveals that this transcendent One, enthroned in heaven, wants to relate to us as dearly loved children. His infinite love can heal our emotional wounds from

earthly fathers and others, and His wisdom can be trusted. He reigns over all things from a place called heaven that the Scriptures say will one day be the believer's eternal home. The descriptions of this place, envisioned by men like Isaiah and the Apostle John, sound like something we would see on a modern movie screen... almost unimaginable. They had difficulty using human language to depict what they saw.

But in common terms, Jesus promised that those who believe in Him will be there and that He has gone to prepare a place in heaven for each one. Because His resurrection is a fact of history, we can know Jesus was God's Son, and His promises regarding heaven and our eternal future there will be fulfilled.

Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." In teaching us to pray, "Our Father in heaven," Jesus encourages us to begin prayer with faith that the Father is on His throne, and we will one day see Him face to face. In this lesson, we will look at some of the facts the Bible gives us about heaven.

Lesson 3

Knowing God

"Hallowed be your name."

How easy it is for us to rush into God's presence with an urgent concern or list of concerns which we inform Him about (as though He doesn't know) and then instruct Him how to deal with.

But Jesus teaches us to begin prayer with, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Herein lies an important principle of a powerful and fulfilling prayer life. We should begin prayer by turning our focus on our heavenly Father, opening ourselves to His presence, putting ourselves under His sovereignty and remembering who He is. When we start there, our concerns may well diminish in size in light of the goodness and greatness of the Lord who bids us come to Him in prayer.

What does the phrase, "hallowed be your name," mean? We must go back in biblical history to understand. The name of God was so holy to the Jews of old that they refused to pronounce it. When they read the Scriptures aloud, they did not say the word, which consisted of four consonants, transliterated JHWH, which later became Jehovah or Yahweh. When they came upon the name, they substituted the word *Adonai*, which means Lord. The word LORD in the English Bible is usually the translation of JHWH.

But when we see "thy name" (KJV) or "your name" in the Bible, it does not just stand for Yahweh. The "name" of God biblically stands for the whole being of God. In other words, to know His name is to know His character, His personality, His temperament, His love, His mercy, His power. For example, when the Psalmist declares, "...those who know Your name put their trust in You" (Psalm 9:10), he is saying, "Those who truly know who and what You are put their trust in You." In the same way, the psalmist who wrote, "Some boast of chariots, and

some of horses; but we boast of the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7), was saying that Israel took pride and found her identity and strength in knowing God.

God has revealed Himself through the inspired Scriptures and through the experiences of people who walked with Him--individuals like Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets and the Apostles of the New Testament. Most powerfully, God has allowed us to know Him through the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ, who is "the exact representation of His being" (Hebrews 1:3).¹ As we study the character of God revealed in these ways, and as we walk through life with Him, we grow in the knowledge of God that is the basis for truly hallowing His name.

To *hallow* the name of God, then, is to magnify, honor and revere who He is. We do this when we worship and praise Him, reminding ourselves of His glory and His loving-kindness seen throughout the Bible and experienced in our lives. In this lesson, we will make some observations about this very important first step in prayer.

Lesson 4

God's Good and Perfect Will

"Your kingdom come, Your will be done."

All of Scripture points to God's overall purpose to establish His righteous kingdom on earth. The Bible tells us that this kingdom where God's will is perfectly carried out will one day replace the kingdoms and nations of this world (Daniel 7:27). It also explains that God has gone to great lengths to bring people into this kingdom--people who are willing to relinquish dominion over their own lives and wholeheartedly subject themselves to God's appointed King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus' preaching focused on the kingdom of God. Matthew 9:35 states, "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness." Phrases such as "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near," "The kingdom of God is like..." and "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" were common in His teachings.

After His resurrection, Jesus continued this focus. Acts 1:3 records, "After His suffering, He showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."

When Jesus told us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done," He was directing us to begin prayer focused on God's overall purpose to establish His righteous kingdom, not only on earth one day, but in our hearts today.

God's intent to build His kingdom begins unfolding in Genesis as He created man in His image with the capacity to have a personal relationship with Him. But Genesis tells us of man's decision to dethrone the Lord from His rightful place as God. Falling for the serpent's temptation, Adam and Eve usurped God's prerogative to determine right and wrong. Everett Fullam writes:

God said it was wrong to eat from a certain tree. Adam and Eve said, "No, it is not wrong; it is right." (See Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-7.) They with all of us following their example, became the standard by which good and evil, right and wrong, are judged. We exercise our freedom against the will and purpose of God. We establish rival kingdoms in which we are the sovereigns, trying to bend others to our wills and purposes. Thus throughout the earth we have millions of kingdoms rival to the kingdom of God, people who will not live willingly under His sovereignty. And we have chaos. So Jesus said we should pray, "Thy kingdom come . . ." ¹

After the fall recorded in Genesis, the rest of Scripture reveals God's steps to rescue man and to restore the original kingdom man was created to live in forever. He did this by calling one man, Abraham, to be the father of a nation through whom a Savior would come. Romans 5:12-21 explains that as through one man, Adam, all fell from God's kingdom, so through one man, Jesus, we can again enter His kingdom. Romans tells us that when we choose to trust in Jesus' substitutionary death for our sin, we are given the gift of Jesus' righteousness before God. Not only this, but God places His Spirit within us to motivate us to do His will and make it possible for the supreme power of God to again rule in our hearts.

All who so choose make up the restored kingdom of God and will one day be a part of God's reestablished kingdom on earth. John, the author of Revelation, caught a glimpse of the future when Jesus Christ will return to set up His kingdom as he wrote, "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him . . ." (Revelation 1:5-7). So to sincerely pray, "your kingdom come, your will be done" is to first acknowledge God is king of a realm we don't yet see, but into which we enter when we choose to let Christ reign in our hearts. It is to determine to follow the good and perfect will of a loving heavenly Father at whatever the personal cost.

Sadly, thousands pray this prayer daily without really meaning it. For each who utters this petition, the question should be: Does Jesus Christ reign in me, thus making me a part of His kingdom on earth today?

Part II: Focus on Our Needs and Struggles

Lesson 5

Ask, Seek, Knock

"Give us today our daily bread."

Nothing is more wonderful for the Christian than God's open invitation to come to Him with all that is on our hearts. Thus far, Jesus has taught us to begin prayer by seeing God in His superior place and coming to Him as our loving heavenly Father whose will and kingdom we seek above all. This puts us in the right frame of mind to openly discuss needs and concerns and lay our requests before Him. Jesus teaches us that God welcomes this and is always available to listen, provide, lead and protect. It is this aspect of our relationship with God

that Jesus addresses in the second part of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus begins this section with the petition, "Give us today our daily bread." The term "bread" certainly refers to physical sustenance, but also to all our basic needs—physical, emotional and spiritual. God desires that we look to Him as our sole source of supply for all we need to sustain the "full" life Jesus came to give us (John 10:10b). While He may use a friend to help us, a doctor to heal us, or a job to provide for us, "every good and perfect gift" ultimately comes from God (James 1:17). When we come to Him with childlike faith, He promises to carry us through each challenge of life, orchestrating to give us the "bread" we need one day at a time.

More importantly, this dependence on God and open communication about our needs meets our deep spiritual need for fellowship with our Creator. The fifth century theologian, Augustine, wrote, "Thou has made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." As we learn to talk to God about everything, by God's design, we will find rest in our relationship with Him.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35). Through His death on the cross, Jesus made the way for us to be reconciled to God and be close to Him as a loving heavenly Father. As we meet with the Lord daily for prayer and meditation on His Word, our souls are fed, our spiritual thirst quenched and our spiritual life sustained. Not only this, but His Spirit within us uses our time with Christ to transform us into His likeness and strengthen us to reach out to others with God's love and grace.

Paul wrote, "And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Jesus said, "Ask, and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). To pray, "Give us today our daily bread," is to ask God to meet all our needs—physical, emotional and spiritual—knowing He is there to do this today and every day to come.

Lesson 6

The Freedom of Forgiveness

"Forgive us our debts . . ."

In this second section of the Lord's Prayer, five phrases deal with our personal needs and struggles, two of which relate to forgiveness. The topic is of such importance that Jesus later took the time to reemphasize and develop it in depth. Perhaps this is because the emotions involved with guilt (to be addressed in this lesson) and unforgiveness (which we will consider in Lesson 7) can be devastating. Sadly, a lot of people pray the phrase, "forgive us our debts," who do not really experience God's forgiveness. Some don't feel any sense of indebtedness to God. As the Pharisees of Jesus' day, they compare themselves with other "worse sinners" and feel pretty good about themselves. However, Jesus set the norm much higher than that. He said, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), making God and His Word the standard.

Still others live with guilt, trying to cover sin by denying that it is sin or trying to somehow earn God's forgiveness. Many live with false guilt.² But God wants to set us free from the draining emotions surrounding guilt and shame, and He has paid a great price to make it possible.

Through the cross of Christ, where Jesus took the penalty for our sin, we can be set free from the guilt that drains our energy and separates us from a loving heavenly Father. Jesus was also teaching that we must be open with our heavenly Father regarding sin in our lives in order to walk with Him in a fulfilling personal relationship.

The phrase, "forgive us our debts," then, reminds us to ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind any wrong we need to confess and abandon. If He reminds us of something specific we have done, we can immediately agree with God about our sin, determine to change and thank Him that, on the basis of Christ's death on the cross, we are forgiven.

If the Spirit does not point out anything, the words, "forgive us our debts," can remind us to be thankful that we can come into the presence of a holy God because of the forgiveness we have received through the cross of Christ. In this sense, we will always feel indebted and grateful to God for His amazing grace. One writer described it thus:

*Because the sinless Savior died
My guilty soul is counted free,
For God, the Just, is satisfied
To look on Him, and pardon me.*

In this lesson, we will look at the freedom of forgiveness God wants us to experience as we pray, "forgive us our debts."

Lesson 7

The Freedom of Forgiving

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Conflict with others is unavoidable in life. As Everett Fullam so eloquently stated (quote on p. 29), the results of the fall of man is that each of us has the tendency to want the world to be our personal kingdom where we call the shots and others follow. Conflict results, and in these conflicts we all have the opportunity to choose revenge or forgiveness.

Jesus clearly taught us to choose to forgive. He viewed this as so important that He inserted the phrase "as we also have forgiven our debtors" in the middle of His model prayer. In the same breath that we ask for God's forgiveness, we must pause to be sure that we have forgiven anyone who has wronged us.

This is not always easy. When we are living or working with someone, for example, who continually abuses, wrongs or irritates us, the temptation to harbor resentment and hurt them for hurting us is ongoing. We could all think of situations where we will never feel like extending grace in our conflicts with others.

But Jesus teaches in the Lord's Prayer that we must choose to forgive others as an act of the will in order to experience God's forgiveness.

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:12,14-15).

Like Jesus’ teachings on loving our enemies in Matthew 5, these principles can be so difficult to accept that many people choose to disregard them altogether. This may be because we don’t think it is reasonable or necessary to forgive in some situations. Or perhaps we don’t feel God has much to forgive us for, or we have forgotten the extent to which He has gone to cancel our debt for sin.

But God not only wants us to experience His forgiveness, but also freedom from the consuming and imprisoning emotions of bitterness and unforgiveness in our lives. He wants us to trust Him to deal with the person who has wronged us. This is not to say that we do not create healthy boundaries in our lives or that we enable others in their addictions. It is to say that we keep fresh in our mind the way God has forgiven us and the mercy He has shown us. Then we choose to extend that same forgiveness to the one who has hurt us. The results can be amazing.

It is important to keep in mind that Jesus, as He taught these principles, continually faced unavoidable conflict during His ministry. The religious leaders of the day were threatened by His popularity and teachings which openly confronted their rigid rules and publicly exposed their hypocrisy. In His teachings on forgiveness and love even toward our enemies, Jesus used terms that actually described how he was treated by His opposition: hated, cursed, mistreated, physically abused, and, had it been possible, robbed of His authority as the Son of God. Yet he taught *and* modeled His teachings on forgiveness. On the cross He looked down in agony upon those who hurled insults at Him and said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

The Lord’s desire is that we not only experience the freedom of God’s forgiveness secured for us through the cross, but also the benefits and freedom of forgiving others in the conflicts of life.

Lesson 8

Facing Temptation

“And lead us not into temptation...”

As surely as conflict is unavoidable in life, so is temptation. Because Jesus was faced with enormous temptation early in His ministry, He knew the anguish we experience when it comes to resisting pulls to rebel against God’s will. So He taught us to pray that God would “lead us not into temptation.”

Certainly as we seek to follow the Lord in our daily lives, He will lead us away from many temptations that easily entice those who do not follow Him. When we receive Christ into our lives, He gives us a heart like His. Not only are we no longer drawn to many unhealthy, unconstructive activities, we see the fallacy in the idea that we must have certain things to be happy, like money, sex and power. If we begin each day giving our lives to God and asking His Spirit to control us, He

will give us great strength when we face temptation, and not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle.

But we will face temptation, because we have an old sinful nature that responds readily to the schemes of Satan, the master of temptation.

The Bible tells us that he is real, seeking to undermine our faith by using various deceptive schemes to entice us to sin, and sowing seeds of doubt, unbelief and rebellion in us. As we study Satan's two best-known temptations in the Bible—Adam and Eve in which he succeeded, and Jesus in the wilderness in which he failed completely—we see Satan's often-used strategy of tampering with God's word. He twists what God has said and leads us toward self-pleasure, self-reasoning and self-prominence. The Scriptures tell us to stand firm in the faith and watch out for the temptation schemes of the enemy.

In our watchfulness, it is important to realize Satan attacks the area where we are most vulnerable, the area of our personality that is not yet fully under God's control. In times of temptation, we will undergo a great struggle between our old sinful nature and our new Christlike nature which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-17). It is important not to feel we have sinned just because we experience this battle. Jesus was also tempted, but He never sinned. We only sin when we make the choice to disobey God.

If we choose to turn the area of weakness over to the Holy Spirit's control, regardless of how many times we have failed, He will use the battle to develop more of Christ's character in that area. If we do not turn the area over to the Spirit's control, it will become a spiritual stronghold from which Satan can launch more assaults on our relationship with God. Our character and maturity as God's children grows as we determine to keep choosing God's way through the temptations of life, calling on His Spirit for help and guidance in the battles.

J. B. Phillips' translation of James 1:2-4 describes the good that can result from temptation in our lives.

When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men [women] of mature character with the right sort of independence.

The difficult ordeal of temptation is a continual challenge for every believer. As we pray, "lead us not into temptation," we declare our commitment to do God's will in the power of His Spirit. In this lesson, we will look at biblical principles that give hope as we face the constant temptations of life.

Lesson 9

Protection Against Evil

"...but deliver us from the evil one."

One need only read a newspaper or turn on a television to observe that evil is a reality that daily wreaks havoc on nations and individuals. For

many, the response to evil is fear and despair. But the Christian can have hope. Throughout the Scriptures God reveals Himself as our refuge and salvation in the face of evil, and He is stronger than the destructive forces we face in this world. God has made death itself into a passageway to eternal life with Him in a new heaven and earth that is absent of evil. In acknowledgement of this hope and our dependence on God for protection, Jesus taught us to pray, “Father...deliver us from the evil one.”

To understand this request, we have to look at the Greek words used for *deliver* and *evil*. *Deliver* is translated from the words *apo rhuomai* meaning *to rescue away from, to preserve through, and so, to deliver*.

The word *poneros*, denotes *what is evil in influence and effect, malignant, destructive, injurious in nature*. It is the opposite of what is kind, gracious, and of service.

The usage of the word as a noun indicates Jesus was speaking of Satan, the one the Bible ascribes to being the originator of all that is evil in our world.¹ Jesus had faced Satan and his demonic forces in His human experience and knew God alone could preserve us through the powerful and age-old destructive schemes of this enemy. Jesus is teaching us in the Lord’s Prayer that our heavenly Father is available and able to do this.

To ask the Father to deliver us from evil, then, is essentially asking Him to keep us from falling into the clutches of evil, to take us through it and deliver us from the destructive intentions of Satan.² However evil stalks us—through overwhelming temptations, difficult circumstances or the cruelty of others—we can know that God is “for us” and is more powerful than the one behind the evils we face. Satan is limited by God. Nothing can touch us unless permitted by God, and then it is allowed only for our benefit.³ As stated, death itself is only victory for the believer in Christ.

God’s deliverance from evil not only involves protection from an overwhelming foe. God uses our conflicts with evil to build and transform us into whole people who reflect His character. In his book, *A Layman Looks at the Lord’s Prayer*, W. Phillip Keller shows the Father’s love in this process using the analogy of a child learning to walk. Just as a loving parent is supportive and attentive and encouraging as his child progresses through the falls, bumps and bruises, God helps us learn to “walk” spiritually as we battle evils in ourselves and the world. His desire is not that we be in a state of despair over our weaknesses and failures, but rather that He be with us in the learning process, providing strength and guidance and encouragement through the struggles that build wholeness and a deeper relationship with Him in our lives.

In his book, Keller speaks of three keys to experiencing God’s deliverance from evil. First, when we face evil we must deliberately turn to God for help. In simple, sincere prayer, we can tell Him how the battle is beyond us to cope with and ask Him by His Spirit to get us through it without falling.

A second key to experiencing God’s deliverance from evil is to heed common sense. Paul told Timothy to “Flee these [evil] things...” (1 Timothy 6:11). In areas of our lives where we are most vulnerable to fall, we need to heed the inner voice that says to stay away from the places, situations or people that pull us down. The Holy Spirit will also

give us a sense of caution when we cannot see the danger.

The final key is to be ready to resist the devil (James 4:7). When we feel overwhelmed by fear, doubt, unbelief or the pull to rebel against God's way, we must remember that the "sword of the Spirit" that destroys the enemy is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). We resist the devil by first submitting ourselves to God and then quoting Scripture related to the situation. Jesus did this in His wilderness temptations (Matthew 4). The more we study and memorize Scripture, the easier this becomes.

All of these areas of biblical truth are bound up in Jesus' prayer, "Father...deliver us from the evil one." In this lesson, we will look at some of these principles from the Scriptures.

Lesson 10

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory

"For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever." Amen.

The doxology at the end of the Lord's Prayer appears in only about half of the 6,000 full or partial New Testament manuscripts existent from early times. Eminent textual authorities believe it was added by later hands, probably to make the prayer more suitable for public worship.

Certainly inspired by the Holy Spirit, if not from Jesus' lips, the doxology of the Lord's Prayer makes the prayer begin and end with worship. Its main ideas are clearly biblical and coincide with a prayer of David recorded in 1 Chronicles 29:11—"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."

For these reasons, it seems appropriate to conclude our study of the Lord's Prayer with a look at the meaning behind its traditional doxology.

To say "Yours is the kingdom" is to reaffirm that the Lord is sovereign over our world. Kings and nations rise and fall and are limited by God in what they can do. While Satan has great power to influence, the Bible makes very clear that the Lord will finally triumph in the battle between good and evil. Though He created a world in which evil was possible, it exists by His permission and to accomplish His purposes. Biblical prophecy and events prove that God reigns supreme over the events and destiny of history. Its final book, Revelation, tells us that in the end the Lord will replace our chaotic world with a new eternal heaven and earth absent of evil, filled with the righteousness of God, and ruled by Jesus Christ, whom God has declared King of Kings forever (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

"Yours is the kingdom" thus reminds us that our heavenly Father is sovereign and bids us to lay down our rival kingdoms and let Him reign in our lives.

"Yours is the power" reminds us that all power resides in God's hands.

He sustains His creation, ordering galaxies as well as the life of the smallest organism. Each person's existence as well as what he may take pride in—beauty, talents, intelligence, riches, or otherwise—comes from God. This leaves no room for self-exaltation. His power not only sustains our lives today, but will one day bring about the kingdom where believers will live eternally. "Yours is the power" calls us to bow before the One who holds our lives in His hands.

"Yours is the glory" reminds us of the glorious character of God. The more we see the character of our heavenly Father—His greatness, justice, love, generosity, graciousness--the more we are seeing His eternal glory. Everything exists for the glory of God--to reveal His majesty, holiness, goodness, and perfection.

The greatest revelation of God's glory is in His Son, Jesus Christ. By His life, death, resurrection, and present reign in heaven, He is a reflection of God's perfect character and passion to bring sons and daughters out of the human race to *share* His glory. As we yield our lives to God, the Holy Spirit delights to produce God's character in us, enabling us to reflect His nature in our words and deeds and countenance. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so we are made to reflect His glory forever.

Finally, the "amen" that concludes the Lord's Prayer is not just a word used to end our prayer. It means "so let it be" or "let it be so." To say "amen" is to say, "Yes, this is right; I agree. Let this happen; let this be the case." As we praise our heavenly Father, seek first His kingdom, trust Him for our needs, receive His forgiveness, and draw on His strength to overcome temptation and evil, we can be sure He will accomplish His good and loving purpose for our lives. The "amen" of the Lord's Prayer is a final declaration of faith in God and commitment to His will above our own.

The disciple wanted Jesus to teach him how to pray as He did to unlock the secret of His amazing ministry. And so Jesus gave it to him, and to us in the Lord's Prayer.