

TEACH US TO *Pray*

Practising Prayer in Community **BIBLE STUDY WEEK**

4

Forgive Us Our Debts

Begin by praying the Lord's Prayer together

*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.
For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

THEME: Prayer is an opportunity to receive forgiveness and mercy.

At this point in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus builds on the idea of receiving what we need. Earlier in Chapter 6 He said, "...your Father in Heaven knows what you need before you ask Him." In Chapter 7 He says "...everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds..." and he gives the example of bread, something that we need for daily survival. In Matthew 6:12, right after He teaches us to ask for daily bread, He teaches us ask for forgiveness. Why is this so important? Some translations say, "Forgive us our debts", while others say, "Forgive us our trespasses". What do these ideas mean?

1 John 1:8-9 says "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." What an amazing and life-giving promise, that a willingness to confess, results in God's faithfulness to forgive. A true awareness of our sin will help us to never take God's forgiveness for granted. And when we are aware of the mercy that we have received, instead of resenting the shortcomings in others, we will have hearts that show compassion and are therefore ready to forgive.

What do we want Him to teach us? We want to learn to receive God's mercy, through repentance and forgiveness, so that we can truly show mercy to others.

SHARE WITH ONE ANOTHER

Can you remember a time when you realised that you had hurt someone unintentionally or when you felt deeply hurt by someone else's behaviour? How did you deal with the situation? Did you ask for/extend forgiveness? If so, how did it make you feel? If not, what got in the way of your ability to resolve the issue?

- ? What are some examples of debts, and in what ways are we all debtors?
- ? What is repentance and why is it a necessary part of our Christian lives?
- ? What's the difference between excusing and forgiving, why is this important?

GOING DEEPER

Read Matthew 18:21-35. In this passage Jesus teaches the importance of having a heart of forgiveness. He gives the example of someone who has a huge (almost incalculable) debt. His debt is forgiven, but then he turns to someone else who has a relatively minor debt, and he refuses to forgive him. What is Jesus communicating through this parable? Jesus wants us to understand the importance of being aware of our own need for forgiveness. Jesus knows that we will never be able to forgive others, unless we are aware of our own need for forgiveness and mercy. When we are aware of the enormity of our own debt, then we will have a heart of mercy.

Read Luke 18:9-14. This parable starts out with the sad example of someone who is unable to receive forgiveness. How could he be able to receive forgiveness and mercy when he is unable to recognize his debt? In his prayer, “God, thank you that I am not like other men...” he shows that he is in denial and unable to receive God’s mercy. The second man shows humility, he recognizes his need and he asks God to show him mercy. Forgiveness always begins with recognising the debt. When we forgive others, it is not that we are denying that we were ever wronged, we identify the wrong-doing, then we extend forgiveness. The same is true with God, first we recognise our debt before him, then we are ready to receive forgiveness and grace.

LET’S PRACTISE PRAYER TOGETHER

In Matthew 18:35, Jesus talks about forgiving “from your heart”. Our ability to extend forgiveness to others shows us something about the condition of our heart. Let’s spend some time now in prayer together. Begin this time with a few moments of silent prayer. During this time let’s allow the Holy Spirit to make us aware of our wrongdoings and prepare ourselves to receive God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness. If we have experienced hurt, this is a moment to examine our hearts. Are we ready to extend forgiveness to those who have hurt us? What can help us to be more ready?

Praying “Forgive us our debts as we forgiven our debtors” reminds us that while others may have sinned against us, we too have sinned against others. It establishes the fact that each of us is a debtor to others and above all to God. Pray for one another that we will be free of self-righteousness and self-pity, and instead be ready to forgive, even as we have been forgiven. Pray for one another thanking God for the grace and mercy He has extended to us and asking that we too will extend mercy.

Weekly Prayer Journal
