

TEACH US TO *Pray*

Practising Prayer in Community **BIBLE STUDY WEEK**

1

Our Father in Heaven

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 intimate conversation with our Father.

Over the past several weeks our church community has been engaging with the amazing teaching of the Lord Jesus in His great Sermon on the Mount. In the middle of his teaching, Jesus introduces a radical new approach to God. Not only does He claim to be the Son of God, but He encourages us to call God our Father. The Lord's Prayer is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In Luke 11, we read that the disciples, seeing Jesus own prayer life, asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." We too desire to be men and women of prayer.

Prayer is an intimate dialogue between us and God. In last week's sermon "Do Not Worry" we learned that we should not be anxious about our very real earthly needs - what we will eat, or drink or wear - because "...your heavenly Father knows that you need them." Luke 6:32 Jesus wants us to understand that, although we were once far from God, we have been adopted as His children, and can now call out to Him as children in need of His love and care. Our earthly fathers may not have been perfect, but in God we have a perfect heavenly Father.

What do we want Him to teach us? To embrace the miracle of our adoption as God's children and to be led into worship, as we recognize our dependence on Him as our Father.

SHARE WITH ONE ANOTHER

Begin with a round of introductions. Ask members who are willing to share a memory of their earthly father. Maybe something that they have learned from their fathers or from another "father figure". Or someone might want to share some of their personal struggles with prayer.

- ? What are some of the reasons we struggle with prayer?
- ? How does embracing the words "Our Father in heaven" impact our prayer life?
- ? What are some of the ways we can approach God like a child?

GOING DEEPER

Read Matthew 6:5-8. Jesus warned His disciples against using repetitive words. In any religious context or even in our daily lives, prayer can become a routine, more about religious practice than about initiating a real conversation with God. In what ways do we fall into these patterns in prayer? Have you experienced a season of dryness in prayer, or ever felt your prayer life had become just about bringing your list of needs to God? Has it occurred to you that God might feel this way too, welcoming a dialogue, rather than a list of requests?

Read Luke 15:11-32. In this powerful story, Jesus shows us the Father heart of God. Throughout the Bible, God reveals Himself as a father who longs to be in an intimate relationship with His children. In the religious world of Jesus' time, this story must have been shocking to his listeners. In light of our discussion today about prayer, what aspect of this story stands out the most to you? Do you see how the loss of the "sonship" identity of the boy hindered his ability to ask his father for help. Do you see the obvious joy of the Father in his son's return?

LET'S PRACTISE PRAYER TOGETHER

There are many models which can help us to grow in more effective prayer. One popular reminder is the acronym A.C.T.S. In this model, we begin with adoration, just as the Lord encourages us to recognize God as Father, then to respond that His name is holy, or hallowed. C stands for confession, followed by thanksgiving and ending with bringing our requests to God in supplication. Let's spend some time now in prayer together, practicing all of these with one another. Ask someone to read Psalm 103:1-13, then begin a dialogue with God.

Share some prayer requests with one another and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal both the Father heart of God and your shared identity as His children. Ask God to fill you with the peace that comes with being in a right relationship with Him. If anything might be hindering this relationship, ask Him to help you enjoy the love, compassion and intimacy of a father-child relationship. Use this time to give thanks for your group and for this journey in learning to pray that you have embarked on together. You are not just friends, you are brothers and sisters, children of an almighty God who welcomes you into a dialogue with Him.

Weekly Prayer Journal
