

THE FIRST 15

Monday, January 13, 2025

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Today is Monday, January 13 and we begin the year of 2025 with a study on the Practice of Prayer. This week we explore what it means to talk to God and how Jesus taught us to pray with the words of The Lord's Prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

At the dawn of a new day and the beginning of a new year, I seek God's presence - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I find a quiet space amid a busy day. I pause and become still, calm my thoughts, silence my mind, and breathe deeply and slowly. Lord Jesus, as the disciples once asked you to teach them to pray, I also ask you to teach me to pray. Instruct me in Your school of prayer and strengthen this practice in my life. Teach me to talk, speak, listen and respond. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say, "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation." Luke 11:1-4

REFLECTION

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus offers a guide to prayer that we call The Lord's Prayer. Jesus provides this guide in response to His disciple's request, "Lord, teach us to pray." The prayer was provided as a timeless guide for the private prayers of the believer, not necessarily corporate prayer as it is so often experienced today as we say it aloud together every week in our worship services.

Because the Lord's Prayer has become so common and is used so often, we may not really reflect upon the individual words and their power. So this week, we will live with the model Jesus gave us to "talk to God." We will immerse ourselves in the mood, spirit, style and content of this prayer Jesus gave us, so that we will never be without a way to pray meaningfully. Each day we will explore different translations of The Lord's Prayer, try on different words and consider deeper meanings.

Prayer is a relationship that invites a personal conversation with the God who loves us. We are praying to a specific God who Jesus invites us to call "Father." Jesus used the term "Father" in addressing God to imply an intimate connection. As a group of believers in Christ, God is "our" Father. So we begin the prayer addressing God as, "Our Father, who art in heaven."

Addressing a God who is "in heaven" may imply that God is far away, but heaven came down to earth in Christ and is present with us in the Holy Spirit. Heaven is wherever God is. Therefore, when we pray to the God who is "in heaven," we pray to the God who surrounds us. The God in

whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). God is infinitely nearer to us than even we are to ourselves. He transcends the limits of time and space, and is very close to us in mind and spirit.

Because of individual experiences, some may have difficulty with “father” as an image of God. For Jesus the revelation of Father is not tied to our understanding of human fathers that may have failed to be good fathers. God’s Fatherhood is not limited by earthly concepts. God is the ultimate model of the loving, caring Father who will never leave us, hurt us, abandon us, disappoint us, forsake us or let us down.

Prayer Prompts:

- Ask Jesus to teach you to pray in a fresh and deeper way in the month of January.
- Pray the traditional version of The Lord’s Prayer for today’s Closing Prayer deliberately and slowly. Rather than saying this prayer from memory, pray it from your heart, stopping to consider each word and movement.

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father which 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. Amen.

Resources utilized: The Workbook of Living Prayer, Maxie Dunnam, Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN, 1994, p. 63-88.