

THE FIRST 15

Monday, January 20, 2025

By: Jan Davis

Today is Monday, January 20, and we begin the year of 2025 with a study on the Practice of Prayer. 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

Pray along these lines: Our Father in heaven, we honor your holy name. We ask that your kingdom will come now. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven. Give us our food again today, as usual, and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us. Don't bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One. Amen. Matthew 6:9-13 (The Living Bible)

REFLECTION

The words of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples flow with logic and clarity. We ask for forgiveness. We pray, "God, forgive us as we forgive others." Because of Jesus, we are forgiven. The mountainous debts we owe God, the places we have trespassed where we should not have gone, the wrongs we have done, the rights we have failed to do and the sins we have committed in thought, word and deed - all forgiven. Through God's mercy, amazing grace and the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, we are redeemed. God loves us, accepts us and marks the account settled. Paid in full.

Where does the prayer go next? What follows once we are forgiven? We need God's protection against what may come into our future. Praying the words, "Lead us not into temptation," reminds us that the Christian life does not exempt us from trials and temptations. We need a Good Shepherd who will lead us in paths of righteousness and guard us against sinful diversions, enticing temptations and the deceitfulness of a cunning enemy. Peter says, "Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus warns us to watch out for ravenous wolves who appear in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). Paul encourages us to put on the full armor of God and stand against the devil's schemes (Ephesians 6:11).

The petition, "deliver us from evil" is about handling the very real evil we all experience. We pray to be delivered, set free from the threat of evil and the damage that evil can do to our lives, our loved ones, our health and our home. John says, the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy and

Jesus came so that we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). Jesus is on our side. We are not alone. We have a mighty Advocate in our struggle against the powers that would tempt us to sin or seek to destroy our wellbeing. Jesus Christ is God's answer to our prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

That is the reason the historic church added the doxology to the end of the Lord's Prayer, because God has won and Christ reigns. Together we affirm, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever! Amen.

Prayer Prompts:

- Pray for yourself or others struggling against temptation.
- Pray for evil to be overcome in our world and for people to be set free from the bonds of evil.
- Today we complete our study on The Lord's Prayer. 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 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. Amen.

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