

## PRAYER AS JESUS TAUGHT US – Week 5

### Examining the Lord's Prayer

#### **Week #5 Introduction “Lead Us... Deliver Us” *Prayer as Jesus Taught Us***

Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial,

but rescue us from the evil one. *Matthew 6:9-13*

#### **Week #5 Day #1 Psalm 23:1-3; Romans 8:12-14 *God will lead us***

King David, who became Israel's greatest king, had worked as a shepherd (cf. [1 Samuel 16:11, 17:34-36](#)), and likely wrote Psalm 23. He knew a shepherd's job description from his own experience, and pictured God as his shepherd. Centuries later, the apostle Paul said the defining characteristic of a child of God is allowing God's Spirit to lead you. As a shepherd leads his flock of sheep in the ways that best protect and nurture them, so God leads those who put their trust in him.

- David described God as guiding him (and all God's children) “in proper paths.” Living as we do in a culture that places great store on our freedom to choose our own path in life, how easy or difficult do you find it to trust God to guide you to the proper paths for your life? How can confidence that you are on the proper path reduce your fear when you face tough choices?
- The apostle Paul addressed readers as “brothers and sisters” in Romans 8:12. The use of these family terms reminded his readers that, as in the Lord's Prayer, God is “our Father,” who leads us lovingly and well. We have the chance to let the King lead us, to be part of his family. What experiences have helped you learn to trust God's leading? Where is God leading you today?

**Prayer:** Loving Lord, thank you for being my shepherd. Lead me into a truly good life, based not on my own wishes and instincts, but on your eternal principles. Amen.

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#### **Week #5 Day #2 James 1:12-16 *God never leads us to temptation***

The phrase “don't lead us into temptation” ([Matthew 6:13, Luke 11:4](#)) may sound as if we have to plead with God to not lead us into settings that lure us off the best path for our lives. But God isn't in the business of tempting us to do wrong. At Resurrection, we say the phrase with a comma in it:

“Lead us, not into temptation.” Matthew's longer version of the prayer added, “rescue us from the evil

one.” That is the way God leads us. Jesus’ prayer promised that God always has our best interests in mind and reminded us to always let God lead us.

- James was definite: “No one who is tested should say, ‘God is tempting me!’” When something happened that strained your faith, have you ever said (or had someone say to you), “Why is God doing this?” How can James’ assurance that “Every good gift, every perfect gift, comes from above” (James 1:17) correct and reassure you when you feel like blaming God for bad things in your life?
- Some Bible stories show temptations coming from outside (e.g. Jesus’ temptation—cf. [Luke 4:1-13](#)). But James knew that often our own inner wishes and wants lead us away from God’s path. In what ways can inner “cravings” you don’t even consciously focus on (e.g. for power, popularity, wealth) keep you from living out your identity as God’s child? What disciplines have you chosen to help you know yourself better, so that you can more and more live into your identity as a Christ follower?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, lead me, not into temptation, but into the path of a rewarding and fruitful life that you have laid out for me, and for all your beloved children. Amen.

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### **Week #5 Day #3 Galatians 5:22-26    *The life qualities to which God does lead us***

When the apostle Paul lived, many people shared the belief that “do whatever you want” pretty much defined “the good life.” (It even had a big philosophical name—hedonism. You may have noticed that some folks still believe that today.) Paul told the Galatian Christians that a truly good life results as we open ourselves to letting God’s Spirit lead us. He listed nine dynamic qualities the Spirit produces in our lives.

- Paul knew humans miss the mark in many ways. (Review his examples in [Galatians 5:19-21](#), noting how he put fairly “respectable” items like “group rivalry” in the same list as things like “drunkenness.”) He also warned against self-righteous “goodness” (“all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse”—Galatians 3:10). What does his choice of the word “fruit” in verse 22 tell you about how “organically” the Spirit grows the nine important Christian traits he listed?
- Which of the nine fruits Paul said you get to have as a Christian do you find already most present in your life? Which of them are you most eager for the Spirit’s power to grow more of in you? What is your part in nurturing a soul “climate” in which the fruit of the Spirit can grow?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, Paul made sense. Why would anyone make a law against “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”? Please grow that wonderful fruit in my life. Amen.

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## **Week #5 Day #4 John 3:17-21, 16:12-15 We choose God's light, not darkness**

Though many people think Christianity is about condemnation, Jesus said he did not come to judge the world. Instead, he told the Hebrew leader Nicodemus (right after the famous [John 3:16](#) passage) that we humans condemn ourselves when our choices show that we love darkness more than light. Loving the light takes continued growth, and Jesus was direct with his disciples: "I have much more to say to you, but you can't handle it now." But he promised that the Holy Spirit would continue his work of teaching and leading them.

- Have you ever known someone who "loved darkness more than the light," who feared having their actions exposed to the light? Have those words ever applied to any part of your inner life? In what ways does John 3:21 invite you to keep moving toward God's light, even when it may alter your wishes or comfort level?
- How do you understand the meaning of "God so loved the world... God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world"? In what ways have you made God's forgiveness and leading, not an abstract "church" idea, but a transforming, freeing personal reality? Can you identify one specific relationship in which you will begin or deepen the process of moving more fully into the freedom of a forgiven, forgiving life by the end of 2018?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you knew, long before we figured it out, that condemnation is a lousy motivator. Help me learn to live in the glow of your love and guidance, and to extend your spirit to other people in my life. Amen.

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## **Week #5 Day #5 Luke 9:20-25; Hebrews 12:1-4 Following God's lead takes persistence**

When Peter said Jesus was the promised Messiah, Jesus agreed—but said frankly that being the Christ ("anointed one") meant suffering, not earthly power. And it meant that for those who chose to follow him, too. In Hebrews 12, the writer used Greek Olympic Game images to urge believers to run the entire race set before them with endurance. The key to Christian spiritual stamina, the letter said, is to fix our eyes on Jesus. We must set aside anything that hinders us, and keep our inner focus always on Jesus, who endured even the cross for us.

- In what ways have you had to answer Jesus' question: "What advantage do people have if they gain the whole world for themselves yet perish or lose their lives?" What choice(s) have you made, or do you face, that promise gain, yet might cost your values, self-respect or honor? In what ways can you gain the strength and self-knowledge to choose rightly?
- Scholar Raymond Brown wrote, "In the course of the race the eyes of every Christian athlete must be directed firmly and continually on the Lord Jesus himself. The word used here (*aphorōntes*)...indicates the action of one who, aware of rival attractions, deliberately looks away from other things. This runner must keep his eyes 'fixed on Jesus...constantly during the whole struggle.'" \* Which parts of your spiritual journey through life's marathon call for the most stick-to-it-iveness from you? How does remembering what Jesus pressed through for you help you keep going?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, even in our tolerant culture, when we serve as you served, and stand firm for God's principles as you did, it can feel like suffering. Give me a heart that's always oriented to your ways, even when under pressure. Amen.

\* Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982, p. 228.

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### **Week #5 Day #6 John 10:2-5, 11-15 *The Good Shepherd's sheep know his voice***

One metaphor Jesus chose to describe his role was "I am the good shepherd." To do his job well, a shepherd had to thoroughly understand sheep. He had to know what makes them thrive, and what things are harmful (or even deadly) to them. Based on what you can learn (or already know) about shepherds, in what ways is Jesus most like a shepherd? (A modern classic about shepherds is Phillip Keller's *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*.)

- Jesus painted a beautiful image of the shepherd calling each of his sheep by name: "He goes before them and they follow him, because they know his voice." Like the shepherd, God leads us by calling each of us by name. He calls each one of us to follow Him, not willing to leave anyone behind. When have you heard God calling you to follow Him? How did you hear God? How does it strengthen you to realize that God knows and calls you by name? In what ways are you training yourself to "hear" and "recognize" Jesus' voice, so that you can follow him to a life of eternal safety?

**Prayer:** Lord God, you are the shepherd and I am your sheep. You lead me away from trouble and onto higher ground. Thank you for calling me by name and guiding me every day. Amen.

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**Family Activity:** Jesus taught us how to pray when we face temptation, and used his words and actions to show others how to pray. Spend time in prayer as a family. Together, walk around the different rooms in your home. Where does your family feel most comfortable and at peace? Where would you enjoy spending time talking to and listening to God? After listening to each other's ideas, discuss and agree upon a special place where you can pray together as a family. Ask God to lead you away from temptation and evil and into God's goodness and grace.