

LESSON 1 Why Pray?

Do you ever feel like your prayers have no power? Do you ever wonder if you even really know how to pray? It is interesting to note that as the disciples travel with Jesus, they never ask Him to teach them to be great teachers, like He is, or to show them how to perform miracles. However, one thing about Jesus impresses them so much they want to know how to do it. Therefore, they ask, “*Lord, teach us to pray*” (Lk 11:1). To answer that question, Jesus shares with them what we today call the “Lord’s Prayer” or the “Model Prayer.” In this prayer, Jesus provides all the principles necessary to have a “journey into powerful prayer.” To find the motivation to complete this “journey,” we need to answer the question, “why pray?” There are at least **four** reasons:

First, praying is a command

As He introduces the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus says, “*This, then, is how you should pray*” (Mt 6:9a). Is that a suggestion or a command? It is a command! What other command does Jesus give us in Matthew 7:7?

The three key words—*ask*, *seek*, and *knock*—form an acrostic. What word is formed by using the first letter of each word? _____! These three words are all imperative mood, meaning they are commands. They are also present tense, which means continuous action. Therefore, that verse could be translated, “Keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking.” This command is amplified by what other command in 1 Thessalonians 5:17?

To *pray continually* means we are always in a spirit of prayer, saying numerous prayers throughout the day as the Lord brings needs to our attention. I pray silently while walking through our church as I greet people on Sundays, and they ask me to pray for various needs. I also pray while driving my car, lying in bed at night, sitting in my office, or any time a need comes to mind. To obey God's command to pray, we must make a habit of praying short prayers throughout the day as He reminds us to pray through requests, circumstances, or spiritual impressions.

Whenever and wherever we pray, we must remember Jesus told us not to pray with the motives of the hypocrites who stood in the synagogues and prayed wanting to be seen by men (Mt 6:5). Instead, what does Jesus tell us in Matthew 6:6 about where to pray?

When we pray, we should not pray to impress people because the Lord commands us to pray unseen by others. Private prayer enables us to pour out our hearts to God and to listen to Him without distractions. We should pray because **praying is a command**.

Second, praying allows God to meet our needs

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us how to pray so God can meet all our physical, psychological, and spiritual needs. God chose prayer as the means through which He will meet our needs. The Bible teaches there are some things God promises to give us only if we ask. Some people think, "God knows what I need. I don't need to tell Him. He'll just give it when I need it." No, that is not how it works. God gives us some things only if we ask Him, no matter how obvious they are. How does the last sentence of James 4:2 remind us of this truth?

At this very moment, what is your life lacking simply because you have not asked God? Why does God want us to ask Him to meet our needs,

such as our *daily bread* (Mt 6:11)? How does Jesus answer this question in John 16:24b?

God wants us to ask Him to meet our needs because it makes our joy *complete*. It will cause us to be happier with what we have. When good things we don't ask for happen to us, we think it is luck, our own hard work, wise investing, or whatever. However, when good things happen to us because we ask God for them, we experience a completely new dimension of joy. It is not so much what we have but why we have it that brings us joy.

When my son Jeremy was in college, he had little money. Nevertheless, he spent what he had on Christmas presents for his mother, his sisters, and me. I really didn't expect much, but when I opened my Christmas present from Jeremy one year, I was shocked. He had purchased a nice Buck knife in a sheath, so I could carry it on my belt. Jeremy thought I would really like it because it was something he would really like. Do you know where I keep that nice Buck knife? In my nightstand! It brings me a special joy each time I see it, not because of what it is but because Jeremy gave it to me.

When we ask God for things—a house, car, or better job—and we realize God gives them to us because He loves us, we will have a completely new appreciation for them. Our joy will be *complete*. We should pray because **praying is a command, praying allows God to meet our needs, and ...**

Third, praying releases God's power in our lives

God is “omnipotent,” which means He is all-powerful. Therefore, what does Jesus reveal about God in Matthew 19:26b?

This means His power has no limits and therefore, neither does prayer. With the exception of the Lord Jesus, through whom did God perform more miracles than anyone else in the Bible? Moses! The last forty years

of his life are filled with miracles. How many can you remember? The ten plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, manna from heaven, etc. God worked His miracles through Moses because Moses had a *tent of meeting*, which was a tent he set up outside the camp (Ex 33:7). This is not the tabernacle (which is often called *the Tent of Meeting*—see Ex 40:7, 12) because Moses' tent was *outside the camp* (33:7), while the tabernacle was in the center of the camp (Num. 2:17). Furthermore, the tabernacle proper (also called *the sanctuary*) was not constructed until later (Ex 36:1–39:43). When Moses would go out to his *tent of meeting*, what would happen, according to Exodus 33:11a?

To experience God's mighty power in our lives we need a *tent of meeting*—a regular place where we can meet God. It can be in our home or office, in a car on the way to work, or wherever we can privately pray. It is only then we can experience what truth found in James 5:16b?

We should pray because **praying is a command, praying allows God to meet our needs, praying releases God's power in our lives, and ...**

Fourth, praying brings immediate rewards

Although we should ask God to meet our personal needs, such as *daily bread* or deliverance from temptation, our prayer time should not be just giving God our personal want list. One reward of prayer is being able to help others when there is little else we can do. Praying should be a ministry—a way of helping others. We are commanded to *carry each other's burdens* because this is the way we *fulfill the law of Christ* (Gal. 6:2). A primary way we *carry each other's burdens* is by praying. Failing to pray for others is not a minor omission. Why, according to 1 Samuel 12:23a?

As we pray for others, we will have the immediate reward of knowing we are having a powerful and positive impact on their lives. Prayer also has an immediate reward when we pray for our own needs or problems. The book of Philippians commands: *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God* (Phil. 4:6). What is our immediate reward for this kind of praying, according to the next verse (4:7)?

Praying allows God to *guard* our *hearts* and *minds* immediately against worry, anxiety, and stress. The peace that exceeds human *understanding* is one of the greatest rewards of prayer.

Why pray? Because **praying is a command, praying allows God to meet our needs, praying releases God's power in our lives, and praying brings immediate rewards.** At this moment, make a commitment to spend the next twelve weeks sitting at Jesus' feet, learning how to have a "journey into powerful prayer." In other words, make a commitment to finish this "journey." Right now, would you pray:

"Lord, I want Jesus to teach me how to pray. For Him to do that, right now I make a commitment to You, that unless providentially hindered, I will attend the next twelve sessions of this study. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen."

Before going to bed tonight, make a list of things for which you should pray, including personal needs and problems, needs of others, etc. Then, decide on your "tent of meeting," where you will meet with God on a daily basis (in your car on the way to work, a room in your home, or wherever).

My prayer list:

Time for my daily prayers:

My "tent of meeting":

LESSON 2 **Powerful Prayer Principles (Matthew 6:9a)**

We are on the most important journey of the Christian life, a “journey into powerful prayer.” Prayer is the most important thing we do because prayer can do anything God can do! And, what can God do? Anything! Prayer is not a meaningless, habitual task required of us. It is a time when we connect with the person and power of God.

To help us have a “journey into powerful prayer,” Jesus gives us at least **five** general principles in the Lord’s Prayer that apply to every prayer we pray.

1. Prayers are to be prayed, not recited

To have a “journey into powerful prayer,” we must not miss how Jesus introduces what we call the “Lord’s Prayer.” What does Jesus say just before He begins the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9a)?

Notice Jesus does not say, “Pray this prayer,” or “Memorize and recite this prayer.” He says, “*This is **how** you should pray.*” (Emphasis mine.) We are not just to recite a prayer; we are to pray a prayer.

There are times when quoting this prayer is very appropriate, but we should not merely recite the words; we should pray from our hearts. Simply repeating a prayer is not necessarily spiritual. What does Isaiah 29:13a tell us about how the Lord does *not* want us to pray?

God wants our prayers to come from our hearts, not just our mouths. In this prayer, Jesus gives us prayer principles, some of which should be included in every prayer. However, our prayers must come from the heart and not just be repeated or recited. This is because of what truth found in the last sentence of 1 Samuel 16:7?

Prayers are to be prayed, not recited because only then do we pray from the heart, and that is where God is looking.

2. God can do anything, and I can do nothing

We do not come to God offering our assistance. We come to God asking for the privilege of being a part of His plan and program. How does Jesus make this clear in the last phrase of John 15:5?

This means without Christ we can do nothing of spiritual or eternal significance. Yes, we can get a college degree, make tons of money, have an impressive career, or become famous, but we *can do nothing* of real, eternal significance apart from Jesus.

When God sends the angel Gabriel to inform the Virgin Mary she will give birth to Jesus, Mary asks how this can happen since she is a virgin. How does Gabriel answer in Luke 1:37?

This principle means God can accomplish whatever He wants on earth without our help. Therefore, whatever He gives us to do as His purpose or will for our lives is a privilege. It is a privilege for us because He could create someone else who could do it better.

It is my privilege to serve God as a pastor, teacher, and author. God could get a thousand people to do everything I do and do it much better. Yet, because He loves me, in spite of all my weaknesses and shortcomings, He gives me the privilege of serving Him, which brings us to the next powerful prayer principle ...

3. God is God, and I am His Servant

The Lord's Prayer focuses on God at the beginning and the end to remind us of this principle. God is not an "errand boy" or "divine Santa Claus" to whom we present our wish list. Prayer is not a time to make demands of God. Prayer is a time when we, as sinful servants, speak to our Holy God.

When we pray, we should remember what truth seen in Jacob's attitude when he prayed in Genesis 32:10a?

Yes, we are to call God *Father* (and we will discuss that), but we are never to forget God is a King with a kingdom, and we are on this earth to help bring His kingdom here, not to set up our own little kingdom.

The Bible begins with two men who understood God is God and we are His servants. To one, God gave the privilege of receiving the Ten Commandments and the plans for building the tabernacle, as well as inspiring him to write the first five books of the Bible. Then, there is the first person in the Bible to have a book named after him. Of course, I am referring to Moses and Joshua. Why was God so pleased with them? Let's see how God sums up their lives in His Holy Word. When Moses and Joshua die, what phrase does God use to describe them both (Deuteronomy 34:5 & Joshua 24:29)?

Why did these two men make such a difference in the world? They were both great men of prayer and knew God is God and we are His servants. We don't pray to get God to serve us; we pray so we can better serve God.

4. Prayers should always begin and end with praise

The Lord's Prayer has six petitions or requests. The first three refer to God's *name*, *kingdom*, and *will* (Mt 6:9–10). This means powerful prayers begin by focusing on God. The second three requests are for *daily bread* (daily provisions), forgiveness, and protection (6:11–13a). Then, the prayer ends by focusing on God's *kingdom*, *power*, and *glory* (6:13b). Though not included at all in the NIV, this phrase is included in the KJV, NKJV, and the NASB, though in brackets. We will include it in our "journey" for reasons we will discuss later.

The first request in the Model Prayer is *hallowed be your name* (6:9c). The prayer ends, “*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever*” (6:13b, KJV). Praise reminds us of who God is and changes the focus from what we need or want to what God wants. Prayer is a time when God wants us to develop what attitude found in David’s prayer in Psalm 86:12?

Beginning and ending with praise makes our prayer time an exhilarating experience. Praise takes the burdens and worries from our lives and adds tremendous power to our prayers.

5. Don’t worry about length

The Lord’s Prayer is a part of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus gives some introductory principles to follow in all our prayers. He begins by warning against praying like the hypocrites, who love to pray just to *be seen by men* (Mt 6:5). Then, He warns about repetitious prayers, or babbling on and on, thinking we will be heard because of our *many words* (Mt 6:7). The length of our prayers does not make them more powerful.

How many words are in the Lord’s Prayer? There are 52 in the NIV and 66 in the KJV. How long does it take to pray the Lord’s Prayer? About 20 seconds! Therefore, we see our requests should be specific and to the point. God is not interested in a lot of “fluffy” Christian jargon. It is so liberating to realize God accepts short prayers as well as long ones, and both are scriptural.

The shortest prayer in the Bible is just three words. When Peter tries to walk on the water to Christ and begins to sink, what does he pray (Matthew 14:30)?

We can see all five **powerful prayer principles** in this short prayer. First, it is a prayer from the heart, not just recited words. Also, this short prayer

reveals Peter believes the Lord can do anything. It is obvious Peter recognizes God is God and he is the servant because he calls Him *Lord*. Is there any praise in this prayer? Yes! Simply trusting in God's power to save him is praise. Therefore, prayers do not have to be long to contain the principles Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer.

Our prayers can also be long, like Solomon's prayer to dedicate the temple, which is a very long 28 verses (2 Chron. 6:14–42). The length of our prayers is not important, but using the principles Jesus gives us in the Lord's Prayer is. We can experience a powerful prayer life and have tremendous confidence in approaching God in prayer if we remember one fundamental thing about prayer: *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us* (1 Jn 5:14). Moreover, if we know He hears us, of what does 1 John 5:15 assure us?

How do we know if we are praying according to His will? By following the principles Jesus gives us in the Lord's Prayer. To have a "journey into powerful prayer," we must remember these five powerful prayer principles: **prayers are to be prayed, not recited, God can do anything and I can do nothing, God is God and I am His servant, prayers should always begin and end with praise, and don't worry about length.** Which of these principles do you need to work on most in your prayer life, beginning today?

LESSON 3 Getting Comfortable With God (Matthew 6:9b)

If you were asked to describe God in two words or less, what would you say? Jesus answers that question like this: “*Our Father*” (Mt 6:9b). God is not just an impersonal Creator, or some invisible power like “the force” in “Star Wars” movies. God is our loving, heavenly Father. When Jesus teaches us to pray, *Our Father*, He reveals we can be comfortable in God’s presence. There are at least **three** things we must understand if we are to be comfortable with God and address Him as *Our Father*.

First, we can have a family relationship with Him

God is “our Father,” which means we can have a relationship with Him. We can’t have a relationship with a book, even the Bible, or with laws and rituals. We can’t have a relationship with a creative force, or an impersonal power; however, we can have a relationship with a person. But what kind of relationship? Jesus tells us when He uses the word “*Father*.” If God is “our Father,” then who are we? His children! We are to approach God and speak to Him as “our father.”

It is very important we understand prayer is the privilege of family members only. Some would say, “We are all the children of God because we are all created by Him.” However, how does Jesus describe even the very religious Pharisees in John 8:44a?

The Pharisees went to the synagogue every Saturday. They didn’t lie, cheat, steal, or commit adultery. They even tithed of everything they made, but they were not God’s children. Why, according to John 14:6?

Not everyone can call God “Father”—only those who have become His children by receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord. Therefore, prayer is a family privilege, through which we talk to our Father. You might say,

“But Tommy, I don’t have good memories of my father. He never listened to me or talked to me; he was distant and sometimes mean.” Or, you might say, “I was abandoned and abused by my father. So, how can I talk to God as a loving Father, when the word “father” brings back such bad memories?”

Even though you may not have had a caring, compassionate, loving earthly father, you wanted one. We all do! Well, as Christians, we have a perfect one in heaven, and He wants us to talk to Him and have a relationship with Him as our caring and loving Father. That is why we have what command in 1 Peter 5:7?

To get comfortable with God, we must understand **we can have a family relationship with Him**, and ...

Second, we can talk intimately to Him

Calling God “Father” seems natural to us who grew up quoting the Lord’s Prayer, but this was a bombshell in Jesus’ day. In the Old Testament, the fatherhood of God was seen only in the terms of a Creator-Father who fathered the nation of Israel. In the Old Testament, God is called “Father” fourteen times and always as the Father of the nation of Israel, never on an individual or personal basis. Also, the veil in the temple forever reminded the Jews that only the High Priest could approach God on a personal basis, and he only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). What would happen to anyone, except the priests, who even came near the veil or inside the tabernacle (Numbers 18:7c)?

When people prayed in the Old Testament, even the greatest of saints would call God *Sovereign LORD* (“LORD God,” KJV). This phrase is used to address God more than 280 times. He is also called *God Almighty* or *the Almighty* more than 50 times. He is addressed by several other names, but never as Father on a personal or individual basis.

Even more amazing is the word Jesus uses for “Father.” The Gospels are written in Greek, but Jesus spoke in Aramaic, the prevalent dialect in the Holy Land during His time. In Mark 14:36, as Jesus prays and asks God to take away His cup of suffering, how does He address God?

Since Jesus spoke Aramaic, many New Testament scholars say Jesus probably began the Lord’s Prayer with the name, “*Abba, Father*,” though the word *Abba* is not in the Greek text of the Lord’s Prayer. The Aramaic word for “father,” *Abba*, is best translated “Daddy” or “Poppa.” This must have astonished the disciples since it is a term of affection. The Jews could not even pronounce the name of God aloud—much less call him “Father” or even more shocking, “Daddy.” The Jews called themselves the children of Abraham, not of God. However, Jesus made it possible for us to become the sons and daughters of God. How, according to John 1:12?

Before we can pray to God as “Abba, Father,” we must become His child by receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord. The word *Abba* comes from the lips of a child, conveying affection. The word *Father* expresses an intelligent comprehension of the relationship and emphasizes God’s position and authority. The two names give us a holy balance in our view of God.

Although I am personally uncomfortable calling God “Daddy,” I think “Dearest Father” or “Dear Father” is certainly biblical and just as intimate. It might be even better to address God as “Abba Father,” since we would be addressing Him exactly as our Lord Jesus did when He prayed.

Being able to call God “Father,” “Dearest Father,” or “Abba Father,” is fundamental in getting comfortable with God and having a “journey into powerful prayer.” Talking to God as our Father means we can talk intimately to Him, pouring out our hearts as a child to a loving father. To get comfortable with God, we must understand **we can have a family relationship with Him, we can talk intimately to Him, and ...**

Third, we should yearn to call Him “Abba Father”

If we are spiritually healthy children of God, the Bible teaches we will have a yearning or desire to address God as “Abba Father.” How does Galatians 4:6 reveal this fact?

One reason God gives us the Holy Spirit is to remind us we are God’s children and should therefore desire to address Him as “Abba Father.” This yearning is an indication we are His children. The Bible also tells us we receive the Spirit of sonship or adoption, and as a result, by the Holy Spirit *we cry*, “*Abba, Father*” (Rom. 8:15). Then, in the next verse, of what does Paul tell us the Holy Spirit reminds us?

If we are spiritually healthy, the Holy Spirit puts a yearning in our hearts to call God “Abba Father.” If we do not have this desire, something is wrong spiritually. One wonderful indication of a close relationship with God is a yearning to call Him “Abba Father.” It is also great to know every member of the Trinity is involved in our prayers when we say “Abba Father.” Jesus teaches us to pray “Abba Father,” the Holy Spirit gives us the desire to pray “Abba Father,” and God hears us as our “Abba Father.”

When we call God “Abba Father,” does it mean we take away from His divinity and majesty? Does it make Him any less the *Sovereign LORD*? No, but it does make our awesome God approachable and enables us to be comfortable with Him. When we pray, we are not to be inhibited with fears about approaching a holy God. God wants us to approach Him as children coming to a loving Father. It is only when we understand what it means to call God “Our Father” or “Abba Father” that we can obey what exhortation in Hebrews 4:16?

To get comfortable with God, you must understand you **can have a family relationship with Him**, you **can talk intimately to Him**, and you **should yearn to call Him “Abba Father.”** Would you pray right now?

“Abba Father, thank you for being my loving, caring God. Help me to get more comfortable talking to You by remembering in Jesus Christ I’m your child, so I can talk to you as my dear Father. Father, remind me I can talk intimately with you and pour out my heart any time, any place. Abba Father, thank you for giving me the Holy Spirit, who causes me to yearn to call You ‘Abba Father.’ In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Beginning today, which of the three points in this lesson do you need to remind yourself of regularly, so you can be comfortable with God, and why?

LESSON 4 **Getting To Know God as “Father” (Matthew 6:9b)**

A “journey into powerful prayer” requires we understand the purpose of the Lord’s Prayer. Our Lord gave us this prayer as a model or pattern to teach us the basic principles or ingredients that should be in every powerful prayer. The words we use in our prayers may vary considerably from the Lord’s Prayer, but the principles taught in the prayer must be present if we are to pray with power.

In the last lesson we discovered the first principle of a “journey into powerful prayer” is to get comfortable with God and come to Him as a dear Father, or as “Abba Father.” Many people have problems calling God “Father” because for them “father” is not a word of affection or intimacy but rather stirs up memories of neglect, desertion, or abuse. So, what was Jesus teaching about God when He taught us to call him “*Our Father*”? To know God as our “Father,” we must understand **five** things ...

First, He is a loving Father

Calling God “Father” reminds us that we are His children. When we trust Christ as our Savior, we are born into the family of God and can therefore address Him as “Father.” How does 1 John 3:1a remind us of God’s love?

God loves us with the same love with which He loves His only Son Jesus. In Christ, we become the objects of God’s love and affection. In His high priestly prayer just before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus prays: “*I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them ...*” (Jn 17:26). This is because when we are born into the family of God, He never sees us outside of Christ. The phrase *in Christ* occurs more than 80 times in the New Testament. Therefore, what assurance do we have, according to Romans 8:1?

Because we are in Christ, He is *our righteousness, holiness, and redemption* (1 Cor. 1:30). Apart from Christ, *all our righteous acts are like filthy rags* (Isa. 64:6a). But in Christ we have His *righteousness and holiness*. Therefore, God loves us with the same love He has for Jesus and there is *no condemnation* for us. It is only *in Christ* that God becomes our loving Father.

Getting to know God as “Father” includes realizing **He is a loving Father**, and ...

Second, He is a correcting Father

Because God loves us, He corrects us. No one likes to be disciplined. Many teenagers’ lives are in a mess because they don’t have the loving, firm discipline all children sometimes need and all loving parents give.

One Saturday night when my wife Virginia was in high school, she and some of her friends were out late cruising. It was past her curfew, so she told her friends she had to get home quickly or she would be in serious trouble with her father, who also was a pastor. One of her friends immediately responded, “I wish there was someone who cared how late I stay out.” This girl really meant she wished someone loved her enough to set boundaries for her and then discipline her when she crossed one. God loves us so much He sets boundaries in our lives and when we cross the line, He corrects or disciplines us. How does Hebrews 12:5b–6a describe this truth?

Sometimes we fail to live like His children, letting peer pressure, culture, and selfish desires lead us into compromise, hypocrisy, and sin. At such times, we will experience divine discipline because our Heavenly Father disciplines His children. That’s why we have what reminder in Job 5:17?

The word *blessed* means happy. Why should we be *happy* when God corrects us? Because it is a reminder God loves us. Getting to know God

means understanding He is not only a **loving** and **correcting Father**, but also ...

Third, He is a caring Father

God disciplines us because He cares what kind of people we are becoming. Furthermore, God cares about everything in our lives. That's why He wants us to pray and tell Him all about our troubles. He cares! The Bible tells us to cast our anxiety or worries on the Lord because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). God cares about our discouragement, our loneliness, our problems, our financial stress, our pressure at work or school, our health, and on and on. He cares about **everything** in our lives. Therefore, what wonderful verse do we find in Psalm 55:22?

God cares about your fears, frustrations, and failings. He cares about how you feel right now. Because He cares, Jesus said, "*And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered*" (Mt 10:30). Jesus didn't say God knows how many hairs are on your head (which changes daily); He said the hairs on your head *are all numbered*. That means He knows where hair #1,365 is on my head, and where hair #3 is. Why would God want to know things like that about you and me? Because He cares about every aspect of our lives! He knows about every cell in your body, and He knows your every hurt and pain because He cares about you.

Getting to know God means understanding He is a **loving, correcting, and caring Father**, and ...

Fourth, He is a comforting Father

When we are fearful, frustrated, or hurting, we need someone who not only cares, but who also can comfort us. Our heavenly Father can comfort as no one else can because He is *the God of all comfort* (2 Cor. 1:3). How does God comfort us? He does it in four primary ways ...

1. He comforts us with His promises. There are more than 7,000 promises in the Bible, and God has never broken one of them. There is a

perfectly matched promise for every problem we will ever have. How does Psalm 119:50 remind us of this kind of comfort?

2. He comforts us with His presence. The Bible tells us “*the LORD ... will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged*” (Deut. 31:8). We can trust in the Lord’s presence in all of life’s problems. Based on Psalm 23:4 (KJV), at what other time can you count on the Lord’s presence to comfort you?

3. He comforts us with His people. One of the most difficult things in life is to have serious problems and feel no one cares or understands, and there is no one with whom to share our hearts and hurts. God doesn’t comfort us just to make us feel better or to help us through our problems. For what other reason does God comfort you and me, according to 2 Corinthians 1:4?

Our heavenly Father wants us to be good stewards of our pain. We are good stewards only if we let painful experiences equip us to comfort those who will go through similar experiences. Then, we can comfort them with the same comfort we have received from God.

4. He comforts us with His purpose. God has a divine purpose for every problem He allows us to have. The Bible tells us: *we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose* (Rom. 8:28). This means God uses our problems and pain to develop us *according to his purpose*. God never wastes a problem or hurt. He has a divine purpose for allowing every one of them. What is His purpose for all our problems? How does the first phrase of the next verse, Romans 8:29, answer that question?

God is the potter; we are the clay. He uses our problems and pain to shape us and make us more like Jesus. Our heavenly Father comforts us with **His promises, presence, people, and purpose.**

Getting to know God as “Father” requires we understand He is a **loving, correcting, caring, and comforting Father.** Yet, there is one more thing we need to know ...

Fifth, He is a Father we must emulate

Getting to know God means we understand what He expects of us. Our heavenly Father wants to see a family likeness or resemblance to Him in our lives. Therefore, God gives us what command in 1 Peter 1:16?

The word *holy* (HAGIOS, hag'-ee-os) means “set apart” or “sacred.” It is the idea of being different from the world. If we emulate our heavenly Father, our morals, language, attitudes, and actions are different from those of this sinful world.

Because we are to resemble our heavenly Father, Paul writes: *Be imitators of God* (Eph. 5:1). The word translated *imitators*, or “followers,” (MIMETES, mim-ay-tace') is the word from which we get our English word “mimics.” Thus, when people see our attitudes and actions, they should see us “mimicking” God, who has made Himself known to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

When people look at your life, God wants them to see what your heavenly Father is really like. That's why we are to emulate Him. First John 4:17 tells us God's love is made complete in us and we will have confidence on the Day of Judgment if something is true in our lives. What is it, according to the last phrase of that verse?

Getting to know God means we know Him as a **loving, correcting, caring, comforting Father**, and a **Father we must emulate**. Which of these qualities of your heavenly Father motivates you to get to know Him better and why?

LESSON 5 God's Address (Matthew 6:9b)

The Lord's Prayer is a model or pattern containing the elements that should be in all our prayers. In this prayer, Jesus teaches us to begin our prayers with "*Our Father*." However, Jesus expands our concept of God by saying we are to begin our prayers, "*Our Father in (where?) heaven*"!

Jesus teaches us to pray "*Our Father*" to remind us of our personal, intimate, family relationship with God, but when we add the phrase *in heaven* (the place where God resides), our prayers take on a completely new dimension. Simply calling Him "Father" could cause us to lose the reverence we must have when we pray. However, to pray "*Our Father who is in heaven*," which is God's address, reminds us of at least four things ...

First, God's address reminds us He is everywhere

Jesus tells us to pray, "*Our Father in heaven*." But where is heaven? The Bible uses the word *heaven* more than 400 times. The word translated *heaven* means "lofty" or "that which is high up." What does Paul write about heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:2?

The Bible refers to three heavens. The first heaven is the atmosphere around earth. For example, the tower of Babel reached upward to heaven—the atmospheric heaven (Gen. 11:4). The second heaven is the planetary heaven, which is the moons, planets, and stars (Gen. 15:5). The third heaven is beyond the first and second and is where God dwells. Referring to Jesus after His resurrection, what does 1 Peter 3:22 tell us?

Therefore, the third heaven is where God, Jesus, and angels dwell. However, God is an omnipresent Spirit, meaning He is everywhere at once. Our heavenly Father permeates the entire universe. Though He is in heaven, He is not confined there. This reminds us of King Solomon's prayer of dedication for his beautiful, dazzling temple: "*The heavens, even*

the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” (1 Kgs. 8:27). Because the heavens cannot contain our awesome God, what fact do we find in 1 Corinthians 3:16?

Our Heavenly Father is everywhere, including **in** us. If I go up into the third heaven, He is there. If I go down into the *grave*, or “hell” (SHEOL, she-ol), He is there. If I go to the depths of the sea, He is there (Psa. 139:8–9). God dwells in the third heaven, but He is close enough to hear my every prayer. This truth is beyond human comprehension, but remembering God’s omnipresence should bring awe and reverence to our prayers. **God’s address reminds us He is everywhere**, and ...

Second, God’s address reminds us He can do anything

Because God can be everywhere, His power is unlimited. How many places can you be in at once? Only one! Have you ever needed to be in several places at once but couldn’t? Why? Because you don’t have the power to be in more than one place at a time. However, God is not only everywhere at once; He created everywhere.

The phrase *in heaven* reminds us our heavenly Father is not just an ideal version of earthly fathers but a Father who can do anything. When we pray “*Our Father in heaven*,” we should have the same awe of God as Isaiah, who writes of God: *He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name* (Isa. 40:26b). Then, what does Isaiah write in the last sentence of that verse?

God not only has all the hairs on our heads numbered; He also calls each star by name and keeps every one of them in place. This is incredible when we consider “our galaxy, the Milky Way, contains more than 100 billion stars and that tens of millions of galaxies are known to exist, so the total number of stars in the universe exceeds a billion billion” (*Grolier International Encyclopedia*, Vol. 18, Pg. 221). Using God’s address puts

power in our prayers because it reminds us He **is everywhere, can do anything**, and ...

Third, God's address reminds us He is different from us

Calling God "Father" reminds us God is knowable and approachable, but the phrase *in heaven* reminds us of who He is and who we are. God is holy and sinless, but we're not. Although we can have an intimate relationship with our heavenly Father, we should never approach Him with arrogance or presumption. The phrase *Our Father* reminds us of our family relationship, but the phrase *in heaven* reminds us God is holy or set apart from all sin. Because God is different from us, of what does God remind us in Isaiah 55:9?

God never acts in a selfish or unloving way, but we do. God never gets in a hurry, but we do. God is more concerned with our character than our comfort, but we are not. Remembering God's address reminds us of whom we are addressing. He is not some "sugar daddy" who can be talked into giving us anything anytime we want it.

God is sinless, and we are not, but His love transcends the difference. Since we are sinful, we cannot reach heaven on our own, so in His love God brings heaven to us. How does Jesus express this truth in the first sentence of His first sermon (Matthew 5:3)?

This means when we acknowledge our spiritual poverty and come to God as spiritual beggars, confessing our sin and trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, we enter the *kingdom of heaven*. Then, God's address becomes our eternal address. Although God is everywhere, He was far away until Christ came. How does Ephesians 2:13 explain this truth?

In Christ, you and I, who are hopeless sinners, become family members with an awesome sinless God. God's address reminds us He is everywhere, can do anything, is different from us, and ...

Fourth, God's address reminds us He is worthy of praise

God sits on His throne in heaven (Psa. 103:19). But what is His throne in heaven like? Almost the entire fourth chapter of *Revelation* describes God's majesty in His throne room in heaven. God's throne symbolizes His absolute authority and power. What does Revelation 4:3b reveal about God's throne?

The rainbow completely encircles the throne, creating an awesome display of transparent colors. It is like an emerald in appearance, meaning it has a dominant green color. The majesty around God's throne is enhanced with *flashes of lightning, rumblings and pearls of thunder* and before the throne is *a sea of glass, clear as crystal* (Rev. 4:5–6). There is also a vast host around the throne praising Him (Rev. 4:11). For what does Psalm 150:2 tell us to praise Him?

As we pray, Jesus wants us to remember our Father is *in heaven*, not sitting in a rocking chair, but on an awesome, dazzling throne. We are to keep in mind our heavenly Father is the majestic Creator and Ruler of the universe, who is in heaven surrounded by indescribable majesty and glory.

As Arthur Pink writes, the phrase *in heaven* gives a “blessed balance” to the phrase *Our Father*. The phrase *Our Father* reveals His love and care; the phrase *in heaven* reveals His holiness, greatness, and majesty. The phrase *Our Father* fills us with confidence and love, while the phrase *in heaven* fills us with humility and awe. If we are to have a “journey into powerful prayer,” these two truths must permeate our minds.

God's address reminds us He **is everywhere, can do anything, is different from us, and is worthy of praise.** Right now, bow your head and thank God for the implications of His address. Then, talk to Him about anything He has laid on your heart.

When you think of God's address, what first comes to your mind, and how can that help you have a "journey into powerful prayer"?

LESSON 6 Making God's Name Hallowed (Matthew 6:9c)

By looking at God's address—*in heaven*—we discovered in our last lesson that our heavenly Father is not like a mellow old man sitting in a rocking chair. He is the awesome Creator God, who sits on His dazzling, breathtaking throne in heaven. Remembering God's address when we pray causes us to say naturally, "*Hallowed be your name*" (Mt 6:9c). This is the first of six petitions in the Lord's Prayer. The first three relate to God's glory and will; the second three relate to our well-being. The principle taught is God first and us second, if we are to have a "journey into powerful prayer." To understand what Jesus means by the petition "*Hallowed be your name*," we must answer three questions: **what does the word *hallowed* mean, what is God's name, and how can we make God's name *hallowed*.**

First, what does the word *hallowed* mean?

Hallowed is an out-of-date Old English word, yet most modern versions of the Bible still use it because it sounds so reverent. The word translated *hallowed* means "to make holy" or "to make separate." It separates His name from what is common and ordinary. The proper use of God's name is so important God includes it in His top Ten Commandments. What do we read in Exodus 20:7b?

We can violate this commandment and fail to "hallow" God's name in several ways. One is by using "God" or "Lord" as fillers in our speech or as words of exclamation. God is very particular about how we use any of His names, and He will punish us for misusing His name. How does Jesus make this clear in Matthew 12:36?

Are careless words about God included in this warning? Certainly! Any misuse of God's name or derogatory words referring to God violate the

third Commandment and the Lord's Prayer. The opposite of misusing or using God's name in vain is to make it holy, or to "hallow" it.

Honoring God's name is part of God's purpose for our lives. As God's children, we are to lead the world to "hallow" His name. God told Ezekiel: *I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them* (Ezek. 36:23a). Then, what does God say in the last sentence of verse 23 that still applies to us today?

The phrase *hallowed be your name* means, "Let me lead the world to treat your name as holy or sacred." We should only use God's name to praise Him or to tell others how wonderful He is.

Second, what is God's name?

Our names reveal a lot about us. My most often used name is "Tommy," but I have other names. My last name is "Higle." To my wife I am "Darling." To my children I am "Dad." To my church I am "Pastor." When Virginia is upset with me, I am "Tommy Charles." Each of these names reveals something about me as a person. The same is true of God.

In both the Old and New Testaments, God reveals Himself in names. The two most common names in the Old Testament are "God" and "LORD" (in all caps). The name "God" translates the Hebrew word "Elohim" (el-O-heem), which conveys the idea of a supreme being with infinite power. That's why the Bible begins with what revelation in Genesis 1:1?

Thus, the name "God" reveals our heavenly Father is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The second most common name for God is "LORD" (in all caps), which translates the Hebrew word "Yahweh" (yah-way) from which we get the name "Jehovah." This name means the "eternal, self-existent One." It is a profound, untranslatable verb because

it is past, present, and future tense all at once. God uses this name to reveal Himself to Moses at the burning bush. There were many gods in Egypt, so when God tells Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, Moses wants to know what to tell the Israelites when they ask what his God's name is (Ex 3:13). What does God tell Moses His name is (Exodus 3:14)?

“God” and “LORD” are the two primary names for God in the Old Testament. There are also two primary names for Him in the New Testament. One is “Father.” This name discloses much about God. However, the greatest revelation of God in the entire Bible is when He makes Himself known in the person of Jesus Christ. When the great “I AM” came to earth in flesh and blood, He chose the name “Jesus” and that name is to be revered also (see Jn 8:58). What does the Bible tell us about Jesus in Philippians 2:9?

Have you ever wondered why many people use the names “God” and “Jesus” to curse and swear or as words of exclamation? Because the Evil One wants to belittle and tarnish God's holy names! It is interesting that the people who use God's name the most, often know Him the least.

We have answered the questions: **what does the word *hallowed* mean** and **what is God's name**. Now let's consider ...

Third, how can we make God's name *hallowed*?

When we pray *hallowed be your name*, we are making a commitment to live in a way that brings honor to God's name. If God's name is *hallowed* in our lives, we must do at least **five** things:

1. Talk about God respectfully. This means we treat God's name with the utmost honor and reverence. We must never use God's name carelessly, which is called “profanity.” The dictionary defines “profanity” as “showing disrespect or contempt for sacred things.” When we use any

name for God, we should do it to honor and exalt Him. This means we obey what command in Psalm 29:2a?

2. Rejoice in God's blessings continually. We can also make God's name *hallowed* by praising Him and giving Him due credit for all our many blessings, abilities, and achievements. That is why we are given what command in Philippians 4:4a?

3. Give to God generously. Nothing reveals how much we really revere God's name like how we use our money. Jesus said, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Mt 6:21). Because of this truth, God gives us what command in Proverbs 3:9a?

4. Obey God totally. Nothing brings dishonor to God's name like violating His Word. When Joshua succeeded Moses as the leader of Israel, God said to him: ... *Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go* (Josh. 1:7). If we are to be successful in making God's name *hallowed*, we must obey all of His Word.

5. Trust God completely. Each time we doubt God, we tarnish His name. Trusting God completely is what the Bible calls "faith." Without faith, it is impossible for us to please God because a lack of faith means we doubt God's character and His Word. Our faith reveals what we really believe about God and His name. That's why Psalm 9:10a makes what declaration?

We hallow God's name by trusting in it. When we trust in His name, we trust every promise in the Bible because each one has God's name on it.

Making God's name *hallowed* means we talk about God respectfully, rejoice in God's blessings continually, give to God generously, obey God totally, and trust God completely.

God will judge us for each time we have used His name in vain and failed to hallow His name. That's the bad news. Now, would you like to hear the good news? It is found in 1 John 1:9. What is it?

Right now, ask God to help you make His name *hallowed* by talking about Him **respectfully**, rejoicing in His blessings **continually**, giving to Him **generously**, obeying Him **totally**, and trusting Him **completely**.

To have a "journey into powerful prayer," we must do more than just pray for God's name to be *hallowed*; we must live a life that hallows His name. What can you do, beginning today, to make God's name more *hallowed* in your life?

LESSON 7 Understanding God's Kingdom (Matthew 6:10a)

In our last lesson, we learned *hallowed be your name* is the first and most important petition to make when we pray. If in everything we say and do we are making God's name "hallowed," then we will be helping make the next petition in the Lord's Prayer a reality. This second petition is *your kingdom come* (Mt 6:10a). If we are to have a "journey into powerful prayer," our first priority must be to make God's name *hallowed*. Our second priority should be to pray for God's kingdom to come. To know how to pray this petition properly, we must answer **three** questions: **what is God's kingdom, where is God's kingdom, and how can we help bring God's kingdom to earth.**

What is God's kingdom?

God's kingdom refers to His dominion in our world. A kingdom requires a king or monarch. What are Jesus' first recorded words as a adult in Mark 1:15?

We cannot understand what it is to be a Christian unless we know what the kingdom of God is, and to understand God's kingdom, we must first realize there are two kingdoms in this world—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Evil One. What does Jesus say in John 16:11b to let us know there are two kingdoms?

In the gospels, Jesus refers three times to the devil as *the prince of this world*. The word translated *prince* means "ruler" or "magistrate." Satan is not king of this world; he is simply a temporary ruler because God's kingdom is coming to destroy Satan's rule.

When Jesus is on trial just before His crucifixion, Pilate asks Him: "*Are you the king of the Jews?*" (Jn 18:33). Since Jesus' enemies are accusing Him of sedition and setting up a rebel government against Rome, Pilate is

asking about an earthly king and kingdom. How does Jesus respond to Pilate's question (John 18:36a.)?

In other words, the kingdom of God is not earthly but spiritual. God's spiritual kingdom can be divided into three parts:

1. God's past kingdom. God's past kingdom is described when He tells Moses to say to the nation of Israel: "*Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession* (Ex 19:5a). Then, what does God next say to Moses in verse six?

God's plan for His kingdom in the past was for Israel to be a kingdom of *priests* who would bring the world to Him. A priest acts as an intermediary between God and people. That is why God makes what promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:18?

However, Israel was not interested in bringing about God's kingdom by being a nation of priests who would lead the world into a right relationship with God. Therefore, after God's past kingdom came ...

2. God's present kingdom. When Jesus came to earth, He brought God's kingdom with Him. To begin His public ministry, Jesus says "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near*" (Mt 4:17b). The kingdom is *near* because Jesus is on the verge of leading men and women into an obedient relationship with God the Father. Being a Christian is being a member of God's present kingdom, which is called the "church." God's purpose for the church, the body of Christ, is the same as it was for the nation of Israel. The apostle Peter reminds us we are a *chosen people*, a *royal priesthood*, and a *holy nation* (1 Pet. 2:9a). According to 1 Peter 2:9b, what is our purpose on earth?

3. God's future kingdom. The day is rapidly approaching when the trumpet will sound and Christ will return to set up His eternal kingdom. The Bible describes this as a time when nations *beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks ... nor will they ... train for war anymore* (Isa. 2:4). There will also be a phenomenal change in the animal kingdom. Isaiah tells us *the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together* (Isa. 11:6). Then, what do we read in the last phrase of verse six?

Evil will forever be defeated at this time. God will create a new heaven and earth, and His glory will fill the earth. **What is God's kingdom?** It is wherever God rules or reigns.

Where is God's kingdom?

This is what the Pharisees ask Jesus. Anticipating the reestablishment of David's kingdom, they ask Jesus when God's kingdom would come. Jesus tells them God's kingdom is not visible, so we cannot say it is here or there (Lk 17:21a). Then, what does Jesus tell them about God's kingdom in Luke 17:21b?

Jesus would have never told the unbelieving Pharisees the kingdom was *within* them. The better translation would be "among you" or "in your midst." If they would look around, it was evident through John the Baptist and Jesus that God's kingdom was among them.

However, when Jesus returned to heaven, the kingdom of God stayed, and it continues in us. Therefore, now *the kingdom of God is within* us literally because God reigns in our hearts. *The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking* or worldly pleasure (Rom. 14:17a). How does Romans 14:17b describe what it means for us to be part of God's kingdom?

Righteousness means being right with God. *Peace* is trying to live in harmony with others. *Joy in the Holy Spirit* is having a holy happiness or divine delight that sparks the interest of others.

Having discovered the **what** and **where** of **God's kingdom**, now let's find out ...

How can we help bring God's kingdom to earth?

There are at least three ways:

1. By living for God. When we sincerely pray, *Your kingdom come*, we are submitting to God's rule in our hearts. We are asking God to control our hearts and lives. As we submit to His control, a little more of God's kingdom comes to earth. This means our first concern is God's kingdom, not our own little kingdom with its cars, cash, and careers.

To be honest, I sometimes find myself working for my kingdom rather than God's. I am a very driven person who can become so focused on my own ministry that I forget it is God's ministry. However, it is so liberating to remind myself I am here to build God's kingdom, not my own. If we seek God's kingdom first, what does Jesus promise in Matthew 6:33?

As we submit every area of our lives to God, we bring a little more of His kingdom to earth.

2. By winning others. Being involved in helping someone come to Christ brings a little more of God's kingdom to earth because He now reigns in one more life. If we are to do our part in helping God's kingdom come, we must do everything possible to bring our lost family members, friends, and associates to Christ.

3. By praying for God's present and future kingdom. When Christ returns, God's ultimate kingdom will be established. Describing this

future kingdom, Jesus says: *“I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt 8:11). This is the wedding (or marriage) *supper of the Lamb* (Rev. 19:9), when all saints of all time sit down with the Lord for a great homecoming banquet. Praying for God’s future kingdom should always be in our prayers. In fact, the last prayer in the Bible should be our daily prayer. How is this prayer worded (see Revelation 22:20b)?

We help bring God’s kingdom to earth **by living for God, winning others, and praying for God’s present and future kingdom.** Are you doing your part to help bring God’s kingdom to earth? Right now would you honestly pray, “Thy kingdom come?” This is a key ingredient in having a “journey into powerful prayer.” What can you do, beginning today, to be more actively involved in helping God’s kingdom come to earth?

LESSON 8 Accomplishing God's Will on Earth (Matthew 6:10b)

In our journey, we now come to the third of six petitions in the Lord's Prayer. The first and most important petition is "*hallowed be your name.*" The second is "*your kingdom come,*" and the third is "*your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*" (Mt 6:10b). How do we accomplish God's will on earth? To answer that question, we must first answer these three questions: **how does God's will come to earth, what is God's will for us, and what's the problem.**

How does God's will come to earth?

Jesus tells us to pray "*your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" God doesn't accomplish His will on earth through angels; He does it exclusively through you and me. This petition is a prayer of commitment to fulfill God's purpose, or will, for our lives. When sincerely prayed, this is a prayer for God to take control and fulfill His purpose for our lives. God has a purpose for us before we are born (Psa. 139:16). The Bible tells us *we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works* (Eph. 2:10a). Then, what does the last part of that verse teach us?

God has an individual will or purpose for each of us, and Jesus tells us to pray God's will be done in us *as it is in heaven*. How is God's will fulfilled in heaven? The angels do His will wholeheartedly, joyously, and completely. We are to do God's will *on earth as it is in heaven*—wholeheartedly, joyously, and completely. The primary purpose of prayer is allowing God's will to come to earth through us. That's why Jesus, knowing the cross He must face the next day, prayed what prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42)?

What would be our fate if Jesus had not allowed God's will to be done through Him! Our willingness to sincerely pray "*not my will, but yours be done*" will determine the eternal destiny of many people we know.

Someone might say, "Tommy, what good is prayer if all I can get out of prayer is God's will. I thought prayer was to get what I want." Listen! God always wants what we want, if we had enough sense to want it. God wants what is best for us in the end. God's will is often not the easiest nor the most comfortable, but it is always what is best for our character.

God wants to bless us and make us happy. However, for God really to bless us, we must be willing to submit to His will for our lives. The key to true, lasting happiness and purpose is finding God's will or plan for our lives. In Jeremiah 29:11, God tells us about His plan for us. What is His plan for you?

When we surrender to God's will for our lives, He will prosper us spiritually, give us hope or a purpose for living, and give us a future not only on earth but also in heaven.

We cannot truly pray "*your will be done on earth,*" unless we are committed to finding and fulfilling God's will or purpose for our lives because God's will comes to earth through us. This leads to the next question ...

What is God's will for us?

God has a moral, or general, will that is the same for all believers, and He has a special will that, at least to some degree, is different for each of us. God's moral will is revealed through His Word in the form of commands and principles. At least three things are God's will for all believers ...

1. God wants us to love Him because He loves us. How does God tell us about His love for us in Jeremiah 31:3b?

God loves us, and more than anything else, He wants us to love Him. One day a scribe or expert in the Law came to Jesus and asked which commandment in the Law is greatest (Mt 22:36). Then, quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, how does Jesus answer that question in Matthew 22:37?

This means we must love God with everything in our being. Why is this commandment the greatest of all? Because our chief purpose in life is to love God above all else. If we love God as the Bible teaches, we will naturally want God's will to come to earth through us.

2. God wants us to be like Jesus. He doesn't want us to dress like Jesus or look like Jesus; He wants us to have the character of Jesus. As a result, the Bible tells us we should *know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose* (Rom. 8:28). We can't understand this verse unless we read the first part of the next verse. What do we read in Romans 8:29a?

The phrase *all things* in Romans 8:28 doesn't mean *all things* that happen to us are good because they are not. It doesn't mean everything that happens to us in this fallen world is God's will because it's not. However, it does mean God will use everything that happens to us—good or bad—to chip away at our characters and make us more like Jesus.

When we understand this, the problems and pains of life take on a completely new meaning. God has a divine purpose for every problem or pain He allows us to experience. When we have a problem or tragedy, we need to ask ourselves, "How can God use this to make me more like Jesus?"

To be more like Jesus, we must be **forgiving**. Has someone hurt or betrayed you? Would Jesus forgive them? Yes! We know this because of what prayer Jesus prayed as He was nailed to the cross (Luke 23:34)?

Is it God's will for us to be more forgiving? Of course! How does God teach us to be forgiving? By allowing people to hurt us.

To be like Jesus, we must be **patient**. Jesus left the throne room of heaven, where there is no sin, pain, or tears, and faithfully lived in this sinful world, which caused Him many tears and much pain, for 33 years. God makes us like Jesus by allowing delays, disappointments, and long-term problems. That's why God gives us what exhortation in Galatians 6:9?

3. God wants us to help bring others to faith in Christ. *Jesus came into the world to save sinners* (1 Tim. 1:15), and that's what we all are. He not only came to save us from the penalty of our sins but also that we might have a happy, abundant life. If we want God's will to be done on earth, we can never forget what fact about God's will found in 2 Peter 3:9b?

Jesus came to give us life (Jn 10:10b), and that means we're not really living until we know Jesus. People who don't know Him aren't living; they're just existing. Therefore, God's will is for us to help bring them to faith. Now that we know how God's will comes to earth and what His will for us is, then ...

What's the problem?

Here's the problem: We all have a natural desire to be our own boss, do our own thing, and ignore God's will. We see it in phrases like "Look out for number one," "Do your own thing," and "If it feels good, do it." It is summed up best in the phrase from Frank Sinatra's song, "I did it my way." We want to do things our way, not God's way. How does Isaiah 53:6a describe this problem?

We fix the problem by praying the first three phrases of the Lord's Prayer. Beginning our prayer with "*Our Father in heaven*" reminds us He is a loving Father who wants only the very best for us. Then we pray "*hallowed be your name*," reminding us we cannot arrogantly come into God's presence, forgetting whom we are addressing. Next, we pray "*your kingdom come*" to acknowledge God is Lord, or King, and we are subjects in His kingdom. Only then can we sincerely pray, "*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"

How does God's will come to earth? Through you and me. **What is God's will for us?** God wants us to love Him. He wants us to be like Jesus by being more forgiving, more patient, and more diligent in bringing others to faith in Christ. **What's the problem?** We have a tendency to want to do our own thing. Would you sincerely pray right now ...

"Heavenly Father, I pray for Your will to be accomplished on earth through me *as it is in heaven*. I do love You for loving me, and I ask You to help me become more like Jesus by being more forgiving, patient, and bringing others to faith in Him. May Your will and not my will be done in my life."

Beginning right now, what can you do to allow God's will to be accomplished on earth through you *as it is in heaven*?

LESSON 9 **Winning Over Worry (Matthew 6:11)**

In the Lord's Prayer, we find principles that should be in all our prayers. There are six petitions in the Lord's Prayer. The first three relate to God and His *name*, His *kingdom*, and His *will*. The second three requests have to do with meeting our needs. The principle being taught is God first and us second. What is the first request regarding our needs (Mt 6:11)?

Understanding this petition is the key for winning over worry. We all worry. What do you worry about most? Your kids, finances, job, school, health, weight, schedule? Two stockbrokers were talking to each other. One said, "I'm worried sick." The other said, "I never worry." The first guy asked, "Why not?" He said, "Because I have hired a professional worrier." "What's that?" asked the first man. The second guy replied, "I just pay him to do all my worrying, so I don't have to worry about anything." The first man said, "Wow, I've got to get one of those. How much does one cost?" "A hundred thousand dollars a year," answered the second man. "Where are you going to get that kind of money?" asked the first guy. The second guy answered, "That's his worry!"

God doesn't want us to be all stressed out with worry. That's why Jesus gives us the secret for winning over worry. How does Philippians 4:6 amplify what it means to pray for our daily bread?

When Jesus says to pray, "*Give us today our daily bread*," He is teaching us God wants to meet all our needs. The Bible promises: *God will meet all your needs* (Phil. 4:19). God will meet all our **needs**, not our **wants**, because there are times when we want things we don't need, and there are also times when we need things we don't want. God wants to meet all our needs not our greeds. This petition teaches us at least **two** things ...

First, we must live one day at a time

Jesus did not say we are to pray, “Give us our yearly bread, monthly bread, or even weekly bread.” He said we are to pray: “*Give us today our _____ bread.*” In other words, we are to live one day at a time. As someone has said, “God has promised us His grace for all our tomorrows, but He didn’t promise tomorrow’s grace for today.” One of the greatest promises in the Bible is Deuteronomy 33:25b. Write it below:

According to this verse, God will give us the *strength* to meet each day He gives us to live, but nowhere in the Bible does He promise tomorrow’s *strength* today. When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, God wanted to teach them to rely on Him for their daily needs. So, He sends them manna from heaven. How much does He send them? Enough for a month? A week? How much? Moses tells them, “*No one is to keep any of it until morning*” (Ex 16:19). However, paying no attention to Moses, some of the Israelites keep part of the manna until morning. As a result, what happens? (Exodus 16:20)?

Yuk! Like the Israelites, when we take on tomorrow’s needs today, life stinks. You may say, “Tommy, I know enough about the Bible to realize I shouldn’t worry, but I still do. I know it in my head, but how do I practice it in my heart and life?” Here’s a story to illustrate the answer: In the early days of flying, a pilot is flying around the world in a small airplane. Some 1,000 miles out to sea, away from any sort of land, he hears a gnawing somewhere in the cockpit. He soon realizes a rat is gnawing away at the wiring in his plane. He knows he is in serious trouble. What can he do? He remembers rats are terrestrial creatures that can only live on land. So, he flies his plane higher and higher until the gnawing stops at around 20,000 feet. When he reaches the end of his journey and finally lands, he finds a dead rat under the floor of his cockpit. The rat had been gnawing on wires that, if destroyed, would have caused the plane to crash and he would have lost his life.

To kill the “rat” of worry, we, like that pilot, must lift our worries to a higher atmosphere so they will die a natural death. How does Isaiah 26:3 tell us we can do that?

Rather than enjoying today, most of us worry about tomorrow. Worry is interest paid on trouble before it is due. Worry is such a part of our lives that Jesus devoted almost one-seventh of the Sermon on the Mount to that subject. Worry is an effective weapon of the Evil One because it drains our energy, making us too tired to serve God.

God wants us to enjoy life. He wants us to enjoy our families, our jobs, our homes, our incomes—everything. That’s why the Bible says God’s gift to us is *wealth and possessions* and the ability to *enjoy them* and *be happy* (Eccles. 5:19). Therefore, what should be our attitude every day, according to Psalm 118:24?

To win over worry, **we must live one day at a time**, and ...

Second, we must trust God with little things

By telling us to pray, “*Give us today our daily bread*,” Jesus is teaching us that our heavenly Father cares about the small things in our lives. Our heavenly Father cares for the ordinary, day-to-day things in our lives. Sometimes we act as if God only cares about the big problems in our lives, but we don’t have to have a life-threatening problem to ask for God’s help.

God wants to be involved in our small, everyday problems. Those are what most often discourage us. The small things wear us down. As someone has said, “I would rather be swallowed by a whale than nibbled to death by minnows.” Well, God cares about the “nibbling minnows” in our lives. God wants to meet our everyday needs because God wants us to depend on Him *daily*. How does 1 Peter 5:7 remind us of this?

How many of our cares and problems are we to *cast* on Him? All! The word translated *cast* means “to throw upon.” It is the idea of throwing our worries to the Lord and leaving them there. Too many of us cast our anxiety as we do a fishing line; we cast our worries and then reel them back. However, we are to *cast* them to God’s throne and leave them there.

Praying about our problems doesn’t mean they will go away, but it does remind us of our heavenly Father’s involvement. A big part of prayer is involving God in our problems, small ones and large ones. What does Psalm 91:1 promise when we trust God to meet our daily needs?

It really hurts people who love you when you won’t let them help when you need it. I remember something that happened the week before I began my first semester in college. I had worked hard all summer, hauling hay with my own truck and loader. The week before I started college, my mother and I were sitting in the living room of our very modest country home that didn’t even have an indoor bathroom. I told my mother I had enough money to pay my tuition and get through the first half of the semester, and if I could find a part-time job, I would be able to make the whole semester.

Then my mother, a single mom who left at daylight and didn’t get home from work until 6:00 P.M. or later, said, “I can help. I can give you one week’s paycheck each month.” She barely made enough money to buy food and clothes, but she wanted to help me. I quickly replied, “Mamma, I don’t need your help anymore.” My mother immediately burst into tears. The only other time I saw her cry was when her dad died. She just didn’t cry often.

I didn’t understand how my statement hurt her until my oldest daughter, Monta, got married. As I performed her wedding, I was embarrassed because of the tears running down my cheeks. Do you know why I was crying? Because my first baby did not need her dad anymore.

God loves us more than we can imagine, and He loves to meet our daily needs because He wants to be involved in our daily lives. Only when we

depend on God to meet our daily needs will we experience what truth found in Psalm 145:16?

God has so blessed us that we have become much like the Israelites God miraculously provided with manna in the desert. First, they stop thanking Him, then they quit asking Him for His provision of daily bread, and third they begin to grumble and resent not having more. At this point, they begin to think about the cucumbers, melons, and leeks they had in Egypt, while forgetting about the oppression, slavery, and brutality. They grumble about having to eat manna for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Though it could be prepared in many tasty ways, they complain: “*But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!*” (Num. 11:6). They want meat instead. So, the Lord tells them He will give them meat and not just for one or two days but for a whole month, until it comes out their nostrils and they hate it (Num. 11:18b–20a). God wanted the Israelites to depend on Him for their daily bread, and He wants us to do the same. Why, according to Deuteronomy 8:3?

Trusting God for our daily needs humbles us and pushes pride out of our lives. The more we have, the more we need to pray about our daily needs because material affluence can create pride and put us in greater spiritual danger. Pride causes the driving force in our lives to be the amassing of possessions, prestige, or power, which fills our lives with conflict and stress. However, the greatest problem with pride is found in Psalm 10:4. What is it?

One reason we need to pray and thank God for meeting our daily needs is we tend to forget God gives us the intellect, talents, abilities, and health that enables us to meet our needs. Asking God to give us our daily bread, or needs, reminds us of what truth in James 1:17a?

Praying daily for our needs keeps things in the proper context. To win over worry, you must **live one day at a time** and **trust God with little things**. What do you need to begin doing right now to help you win over worry?

LESSON 10 **Forgiving Those Who Hurt You (Matthew 6:12)**

All of us have been deeply hurt by another person. How can we deal with that hurt? Jesus tells us in the Lord's Prayer. If we miss this petition in the Lord's Prayer, everything else we learn about prayer in this "journey" is a waste of time. Jesus tells us we should pray, "*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*" (Mt 6:12). The word *debts* means "sins," as translated in Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer (Lk 11:4a).

After becoming Christians, we still sin and therefore need daily forgiveness so our fellowship with our heavenly Father may continue. However, we must be willing to forgive others if our sins are to be forgiven. To learn to forgive those who hurt us, we must answer **three** questions.

First, why should I forgive?

There are at least **four** reasons we should forgive others ...

1. Forgiveness allows God to forgive our sin. God requires us to forgive others because He has forgiven us (Col. 3:13). It is such a serious matter not to forgive those who hurt us that Jesus' comment on this subject is the only footnote to the Lord's Prayer. He says if we forgive those who hurt us or sin against us, our heavenly Father will also forgive us (Mt 6:14). However, what warning does Jesus give us in the next verse (6:15)?

God is only willing to forgive us if we forgive others. We cannot get from God what we refuse to give to others. For example, Jesus says, "*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy*" (Mt 5:7). If I don't show mercy and forgiveness to others, God will not be merciful and forgiving to me. In addition, what does James 2:13a tell us?

Forgiving others proves we are genuinely sorry for our sins. If we are unwilling to forgive someone else, then we are not really sorry for our

own sins, and consequently, God will not forgive us. Our forgiveness of others allows God to forgive our sins.

2. Forgiveness reveals our faith in God and His Word. Willingness to forgive so we can get over a hurt is really an act of faith. The Bible tells us not to take revenge (Rom. 12:19). Forgiveness reveals our faith in what promise from the Lord in Romans 12:19b?

If we really have faith in God and His Word, we will forgive because of that promise. An unforgiving spirit is clear evidence we don't trust God or His Word. We don't have to try to balance the books or even keep the books, because we can trust God to do the right thing. We just need to be concerned with keeping our hearts right and leaving justice to the only righteous Judge. Our willingness to forgive others reveals our faith in God.

3. Forgiveness closes the door to other sins. When we refuse to forgive and thus hold a grudge, we open the door to all kinds of other sins, such as bitterness, resentment, jealousy, gossip, and hate. This is why the Bible gives what command in Ephesians 4:31?

Bitterness is the direct result of refusing to forgive. When we refuse to forgive, bitterness takes root in our hearts and produces its evil fruit. All those terrible things listed after bitterness are the result of bitterness. The only way to close the door on these sins is to forgive.

4. Forgiveness makes us like God. God is the God of mercy and forgiveness. To reveal His glory to Moses, the Lord passes in front of him proclaiming Himself to be ... *the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin* (Ex 34:6–7a). When we forgive, we are doing something that originates in heaven. God is never more proud of us than when we are willing to forgive a hurt

because that's when we are most like Him. God is clear about His requirement for our forgiving others. That's why we have what command in Ephesians 4:32?

We should forgive because it **allows God to forgive our sin**, it **reveals our faith in God and His Word**, it **closes the door to other sins**, and it **makes us like God**.

Second, how does God forgive?

1. God forgives completely. God promises: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness* (1 Jn 1:9). What does the word *all* include in that verse? *All* our sins! One of the greatest promises in the Bible is what God says in the last sentence of Jeremiah 31:34. What is it?

After we confess a sin to God, He will never say, "Remember that sin you committed, that bad thing you did?" God never brings it up again, and that's the way we should be. If we forgive as God does, we do not bring up that sin or hurt anymore. We don't tell other people about it, so they can know what victims we are and how someone else has hurt us. However, do you know who will bring it up? The Evil One! He will always try to get his foot in the door to keep our bitterness burning by reminding us of those who have hurt us. Then, he can lead us into all kinds of other sins. However, if we forgive as God has forgiven us, we will forgive completely and never bring it up again.

One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is being able to forgive those who have hurt us and never bringing it up again. Forgiveness gives us a foretaste of what heaven is like. One of the most wonderful things about heaven is described in the last sentence of Isaiah 65:17. Write it below:

One of the horrors of hell is that no one there forgets anything. In his book, *The Great Divorce*, C. S. Lewis describes hell as a place where no one forgets anything but remembers every cruel exchange of words and every hurt. If you want to live in a hell on earth, refuse to forgive. One thing that makes heaven a fantastic place is God forgives completely.

2. God forgives freely. It doesn't seem fair to be guilty of sin and then to be freely forgiven. It seems like we should have to do something to pay for the bad things we have done. However, what does Romans 3:24 tell us?

Our forgiveness is free but it is not cheap; it cost God His only Son. God sent His Son to die on the cross so not only could we be forgiven, but also so we could forgive those who hurt us and not be guilty of the sins of bitterness, resentment, gossip, etc.

If we forgive as God does, we must forgive **completely** and **freely**.

Third, how can we forgive those who have hurt us?

Not only does God command us to forgive and tell us the consequence for refusing to forgive; He also gives us wonderful examples of how to forgive. One example is the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. All through his life, Joseph was willing to forgive those who hurt him. He forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery. He forgives Potiphar's wife for lying and accusing him of trying to rape her and forgives Potiphar for having him put in prison for several years. He forgives Pharaoh's chief butler for forgetting him and leaving him in prison for two years. He forgives his brothers for selling him into slavery.

Joseph was willing to forgive and forget. Did he forget the events? Did he forget the pit or the prison? The lies and suffering? No! Joseph chose to forget the pain associated with those events. Joseph knew the past was done and nothing could change it. Joseph also knew God has a purpose for our pain, hurts, and sufferings. Joseph says something to his brothers

near the end of his forgiveness-filled life that reveals how we can forgive those who hurt us. What is it? (Genesis 50:20a)?

Joseph could forgive because he knew God has a good reason for every hurt and a purpose for every pain He allows. We need to learn that sometimes God allows us to be hurt because He has a plan for our pain. You may say, “Tommy, you just don’t know how bad they hurt me. I can’t forgive them.” Yes, you can, because of what promise in Philippians 4:13?

Whom do you need to forgive? A spouse, a child, a father or mother, a brother or sister, an employer, an associate, or a fellow believer? We’ve answered the questions: **why should we forgive, how does God forgive, and how can we forgive those who have hurt us.** Bow your head right now, and if God brings to your mind someone who has hurt you, ask His help in forgiving that person and getting over the hurt.

Which answer to the questions in this lesson helps you most and why?

LESSON 11 Turning Down Temptation (Matthew 6:13a)

A man was late for an appointment, so he parked in a “No Parking” zone. To prevent getting a ticket, he left a note under his windshield wiper. It read, “I’ve circled this block ten times, and I have to make this appointment, or my boss will be upset with me.” Then he added, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

When he returned, he found a ticket on his car with a note written by the police officer. The note read, “I’ve circled this block for ten years. If I don’t give you a ticket, my boss will be upset with me.” Then, he added this verse: “ *‘Lead us not into temptation.’* ”

Now we come to the last of six requests in the Lord’s Prayer: “*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*” (Mt 6:13). Of all the requests, this one is the most perplexing. We know God wants to guide us and provide for us, but is it ever in His nature to lead us into temptation? One thing we always need to remember in interpreting the Bible is to interpret Scripture in light of other Scripture. To interpret this petition correctly, we must do it in light of James 1:13. Write it below:

This sounds like a contradiction. How do we reconcile the two? First, we need to understand what Jesus did not say. He did **not** tell us to pray, “Lord, do not tempt us.” God does not entice us to sin, but He does allow the tempter to tempt us. How does Matthew 4:1 describe this fact in Jesus’ life immediately after His baptism?

Notice Jesus wasn’t led by the devil, but who led him? The Holy Spirit! God didn’t tempt Job, but He did allow the devil to tempt him to curse God (see Job 1). God doesn’t tempt us, but He does allow us to be tempted to test our faith. There are two reasons for temptation. The devil tempts us to bring us down, while God allows temptation as a test to build us up spiritually and validate our faith. This petition could be translated: “Do not let us yield to temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.”

In this lesson, we are going to look at the **stages of temptation** and the **strategies for turning down temptation**.

First, the stages of temptation

To turn down temptation, we must be aware of the schemes and methods of the Evil One. There are at least **five** stages of temptation.

1. Desire. God has given us good desires, such as thirst, rest, and sex. The Evil One tries to get us to satisfy our God-given desires in perverted ways. Thirst is natural and good, but drunkenness is a sin. Rest is a gift from God and commanded in the Ten Commandments, but too much rest results in the sin of laziness. Sex is God's way for us to express love and have children, but sex outside the marriage of a man and woman is sin. How does the Evil One tempt Jesus after He has gone forty days without food (Matt. 4:3)?

In other words, he tempts Jesus to use His power for selfish reasons. Jesus could not do that. The first stage of temptation is **desire**; then comes ...

2. Deceit. The Bible says we are tempted when we are *enticed* by our own evil desires (James 1:14). The word translated *enticed* means to entrap or allure. Temptation always comes dressed in sheep's clothing. Satan deceives us by making something sinful look delightful. Like Adam and Eve, the Evil One tries to get us to think we will never be happy or fulfilled unless we have the forbidden fruit. There are three ways the Evil One entices or deceives us. How does 1 John 2:16 describe them?

The first form of temptation, *the lust of the flesh*, refers to anything that appeals to our desires or appetites. In other words, the Evil One tries to entice us to satisfy a craving in a way God forbids. The second form, *the lust of the eyes* refers to enticement by sight. This also refers to seeing a position, prosperity, or possession and wanting it so badly we sin to get it. This temptation is described in phrases like "feast your eyes on this."

The third form of temptation is *the pride of life*. Pride causes us to try to impress people by bragging about and embellishing what we have or have done. It also causes some people to become workaholics, ignoring family and church as they try to impress people with prestige, position, and property.

These are the only three ways Satan can tempt or entice us—through **lust**, **greed**, and **pride**. After His baptism, Jesus was tempted in all three of these areas (see Mt 4). That’s why 1 Corinthians 10:13a gives us what reminder?

Every temptation we will ever face will be in one of three areas: lust, greed, or pride. First comes **desire**, then **deceit**, and then ...

3. Delusion. When we toy with temptation long enough, the Evil One helps us delude ourselves into thinking what God calls “sin” is ok for us. It may be wrong for everyone else, but we think we are the grand exception. We think we can play with fire and not get burned. We think we can violate God’s precepts without consequence. Our delusion causes us to forget what eternal truth in Galatians 6:7?

When **desire**, **deceit**, and **delusion** have run their course, the next stage is ...

4. Disobedience. When we are fully deluded about our sin, the next step seems natural and right. How does James 1:15a describe the result of this stage of temptation?

The first stage, **desire**, sets in motion a chain of events that results in **disobedience**, or sin, which is followed by ...

5. Disgrace. Christians who fall into sin, especially moral failure, are eventually overwhelmed with shame. They disgrace themselves, their family, their church, and their Lord. How does James 1:15b awesomely describe this last stage?

It brings death to self-respect, reputation, and sometimes family relationships and friendships. Some people are so overwhelmed with disgrace and guilt they literally take their own lives. This is not necessary because the same God who condemns sin promises us complete forgiveness and cleansing if we confess our sins (1 Jn 1:9).

The five stages of temptation are **desire, deceit, delusion, disobedience, and disgrace**. Now, let's look at ...

Second, the strategies for turning down temptation

We never have to give in to temptation because we have this wonderful promise: *And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it* (1 Cor. 10:13b). There are at least three ways to turn down temptation.

1. We can fight. We fight by resisting the desires that entice us. How does James 4:7b describe this strategy?

You can resist because thousands of other believers are fighting the same temptation as you, and they are winning (1 Cor. 10:13a). We fight temptation by replacing the sinful thought with an appropriate scripture, as Jesus did in Matthew 4.

2. We can flee. If resistance doesn't work, then flee. Fleeing may require changing the TV channel, putting the magazine or novel in the trash, or staying away from wicked websites. It may also require changing jobs.

When we can't fight and win, we need to flee. God tells us to *flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness* (2 Tim. 2:22a) and to *flee from sexual immorality* (1 Cor. 6:18). A great example of fleeing is found in the life of Joseph, recorded in the book of Genesis. Mrs. Potiphar has been enticing Joseph to go to bed with her. Finally, one day she and Joseph are alone in her house, so she grabs his coat and says, "*Come to bed with me!*" (Gen. 39:12a). What does Joseph do?

Joseph takes off down the street in his "Fruit of the Looms." He had rather lose his coat and career than his character. Sometimes the best equipment for resisting temptation is a good pair of running shoes. Like Joseph, don't flee as a last resort; flee immediately. Joseph knew it would be too late if she got him into the bedroom. Don't deliberate or negotiate; evacuate!

3. We can feed. When tempted by Satan, Jesus turned down every temptation by quoting Scripture. All three times He said, "It is written," referring to the Bible (Mt 4). Feeding our minds with God's Word is essential for turning down temptation. That's because of what truth found in Psalm 119:11?

God's Word is the Lord's sharp two-edged sword that can cut to pieces any temptation. God allows us to be tempted by the Evil One, but He gives us a weapon Satan cannot match—the Word of God. However, He also gives us another powerful weapon against temptation. How does 1 John 4:4b remind us of another supernatural weapon with which to fight temptation?

In His Word, God reveals **the stages of temptation** and **the strategies for turning down temptation** so we can obey the command of Christ: "*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation*" (Mt 26:41a).

Like the petition for daily bread, this petition, “*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*” (Mt 6:13), is to be prayed every day because it is a daily necessity. Right now, would you ask God to help you remember to pray daily for His help in turning down temptation?

Throughout the day, we all need to pray for God to help us turn down temptation. This is especially true when we are tired or discouraged and most likely to let our guard down. Instead of letting temptation lead us into sin, we should let it be a reminder to pray this petition.

Which of the five stages of temptation are most difficult for you and why?

LESSON 12 **Four Things That Add Power to Our Prayers** (Matthew 6:13b)

The doxology of the Lord's Prayer, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen* (Mt 6:13b, KJV), is not in many versions of the Bible. The reason is this part of verse 13 does not appear in the oldest Greek manuscripts; the prayer ends with *deliver us from the evil one*. Therefore, many scholars believe the doxology was added during the first or second century. They suppose early Christians didn't want to end their prayers with the words "evil one," and I don't either. The doxology is a wonderful way to conclude the Lord's Prayer.

Furthermore, the doxology is scriptural. The phrase: *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever* (or its equivalent) occurs many times in the Old Testament. For example, David prays, "*Praise be to you, O LORD, God ... Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor ...*" (1 Chron. 29:10b–11a). Then, what does David pray in the last sentence of verse 11?

So, the doxology is scriptural and is a wonderful way to conclude the Lord's Prayer. Few things can add power to our prayers like beginning and ending them with praise. It is powerful to begin, *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name*, and to end, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen*. The doxology reminds us of **four** things that add power to our prayers.

First, God is always in control

The first part of the doxology—*for thine is the kingdom*—means God is king or ruler. This is one of the most consistently taught truths in the Bible. A critic might look at the state of our world and suggest God is not doing a very good job managing His kingdom. However, the kingdom of God is not the fallen world we see. Pontius Pilate didn't understand God's kingdom. Just before Jesus' crucifixion, Pilate asked Jesus: "*Are you the King of the Jews?*" (Jn 18:33). How does Jesus reply in John 18:36a?

Trying to prove Christ was not king, Pilate orders Jesus flogged or beaten with a scourge (Jn 19:1). A scourge consisted of a handle and several leather cords embedded with broken glass, sharp pieces of metal, or anything that would cut the flesh. It would rip open the flesh on one's back. They also put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head and dressed Him in a purple robe, the color of royalty. Then, they hit Him over the head with a staff, driving the long thorns into His head (Mt 27:30). What do the soldiers say as they mock and brutally beat Jesus to the point of unconsciousness (John 19:3)?

Beaten almost to death and wearing the crown of thorns with blood dripping down His head, Jesus is finally presented to the crowd. Pilate says, "*Here is the man!*" (Jn 19:5). Pilate sits on his throne with all the power of Rome behind him, and Jesus stands before him so brutally beaten and weak He probably has to have aid from Roman soldiers to stand. When Jesus refuses to speak, Pilate says, "*Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?*" (Jn 19:10). Then, how does Jesus respond in John 19:11a?

The truth is, Pilate was the prisoner, and Jesus was King. Pilate was not in control of what happened that day; Jesus was.

This world has no power over us as Christians either. Over two hundred times in the Bible, God is called *sovereign LORD* (NIV) or "LORD God" (KJV), which means He is supreme in power and authority. Whatever happens to you, God allows; He does not yield to the power of the Evil One. When the world seems to be beating us up, we need to pray *thine is the kingdom* because it reminds us **God is always in control**.

Second, God can do anything

Thine is ... the power reminds us God is in control because He can do anything. God is omnipotent, which means all-powerful, and His power flows through people who pray. The Bible is filled with examples that reveal God wants to demonstrate His power through people who pray. We see this in the lives of Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Jesus, and the apostles.

However, we must be willing to let God demonstrate His power in His own time and way. Zechariah and Elizabeth prayed for years for a baby (Lk 1:5–23) and if God had answered their prayer immediately, they would have gotten a little baby they would have loved. But God delays, not giving them the answer until they are well along in years because He wants to give them something better than just a baby. Who does God give them as a baby? John the Baptist! He is the cousin of Jesus Christ, the last of the prophets, and the forerunner of the Messiah. What does Jesus say about John the Baptist in Matthew 11:11a?

One of the greatest hindrances to a “journey into powerful prayer” is asking too little and wanting it too quickly. Our all-powerful God can and will do anything we ask, but in His own time and way. How does Ephesians 3:20 describe how God can answer our prayers?

There is awesome power in prayer. The doxology reminds us **God is always in control, God can do anything**, and ...

Third, God deserves all the praise

The doxology says: *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory* (Mt 6:13b, KJV). When we think of God’s glory, we must remember two things. First is His glory in heaven, which is His majesty. In heaven, God *wraps himself in light as with a garment* (Psa. 104:2a). Wanting His inner circle of disciples to get a glimpse of this glory, Jesus takes Peter, James,

and John up a high mountain. Then, according to Matthew 17:2, what happens as Jesus is transfigured before them?

Second, the doxology reminds us God desires and deserves glory on earth. The word translated *glory* means to give or bring honor and praise. How do we bring *glory* to God on earth? We shouldn't just pray for God to get the glory; we should put feet to our prayers and live in a way that brings glory to Him.

Jesus said we are to let our lights shine before men so they may see our good works *and praise your Father in heaven* (Mt 5:16). The word translated *praise* is the Greek word for glory and is better translated "glorify," as it is in the KJV and NASB. The world sees the glory of God in the light of our *good deeds*. So, don't just pray for God's glory, give it to Him by doing *good deeds* in His name, which means we give Him the credit for any good we do.

The doxology reminds us **God is always in control, God can do anything, God deserves all the praise**, and ...

Fourth, God will always be God

The doxology reminds us *the kingdom, and the power, and the glory* are God's *for ever* (Mt 6:13b, KJV). Someone has said, "The future is not what it used to be." But God's future is precisely what it used to be because God is unchanging. His character, position, power, and promises never change. What does God tell us about Himself in Malachi 3:6a?

This means we pray to the same God as did Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Peter, James, and Paul. God has not changed or diminished in His kingdom, power, or glory.

The word *Amen* at the end of this prayer is an untranslated Hebrew word used to confirm a statement made by someone else. It literally means, "so be it" or "let it be." Therefore, using *Amen* at the end of a prayer is asking

God to bring to pass what we have just prayed. Remembering *the kingdom, and the power, and the glory* are God's forever greatly increases our faith in the power of prayer. This is very important because of what reminder of Jesus in Matthew 9:29?

Nothing can limit a “journey into powerful prayer” like our lack of faith and nothing can increase our faith like ending our prayers with *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

A “journey into powerful prayer” requires never forgetting these four truths when we pray: **God is always in control, God can do anything, God deserves all the praise, and God will always be God.** Which of these truths do you think can best help you have a “journey into powerful prayer” and why?

LESSON 13 How To Pray With Power (Matthew 6:9–13)

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus gives us everything we need to know about **how to pray with power**. However, the principles our Lord reveals in this prayer are useless and powerless unless we put them into practice. Let's review these nine things to remind us of how to pray with power.

1. We must remember God's parenthood

We must begin: “*Our Father*” (Mt 6:9b). To pray with power, we must remember we are praying to a loving heavenly Father. He loves us more than any earthly parent does. I have three children—Monta, Jeremy, and Holly—whom I love and would do anything to protect or help them. Jesus said even sinful earthly parents (like me) know how to give good gifts to our children. Then, what does He say in Matthew 7:11b?

Unlike many of our earthly fathers, our heavenly Father is never preoccupied with His job or too busy to listen. He will never find someone He loves more and then desert us. He is always ready to listen because He is our eternal, loving, heavenly Father, who is anxious to *give good gifts to those who ask him*. Beginning our prayers with “*Our Father*” reminds us of our personal, intimate, family relationship with God. He is a loving Father with whom we can honestly share our hearts and openly talk about our fears, hurts, problems, frustrations, and needs without fear of rejection or ridicule. Not only do we need to remember **God’s parenthood**, but also ...

2. We must remember God’s place

Beginning our prayers with *Our Father* reminds us we are beloved family members, but the phrase *in heaven* reminds us we cannot approach our heavenly Father with arrogance and presumption. The word translated *heaven* (OURANOS, ou-ran-os) is the Greek word from which we get the word “Uranus,” the seventh planet in distance from our sun. It means to lift up or elevate. What does Psalm 103:19 tell us about **God’s place**?

The phrase *in heaven* reminds us of God’s elevated place of majesty, and power. The phrase *in heaven* gives a “blessed balance” to the phrase *Our Father*. The phrase *Our Father* fills us with confidence and love, while the phrase *in heaven* fills us with humility and reverence.

To pray with power, **we must remember God’s parenthood, God’s place**, and ...

3. We must remember God’s purity

Now we come to the first of six petitions in the Lord’s Prayer. The first three relate to God, and the second three relate to His meeting our needs.

The first request, “*hallowed be your name*,” (6:9c) means “to make holy.” God’s name represents all He is; therefore, He wants us to be careful about how we use His name. How we use God’s name is so important it is the third commandment. Praying with power requires we remember what truth in Psalm 8:9?

We make God’s name *hallowed*, or holy, by always using His name reverently and never using it in expressions like, “Oh God,” or as filler in a sentence. We should pray that God’s name remains pure and uncontaminated by the world, and only use His name in a holy, respectful way.

4. We must remember God’s program

This means we must pray: *your kingdom come* (Mt 6:10a). In this world, there are two kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Evil One. God’s kingdom is spiritual and is wherever God reigns. His kingdom is *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Rom. 14:17). Becoming a Christian begins by realizing our spiritual poverty or lostness and then coming to Christ to become a part of the kingdom of heaven. How does Jesus sum up this fact in Matthew 5:3?

Every time someone becomes a Christian, a little more of the kingdom of God—heaven—comes to earth. Therefore, if we really want God’s kingdom to come, we will do all we can to win everyone we can to Jesus Christ. So, we can’t sincerely pray *your kingdom come* unless we are doing all we can to bring our family, friends and associates to Christ. **God’s program** is bringing His kingdom into the hearts of men and women.

5. We must remember God’s purpose

The purpose for all our prayers is summed up in the statement *your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Mt 6:10b). Prayer is not an attempt to

change God's mind or bend His will to fit ours. It is not trying to talk God into doing something He would not otherwise do. Praying is seeking God's will and complying with it.

God's purpose for your life and mine is that we *be conformed to the likeness of his Son* (Rom. 8:29). When we understand this, all our problems and pain take on a completely new meaning. God's will for me isn't the easiest or most comfortable way, but it is what's best for me. How does Proverbs 19:21 describe the problem of not complying with God's will?

This means having plans that are inconsistent with God's purpose for our lives causes problems. We all get out of God's will from time to time, so God sends a storm, as He did in Jonah's life, to get us back on course (Jonah 1).

For God's will to be done on earth, it must first be done in our lives. So, we can't pray this part of the prayer unless we are ready to make the necessary adjustments in our lives to be in God's will. Sometimes I notice one of the wheels on my car needs an alignment. Many cars need regular wheel alignment. In the same way, we need a regular "will" alignment, and sincerely praying *your will be done* is the first step in the process.

6. We must remember God's provisions

The first request for personal needs is "*Give us today our daily bread*" (Mt 6:11). This refers to all our needs, not just food. Jesus did not say, "Give us our yearly, monthly, or weekly bread"; He said *daily*. In other words, we are to live one day at a time, and if we don't, our lives will be poisoned with worry. We will worry about our health, finances, career, future, etc. When we pray for God to provide our needs and then trust Him to do it, we can stop worrying and begin enjoying life. The Bible tells us: *The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-*

scorched land and will strengthen your frame (Isa. 58:11). Then, what does the last sentence in that verse tell us?

Believing God's Word and praying for Him to meet our daily needs with His awesome provisions are our antidote for worry and stress.

7. We must remember God's pardon

The second petition for personal needs is "*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*" (Mt 6:12). Two great "joy-robbers" in our lives are worry and guilt. We have all blown it; we have all made bad mistakes—things we wish we could go back and change but can't. If we don't do something with our guilt, we will feel like David. What does he write in Psalm 38:4?

The antidote for guilt is forgiveness. We can't get rid of our guilt, even if we ask for it, without obeying the second part of this petition. God will forgive us only *as we also have forgiven our debtors* (Mt 6:12b). Forgiveness requires more than just asking in faith; it requires forgiving others.

The only antidote for resentment and bitterness toward other people is forgiving them. We can't be happy in the present if we are holding on to a grudge from the past. God commands us to forgive, not because He does not care about our hurts, but because He knows we can never be happy or be the people He wants us to be, unless we forgive those who hurt us. Therefore, this petition enables us to get rid of guilt and bitterness so we can enjoy life.

8. We must remember God's protection

Jesus puts it this way: "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*" (Mt 6:13). God allows us to be tempted, but He is never

the source of temptation. Enticement to sin comes from the devil, which is the word “evil” without the “d.” The Evil One even entices us to exploit our spiritual accomplishments by tempting us to be proud and arrogant.

In the preceding verse (vs. 12), the request is for sins already committed to be forgiven, but here Jesus teaches us to pray to be delivered from falling into new sins. We are to be just as concerned about avoiding future sins as we are about having past sins forgiven. To avoid new sin, we need to remember what truth found in Proverbs 2:11?

Discretion means caution or being careful. *Understanding* refers to understanding our weaknesses. The key to resisting temptation is knowing our weak points. We all have weaknesses, and the Evil One will exploit them. He is not dumb, so he will attack where he is most likely to be victorious. What are your weaknesses? What flashes to your mind when you think about your weaknesses? Is it lust, pride, selfishness, self-pity, gossip, temper, bitterness, deceit, being overly ambitious, etc.?

Always be aware of your weaknesses, and pray for God’s protection in those areas to avoid circumstances where the Evil One might exploit you. If we know our weaknesses and pray about them, with **God’s protection** we can resist temptation when it comes, and it will.

9. We must remember God’s praise

The doxology, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever* (Mt 6:13b, KJV), is not in some versions of the Bible, and we discussed why in Lesson 12. However, there is nothing wrong with including it in our prayers because it is scriptural and an excellent way to end our prayers.

All too often, we are consumed with our own little kingdoms, our own power, and our own glory. This doxology helps us put our lives into perspective. We are not here to promote our own kingdoms; we are to

promote God's kingdom. If we do, what promise does Jesus give us in Matthew 6:33?

Furthermore, ending our prayers with this doxology is very exhilarating because it reminds us of who God is and what He can do. To have a "journey into powerful prayer," we must always remember God's **parenthood, place, purity, program, purpose, provisions, pardon, protection, and praise.**

The Lord's Prayer is not just a pattern for praying; it is a pattern for living. The Lord's Prayer teaches we cannot pray right if we are not living right. Do you need to pray for a "will alignment" right now?

We have now completed our "journey into powerful prayer." In this "journey," what has helped you most to make your prayers more powerful?