

The Disciples' Prayer

Matthew 6:9-15

Introduction: Having just told the disciples, "*your Father knows what you need, before you ask*" (Matt. 6: 8), Jesus begins the passage that we are looking at today by telling His disciples, "*Pray, then, in this way.*" He then proceeds to give them what is commonly called "the Lord's Prayer." Some have suggested that we call it the Disciples' Prayer since it's the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Regardless of what we call it, this prayer, which has guided the praying of the Church for two thousand years, can serve as a wonderful guide to our praying.

Opening Discussion: Did you grow up in a tradition that used the Lord's Prayer? If so, how was the prayer used?

Read Matthew 6:9-15

1. For what categories of things does this prayer prompt us to pray?

2. What are we praying when we pray, "*Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name?*"

3. What are we praying when we pray, "*Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven?*"

4. In what ways are we looking for the kingdom of God to come to our world, community and personal lives?

Speaking of verse 11, Steve said:

This is essentially a request for God to supply today's needs today. Listen again to this request: *Give us **this day** our **daily** bread.* What we'd really like is for God to give us this day our yearly bread. We want enough today to last us for a long time. We feel secure when we can see how our needs will be met into the foreseeable future. But Jesus challenged His students to trust God each day for that day's needs. In general Jesus challenged them to live in the present tense. At the end of the chapter Jesus will tell His disciples not to be anxious about what they'd eat, drink, and wear in the future. His concluding line is classic: "Each day has enough trouble of its own" (6:34). We should live today as fully as possible.

5. Do you find it hard to simply trust God for "*daily bread*" as opposed to "yearly bread"?

6. How might regularly praying this prayer help you begin to trust God for "*daily bread*"?
7. Why might Jesus instruct us to ask for God to "*forgive us our debts*" when we are already forgiven if we are believers in Jesus?

Speaking of verses 12, 14-15, Steve said:

People often get bogged down in the logic of these verses and miss the clear ethical demands of what Jesus is saying. We have a hard time believing that Jesus really means what it sounds like He's saying here: that God won't forgive us if we won't forgive others. But actually, I think that's exactly what Jesus is saying – not in an absolute sense, but in a limited, qualified sense. (See also 7:1-5) When we refuse to forgive others, it hinders our fellowship with God. It is flagrant hypocrisy for us to say to others, "I'm going to make you pay for what you've done for me," and then ask God, "Please don't make me pay for my sin." This is serious business. And I don't know any way to soften what Jesus is saying here. Jesus' teaching forces us to deal with unforgiveness toward others. It's not easy, but it's necessary.

8. Why is it important for us to forgive those who wrong us?
9. What are we praying when we ask, "*And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil*"?

Steve said:

I commend the Lord's Prayer to all of us as a tool – a very valuable tool when it comes to our praying. As I mentioned at the beginning, this prayer will be an everyday tool for some of us. It will become a very foundational part of our prayer life. The more we use this prayer to guide our praying, the deeper our understanding and the more precious it becomes. Others of us might use the Lord's Prayer only occasionally. But when we do, it can give structure and movement to our praying.

10. After studying the Lord's Prayer, how are you thinking about it in terms of using it as one of the tools to help guide your praying?