



Living the Lord's Prayer **Group Study Guide**

How to use this Guide

If you're leading a group that is reading the book ...

The best way to study and discuss the material in *Living the Lord's Prayer* is for everyone in the discussion group to have their own copy of the book and read the chapter before discussing it.

If that's how your group decides to do this study, then you'll want to modify the following Study Guide. Here's a suggestion. Each time you come to the Introduction and Discussion sections of the Guide, substitute two simple questions:

What stood out to you as helpful from the chapter?

What questions came to mind from the reading?

You'll find no shortage of material in the chapters to discuss, and will probably have to cut off the discussion after the allotted 35-40 minutes. Of course, if nobody starts the ball rolling, you can always resort to the suggested topics and questions in the following curriculum

Be sure not to skip the Application section. That's a vital element of the meeting.

If you're leading a group that is *not* reading the book ...

The reality is that many people don't read books anymore. If you're reading the book and leading the group—and nobody else is reading the book—then this Study Guide should help.

You'll find material for at least 60 minutes of sharing together. Read the relevant chapter yourself, then take a look at the Study Guide. You may want to change it according to what catches your eye in the reading. That's fine.

Again, let me encourage you to get a copy of *Living the Lord's Prayer* for everyone in the group. Perhaps the conversation will arouse their curiosity to read it.

May your study flourish and your lives be all the richer.

~ David Timms

*Our Father in the heavens,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into testing,
but deliver us from the evil.
For yours is the Kingdom,
the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

(Matthew 6:9-13)



Week 1

Introduction

The Lord's Prayer & spiritual formation

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Identify some of the obstacles to their spiritual growth;
- b) Define “spiritual formation” in simple terms;
- c) Determine a specific “next step” for their Journey in the week ahead.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

“Think of the most godly person they know, who is still living. Without using their name, describe what makes them particularly godly in your estimation.”

Once the group has had a chance to share for a few minutes, highlight the significance of godly character. Most of those people who will have been mentioned stand out not because they know the Bible well or have been Christians for many years but because they reflect godly character and deep spiritual formation. This series of studies will focus specifically on how we can experience deeper spiritual formation through our study and application of the Lord's Prayer.

Introduction (15 minutes)

[Remember the alternative questions for Introduction & Discussion suggested on page 1 for groups where everyone is reading *Living the Lord's Prayer*.]

Read the opening illustration in the book about Douglas Mawson, concluding with the line, “And then at the moment that we feel like we've finally arrived home, we find that the ship has left with most of our friends.”

- What do you hear in that opening story that describes some of your own spiritual journey?
- What are some of the “obstacles” to the spiritual journey that stop us in our tracks?

Discussion (25 minutes)

During the next 12 weeks we're going to see how the Lord's Prayer guides us over or around the obstacles we've listed. In just 72 words, Jesus offers us a simple framework for the very intimacy with Christ that our hearts desire.

The Lord's Prayer will lead us into deeper spiritual formation.

[Go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind. This will help make the group more accountable, and you'll be surprised how helpful this will be in nurturing growth within the group over the next few months.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Ask two people to lead in prayer, and then close by praying the Lord's Prayer together, using the version from the book. *[Make copies of the Prayer—see below—and distribute them before the prayer time.]*

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 2

Chapter 1

Our: *Committing to community*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Assess their own “community” experiences;
- b) Evaluate the importance of Christian community for spiritual growth;
- c) Identify specific ways to build stronger spiritual community with each other.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

Finish this sentence: “The best thing to happen to me this past week was ...”

[The ice-breakers throughout this series will help connect or re-connect people at a personal level. They open up personal stories and opinions. As the leader, you may want to ask specific people—those who might not normally speak up—to share at this time.]

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (5 minutes)

[Remember the alternative questions for Introduction & Discussion suggested on page 1 for groups where everyone is reading *Living the Lord’s Prayer*.]

This week we give our attention to just the first word of the Lord’s Prayer.

“*Our*. This tiny word forms an immediate bridge between *you* and *me*. It speaks of a shared experience and a shared ownership. It speaks of community. *Me* and *mine* produces isolation and aloneness. So does *you* and *your*. But the unifying *our* produces an entirely different dynamic. The Prayer starts strategically. *Our*. Is any word more profoundly needed today, or more commonly absent? Spiritual writers throughout the ages have noted that the journey to a deeper walk with God can only be fully lived in the company of God’s people.

- How important do you think community is to our spiritual formation? Why?

Discussion (30 minutes)

- How different would the Lord’s Prayer sound and be if it had started “My Father in the heavens....”?

“St. Benedict, sometimes described as the father of Western monasticism, lived early in the 6th century when monks complained about each other and grew restless within their communities. The brothers found themselves in conflict and frequently traveled in search of new monasteries more conducive to their spiritual formation. In such an environment, Benedict added a new element to the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. He insisted that those who wanted to grow deeply in Christ should also take a vow of stability.

“With this vow of stability, Benedict attempted to re-establish the priority of *us* over *me* in spiritual formation. He knew very well that grace could only flourish when it encountered offence, forgiveness requires conflict, healing emerges from hurt, and strength arises from struggle. Thus, the pathway to true spiritual formation demands long-term engagement with others in community.

- How many different homes has each person in the group lived in during their lifetime?
- Does this help or hinder our ability to engage in deep community?

“We live in a period in history when *our* has become both tantalizing and tormenting. We desperately want connection with each other, but also deeply fear it. The proliferation of pain from broken homes, failed marriages, abusive experiences, and profound loneliness creates both desire for and deep anxiety about intimacy.

“On the one hand, we long for strong connection with each other.

“On the other hand, our inexperience or failure at intimacy—something which seems so painless on TV—intimidates us and keeps us from pursuing it further. None of us enjoy rejection. Consequently, we may find ourselves withdrawing into a voluntary seclusion to avoid the pain of being let down (again) by someone.

“When we get hurt, *our* feels dangerous. Divorce can make us wary of intimacy. Abuse can make us fearful of togetherness. And fear of God’s punishment can make us nervous about pursuing Him. Yet, as David Benner writes, “In spite of the messages of Western culture, personal fulfillment lies in connection, not autonomy.”

“The language of *our* then becomes both inviting and threatening.

- How could we build an even stronger “spiritual community” where our longings can be fulfilled and our fears can be laid to rest?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 3
Chapter 2
Father: *Experiencing love & security*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Identify some of the signs of our spiritual insecurity;
- b) Express the importance of the Father-image of God;
- c) Discuss the connections between the Father's love and our own spiritual formation.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

“If your home was on fire—and the family had all escaped safely—and you could run back in for just one item, what would it be?”

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

[Remember the alternative questions for Introduction & Discussion suggested on page 1 for groups where everyone is reading *Living the Lord's Prayer*.]

This week we give our attention to just the second word of the Lord's Prayer—Father.

Jesus opens the Lord's Prayer with the phrase “Our Father” not “Our God” or “Our Supreme Being.” The word *father* suggests intimacy and family. We have not been conscripted into slavery but adopted into a family. The word *father* also reminds us that we have security and protection as well as an inheritance and blessing that await us. But do we really live with this confidence?

- What are some of the indications that perhaps we are not entirely secure in the Father's love?

Discussion (25 minutes)

In *Living the Lord's Prayer*, the author writes:

“We believe that God is a loving Father, but act as though He's a calculating judge. The weight we assign to these two different images will often determine whether or not we live under law or grace.

“We constantly live under the burden of rules and regulations, always telling ourselves what we must, should, need to, have to, and ought to do. The demands are relentless. We should be better parents, must give more time to our neighbors, need to serve more in the church, have to re-start our quiet time, and ought to be more compassionate. The list of demands stretches out endlessly.

“We know that one day we shall stand before God and give an account for every word and deed in our lives. We desperately want to hear those reassuring words, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ (Matthew 25:23) In other words, we accept our adoption into the family of God but see ourselves more as servants than family members.

- Is that a fair summary? Do we have a stronger image of God as Judge than Father?
- How does our image of God affect our understanding of law and grace?

The Apostle John declared that “perfect love casts out fear.” (1 John 4:18) Thus fear and love are generally opposites of each other.

“Fear isolates us and typically produces one of two responses from us. On the one hand, it may paralyze us and make us incapable of action—frozen with fear. On the other hand, it may push us to achieve more than ever before—a fear-driven frenzy. In other words, it produces extremes. The common denominator, however, is the outcome. When we live in the house of fear, we live superficially.

- How does fear affect our spiritual formation—our ability to be intimate with Christ, to become deeply like Christ, and to live fully for Christ?
- How much of our lives are governed by fear rather than love?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 4 Chapter 3

In the heavens: *Developing a cosmic perspective*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Describe the significance of the phrase “in the heavens.”
- b) Identify specific ways to better practice the Presence of God.
- c) Embrace a deeper awareness of the unseen world.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

Complete this sentence: “If I could travel anywhere right now, I’d go to ... because”

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

As we have seen, the opening words and phrases of the Lord’s Prayer set the tone for everything that follows. *Our* calls us into community. *Father* invites us into intimacy. Now, the phrase *in the heavens* adds to the foundation.

- What comes to your mind when you say “Our Father in heaven”?

[After reading the chapter yourself in preparation for the meeting, briefly explain the Jewish understanding of “the heavens” in terms of the air, the universe, and eternity.]

- How does this change the way that we hear the phrase “Our Father in the heavens”?

Discussion (25 minutes)

The phrase “in the heavens” implies both the transcendence of God (He is far beyond us) and the nearness of God (He is right beside us).

- Do we tend to focus more on His transcendence or His nearness? How would it help us to grasp a better balance?

“Strangely enough, *in the heavens* calls us back to practicing the Presence of God in this moment and in this place. The spiritual aimlessness and powerlessness that many of us experience suggests that we need revitalization in this area. Too often we maintain orthodox doctrine, mainstream beliefs, and traditional biblical teachings but our faith remains strangely hollow.

- How can we practice the Presence of God more in every moment?

Some people suggest that the heavenly-minded are of no earthly use.

“C.S. Lewis countered the accusation of heavenly-mindedness when he wrote: ‘Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.’ On another occasion he stated: ‘If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.’

- Do you agree with Lewis?
- How can we practice the Presence of God and be heavenly-minded at the same time?
- The heavenly realm is also the unseen world that surrounds us all the time. How would a greater awareness of the unseen world change or shape our daily lives?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

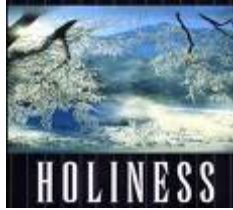
In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 5
Chapter 4
Hallowed be Your name: *Pressing toward holiness*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Describe several aspects of the phrase “Hallowed be Your name.”
- b) Identify obstacles to our own pursuit of holiness.
- c) Describe “next steps” to take so that we can glorify God more consistently with our lives.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

“If Jesus was coming to your place for dinner tomorrow night, what would you serve?”

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

Briefly reiterate the previous four weeks.

The Lord’s Prayer teaches us how to live the Christian life and guides us to deeper spiritual formation. We have seen the importance of community (*Our*), intimacy (*Father*), and broadening our perspective of the world (*in the heavens*). In this study we turn to the familiar phrase *Hallowed be Your name*.

In *Living the Lord’s Prayer*, the author writes:

“We live in a time when the lewd, crude, immoral, and profane receive center-stage.

“We’ve seen dramatic downgrades in fashion standards, music lyrics, radio commentary, dating behavior, and online etiquette. In every area of our lives, obscenity, indecency, and profanity prevail. From the hallways of the high school to the cubicles of the corporate world, secularism has secured its place and sin flaunts itself.

“Under such circumstances, holiness looks very old world. Surely it belongs to a simpler, less complex time.

- What comes to mind when you hear the word “holy” or “hallowed”?

Discussion (25 minutes)

The phrase “Hallowed be Your name” has at least two aspects to it.

- a) It expresses a fact. God’s name is synonymous with God Himself. Thus the phrase declares that He stands quite apart from us.
- b) It expresses our desire. We honor Him by living our lives differently, in ways consistent with His character. This brings Him glory.

- If the statement “Hallowed be Your name” places an obligation upon us to live differently, what sort of changes do you think would be God-honoring?
- If obscenity, indecency, and profanity detract from God’s glory, how should we handle them in our day-to-day lives?
- What factors hinder us from the pursuit of holiness in our own lives?

“Armchair sociologists call us the ‘whatever’ generation. It’s not a technical term, but an accurate one. Whatever you want; whatever suits you; whatever you think. We may disagree, but ... whatever. I may have hurt you, but ... whatever. This laid-back approach to life produces indifference (‘I don’t care’) and indolence (I’m not going to do anything about it). But the consequences run much deeper. Like a seeping appendix, it poisons us and abandons the holiness of the Father.

- How can we reconcile the pursuit of holiness with the “whatever” mentality?

“God’s holiness refuses to ignore our *unholiness*. Perhaps therein lies the explanation for our reluctance to pray this phrase with our hearts. While our lips mouth the words, our hearts hesitate at the implications and potential costs. We cannot yearn for His holiness to pervade the world—and our inner world—and simultaneously be complacent about our current condition. Indeed, what we declare of Him He desires for us, precisely.

- What are some of the implications and costs of holiness?
- How does the pursuit of holiness relate to our spiritual formation (being with Christ to become like Christ to live for Christ)?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 6 Chapter 5

Your kingdom come: *Overturing our kingdoms*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Identify ways that they build their own kingdoms.
- b) Discuss the role of ambition and competition within the Kingdom of God.
- c) Clarify some “next steps” towards truly praying “Your Kingdom come.”

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

Complete this sentence: “As a child, I always wanted to be a”

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

This week we turn to the important phrase “Your kingdom come.”

“We typically spend our lives seeking to expand our own kingdoms—increasing our assets, resources, and influence. Our kingdoms can include the workplace, the church, the club, the sporting team, and the home, and we grow very protective of anything into which we have invested our time, energy, and money.

“When people challenge our kingdom, we react defensively and perhaps even with hostility. This simple observation of human nature makes Jesus’ prayer all the more extraordinary. ‘Your Kingdom come.’

“Any invitation for God’s Kingdom to come threatens our own kingdom. Kingdoms are, by definition, mutually exclusive. Any domain with two kings is ripe for conflict. Thus, we might express the phrase ‘Your Kingdom come’ another way: ‘My kingdom done!’ The Lord’s Kingdom displaces our own.

“‘Your Kingdom come’ does not invite the Father to come and watch us, but to come and rule us. We do not invite Him to partner with our lives, but to take charge of them. This three-word phrase, recited by believers for the past 2000 years, beckons an enormous lifestyle upheaval, if we’re serious.

- Can our kingdoms and God’s Kingdom co-exist happily? Or does our decision to follow Christ mean an end to our own kingdoms?

Discussion (25 minutes)

“To pray ‘Your Kingdom come’ provides another way to say ‘I want to know Christ Jesus my Lord. Above all else, I want to gain Christ and know Him.’ It requires us to lay down our own agenda, our own ambition, and our own dominion. Such a prayer has dramatic implications. It silences self-promotion and guides us to more humble service.

- How important is ambition in our culture? Does it matter to us whether or not our kids have big dreams? Do we respect people who fail to set goals for their lives?
- As followers of Christ, what role can or should ambition play? (As leader of the group, you may want to ask group members to look up some of the Scripture references cited in the book.)

The more devoted we are to God’s Kingdom, the less devoted we may become to our own. That means that we will probably begin to practice what the author calls “the discipline of secrecy.”

“We cannot practice the discipline of righteous secrecy if we need the accolades and recognition of people. Insecurity always drives us to have one better story than the next person. Our need for the approval of others—especially Christian others—may motivate us to great acts of sacrifice and service. But if we tell of those acts, we have (in Jesus’ words) already received our reward.

“The discipline of secrecy prohibits the building of any spiritual resume. It restrains us when we want to compare ourselves with the next person. It denies us the opportunity to advance our own standing in the eyes of the world. Any of us who would pray ‘Your Kingdom come’ must consider this discipline with utmost seriousness. If the coming of His Kingdom means the lessening of our kingdom, then we must strategically refuse to establish our own fame or renown. We cannot build our private empires and His eternal Kingdom at the same time.

- Is this a fair assessment? How can we practice this kind of humility without it being a false-humility?

Just when we want to say “Our kingdom come, with Your help and blessing,” Jesus redefines the focus. He will not sanction any kingdom but the Father’s.

- Do our prayers generally seek to hand everything into the Lord’s care, or do we sometimes seek to receive His blessing on our plans and desires?
- How would our prayer lives change if we prayed “Your Kingdom come” and understood the implications of it?

Summary Statement (from the book):

“As we pray ‘Your Kingdom come’—and understand some of its implications—it forces us to loosen our grip on our own kingdoms. It challenges our own selfish ambitions and prideful behaviors. It also confronts our competitive spirit and need for personal achievement. The Prayer, in this short phrase, inverts everything that we have considered normal and recalibrates our hearts toward the rule of God.

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they’d like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 7 Chapter 6

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven: *Transforming willfulness to willingness*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Identify areas of their own life where they remain willful;
- b) Clarify some of our stumbling blocks to full surrender;
- c) Lay aside their fantasies and experience God a little more in their reality.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

“What’s your fondest memory from elementary school?”

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

The Lord’s Prayer invites us into community (Our), into intimacy (Father), into a new cosmic perspective (in the heavens), into holiness (hallowed be Your name), and into a new kingdom mindset (Your kingdom come). This week it calls us to a deep and full surrender—“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In *Living the Lord’s Prayer*, the author writes:

“I’m much more subtle these days. No crying fits, and much less pouting. I don’t make nearly as many scenes in shopping centers, and I rarely stomp my feet. My wife won’t tolerate it. But the two-year-old is alive and well within me—and possibly within you, too.

- How do adults “throw tantrums” or try to manipulate things to get their own way?

Discussion (25 minutes)

“In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to pray, ‘Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’ (Matthew 6:10) If spoken from the heart, and sustained as our life’s guidepost, such a prayer will prove revolutionary. Nothing about our

lives can remain the same when we speak these words sincerely. So, we should be warned: the journey from ‘My will’ to ‘Thy will’ is no Sunday-afternoon stroll.

- What kind of changes might the Lord make in our lives if we thoroughly surrendered our own agenda to His?
- What would it take for us to fully surrender ourselves to Him?

“We may not gaze at crystal balls or study Tarot cards, but many of us are just as eager to ‘know the future’ as our unbelieving counterparts. We pray, and pray hard, that God will ‘reveal His will,’ by which we mean that He’ll give us a glimpse of the future and the best course of action in a given circumstance. We don’t want to make a mistake. And in our hunger for a hint of what lies ahead we find ourselves walking by sight (clarity) and not by faith (trust).”

- If you surrendered to God’s will would you do so in order to make the best decisions or in order to press closer to Him?
- How does God reveal His will?

“Some fantasies seem harmless enough and perhaps even noble. We imagine what a great marriage would be like, if only this or that could be changed. We dream about a more friendly or successful church, if only the leaders or the church members would change in some way. But therein lies the danger. We romanticize how things could be, and miss the grace of God in what is.”

- Do you think that our fantasies—wanting the perfect marriage, children, church, etc—get in the way of us seeing God’s hand at work in the small realities of our life?
- How can we better see the hand of God in all the small events of our lives (including our meeting for this study)?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 8 **Chapter 7**

Give us this day our daily bread: *Learning dependence and simplicity*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Recognize the relevance of this petition for today;
- b) Evaluate their own prayer requests and petitions more honestly;
- c) Identify some ways in which they might simplify their own lives.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

Complete this sentence: “One of the hardest times of my life was when”

[This is the first ice-breaker in the series that might call for vulnerability on the part of the group members. Hopefully by now the group is connected well enough for this kind of opening. If you sense, as leader, that the question is too sensitive for the group, then perhaps use this alternative: “One of the happiest days of my life was when”]

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

This week we give our attention to the petition “Give us this day our daily bread.”

“Most of us do not worry about food provisions for tomorrow. The local grocery store remains fully stocked, always open, and fairly affordable. Fast-food chains and restaurants dot the landscape in abundance so we can get something to eat or drink at a moment’s notice. Indeed, we have such an availability of food that obesity has become a major national health concern. It hardly seems that we need to pray ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’”

- Is this request in the Lord’s Prayer relevant to us today? If so, how?

Discussion (25 minutes)

“None of the Lord’s Prayer makes sense when we live self-sufficient and comfortable lives. And this brief petition (midway through the prayer) jolts us awake. It exposes our independence and raises a question: Does our lack of *daily need* contribute to a *daily neglect* of the Father? The word *daily* gives this petition a distinct frequency and urgency.”

- How consciously dependent are we on the Father *each day*?
- How does this short petition—“Give us this day our daily bread”—address our self-sufficiency and comfort?

“We’d like to pray for a year’s supply at a time. That would certainly ease the worry and tension we might feel. Who wants to be a day-laborer, earning just enough today to eat today? What if something goes wrong? We judge it best to always have a buffer, some savings to fall back on. And that makes good sense. But it’s not what Jesus invited us to pray for.”

- How does this simple petition for “daily bread” compare to our common prayer requests?

“On one occasion, Mahatma Ghandi put simplicity into perspective. ‘Live simply, that others might simply live.’ In a sense, that’s the sentiment undergirding this prayerful petition. ‘Lord, simplify our demands and expectations. Help us with what we need, today, so that we might help others whose needs will not be met today.’ Thus, this short petition not only redirects our attention off our own extravagance and perhaps waste, it also opens our hearts to those whose needs we might meet.”

- Do you see a “call to simplicity” in this prayer?
- Note that the phrase is “give us” not “give me”. What role might we play in being an answer to this very prayer in the lives of others?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 9 Chapter 8

Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors: *Nurturing a culture of grace*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Understand the relationship between forgiving and forgetting;
- b) Suggest examples of “grace language” consistent with a grace culture;
- c) Identify ways to apply confession and repentance to their own lives.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

“How many countries have we visited or lived in as a group?”

[As the group shares, make a list of all the different countries. Remember, the purpose of these ice-breakers is to a) relax people and get them in a sharing mood, and b) to get to know each other a little better.]

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

After we’ve received our daily bread that sustains the body, we also need forgiveness that rejuvenates the soul. This week we turn to the phrase “Forgive us our debts.”

“I can forgive some folk and some offences relatively easily. But serious injuries and grievances take a while. And just when I think I’ve moved on, something triggers a response from me that shows I have not forgiven as fully as I thought. My capacity to forgive others seems inconsistent and incomplete at best. Will God’s forgiveness be the same for me? The thought is horrifying!

- Forgive us our debts *as we also have forgiven our debtors*. Is this really a pre-condition? [This question may provoke considerably discussion. It might be most effective to leave it open—not to offer the solution proposed in the book too early in the meeting—and move on.]

Discussion (25 minutes)

“Interestingly, Jesus does not pray ‘Forgive *and forget* our debts as we have forgiven *and forgotten* the debts of others.’ We forgive, but don’t necessarily forget. We usually receive quite different advice, especially in Christian circles. Many people would have us forgive *and forget*. Others might even suggest that we have not truly forgiven until we forget.

- Can we truly forgive someone as long as we remember the offence? Why might forgetting be a bad addition to the forgiveness equation?

Note: “The apostle Paul wrote that love ‘keeps no record of wrongs.’ (1 Corinthians 13:5) Was he suggesting that true godliness has selective amnesia? If so, it’s hard to understand God preserving a written and detailed record in the Bible of so many human failings of the past—by individuals and nations—many of which He forgave. The dangers of forgetting are significant. Without a clear memory, we have little ability to break the destructive cycles in marriages, families, and churches. Accountability depends on memory.

“The language of law repeatedly uses terms of obligation, duty, and demand. Listen to yourself speak. Read what you write and look for terms like ‘should, ought, have to, need to, and must.’ I *should* do more Bible study. I *ought* to pray more. I *must* do more in ministry. I *need to* be more compassionate. Every statement reflects the language of obligation and does little more than compound our guilt and deaden our joy.

“The language of grace uses a different set of terms. I *want* to read more. I’d *like* to give. I *desire* to serve. I *choose* to pray. Only as we voice this latter language will the shackles of the law begin to loosen and the freedom of the gospel begin to flood our hearts like a burst dam

- If we want to nurture a culture of grace (and forgiveness), we’ll have to develop an authentic language of grace. Which language (law or grace) do you use the most? How can you employ more grace language in your marriage, family, and workplace?

“Confession of sin cannot be casual. Repentance cannot be flippant. A.W. Tozer described the veil that stands between us and God as made up of ‘the fine threads of the self-life, the hyphenated sins of the human spirit ... self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love, and a host of others like them.’ This veil must be torn asunder.

- If we desire God’s forgiveness, how should we build confession and repentance into our lives?

[You may need to return to the question posed in the Introduction if you deferred it until now. Highlight the phrase as hyperbole—as described in the book.]

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 10 **Chapter 9**

Lead us not into testing but deliver us from the evil: *Growing in faith and obedience*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Understand the relationship between testing and trust;
- b) Identify specific “evil” within their lives;
- c) Explain the power of secrecy and confession in the Christian battle with evil.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

Complete this sentence: “If I was handed \$1 million, one thing I’d do is”

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

This week we turn to the petition “Lead us not into testing but deliver us from the evil.”

“No prayer is genuinely complete that ignores the struggles of our fallen world; the titanic battle between good and evil that rages around us and within us. Since the Garden of Eden, evil has lurked in the shadows of our hearts and sin has conspired to destroy us. The warning that the Lord gave to Cain remains urgent for us: ‘Sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.’ (Genesis 4:7) As much as ever, we need to pray ‘Deliver us from the evil.’ But before deliverance from evil, Jesus teaches us to pray ‘Lead us not into testing.’

- The traditional rendering of this petition is “Lead us not into temptation.” The word in Greek (*peirasmos*) can be translated as either temptation or test. What is the difference between those two words in English?
- How does translating the phrase “Lead us not into testing” change the meaning?

Discussion (25 minutes)

“The teaching of the Prayer—and the wider New Testament—encourages us to test ourselves from time to time, to take a faith-challenge of our own making, and to always be alert to the possibility of a faith-test of the Father’s choosing. Such tests are never designed to humiliate or crush us but to restore and regenerate us. *Lead us not into testing* simply means *lead us into deeper faith*. As we trust the Father more, the tests become less.... *Lead us not into testing*. As we utter this plea, we don’t really appeal for trouble-free lives. Instead, we declare to the Father a yearning of our hearts that He deepen our trust.

- Does God stretch us to grow us?
- Can you think of any biblical examples? Can you share any personal examples when He tested you in order to deepen you?

“The most insidious and lethal expression of evil ... lies not in foreign ideologies, tyrannical regimes, or demonic forces in distant places, but within our own hearts. We hesitate to admit it, but we must. Our hearts harbor the very evil we despise most.... Our most mortal enemy is not the one who forces us against our will, but the one who destroys us *by appealing to our will*. It won’t help us to muster field-savvy soldiers for this battle. We need spiritual reserves, spiritual reinforcements, and spiritual tactics.

- What is some of “the evil” within us that we need the Lord’s help to combat?
- What are some of the “spiritual reserves” and “spiritual tactics” that the Lord can use most effectively to deliver us from the evil within and around us?

“In the interest of maintaining our social standing and superficial niceties, we avoid calling sin by its name. Yet, as any physician will attest, diagnosis is crucial. Until we identify the problem and name it, any effort at treatment will likely be ineffective or dangerous. An asthmatic attack does not require antibiotics, nor does heart disease require an inhaler. The same applies to our spiritual lives.

- How does naming “the evil” reduce its power and hold in our lives? What is the connection between this “naming” and the idea of “confession” that is fairly common in Scripture?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 11

Chapter 10

Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory: *Abandoning our pursuit of control and fame*

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Identify specific ways in which we pursue our own power and glory;
- b) Discuss the significance of full and total surrender in the Christian life;
- c) Affirm the power of God in our weakness.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

“Who is the most famous person you’ve ever met?”

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (10 minutes)

This week we turn to the climactic ending of the Lord’s Prayer. “Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.”

“Power and glory. Our minds quickly skip to people with enormous reserves of wealth or huge followings. Athletic superstars, international rock stars, high-profile politicians, and renowned actors all have power and glory. Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, because of their extraordinary wealth, have tremendous influence. Power and glory belong to the elite, the few, and the privileged. However, we all take an interest in power and glory. Even those of us without two dollars in the bank, no apparent influence, and few achievements to point to, find ourselves drawn to these same pursuits.

- Describe some of the ways in which we seek power and glory in our own lives?

Discussion (25 minutes)

“Only as we relinquish our own pursuit of power and glory can we know the freedom of the Kingdom and the richest blessings of the Lord’s Prayer. True

liberation comes when we surrender power and cease striving for it. Real release happens when we give up the dream of personal fame and glory. It's counter-intuitive; but it's the Kingdom way.

- Do you agree with this statement about relinquishing some of our pursuits and giving up some of our dreams?

“The journey from success to significance can become, for many of us, little more than changing roles in the same game: the shift from player to coach—no longer trying to throw the glorious touchdowns ourselves but calling the plays from the sideline. Many coaches simply trade one pursuit of glory for another.

“Significance is simply success by another name.... Success and significance build on the same foundation: our pride, self-belief, and self-importance.

“Perhaps it's not changing roles in the game that marks our spiritual development, but changing games.

“The Prayer insists, right down to this last phrase, on another option—surrender. We move forward most in our walk with God when we abandon both success and significance and embrace surrender.

- How do we make the huge shift from the pursuit of success or significance to full surrender of our lives to Christ?

“In the 18th century, the French Jesuit Jean-Pierre de Caussade wrote: ‘Without divine action, everything is nothing, with it nothing is everything.’

“Full and unconditional surrender to God can sound utterly barren and empty. We may see nothing in it—no power and glory for us at all. But with His action, that nothing becomes everything. Our resistance to surrender and insistence on our agenda may produce crowds, fame, and influence that others envy, but without His action it proves vain. And He achieves nothing of deep spiritual consequence in or through us.

- What concerns you most about “full and unconditional surrender to God”?
- Do we really believe that ‘without divine action everything is nothing, with it nothing is everything’?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.



Week 12
Chapter 11
Amen: Living with a Yes

Objectives

At the end of this session, group members will be able to:

- a) Discuss more of the breadth of the ancient Hebrew word Amen;
- b) Understand the freedom of living an Amen/Yes life;
- c) Identify the critical spirit as the enemy of the Amen.

Ice-breaker (5 minutes)

Complete this sentence: “The most helpful part of this study on *Living the Lord’s Prayer* has been”

Stories (5 minutes)

Give the group opportunity to share stories about their experiences since the last meeting. Specifically, how did they go in the exercises that they set for themselves at the close of the last meeting when you discussed “application”?

Introduction (5 minutes)

This week we conclude our study of the Lord’s Prayer by looking at the familiar last word of the Prayer, “Amen.”

- When you hear the word “amen” (a Hebrew term), what does it mean to you?

Discussion (30 minutes)

Eugene Peterson writes:

“We come to God with a history of nay-saying, of rejecting and being rejected. At the throne of God we are immersed in God’s yes, a yes that silences all our noes and calls forth an answering yes in us.... Amen! Amen is recurrent and emphatic among God’s people. It is robust and exuberant. There is nothing cowering, cautious, or timid in it. It is an answering word, purged of all negatives.... When we Christians say or sing or shout, ‘amen,’ God hears our unequivocal assent to his irrevocable Yes to us, the Yes of our redeemer Lamb, the Yes of our creator King.

“When we begin to grasp the magnitude of this Yes, we understand why Jesus finished the Prayer with it. Could there be a more positive, more compelling, or more vision-filled word? In the midst of our world of negativity, we reach out prayerfully to the One who says Yes to us. And, having laid our lives entirely before Him through the phrases of the Prayer, we conclude with perhaps the greatest word of faith that the early Church could muster—*Amen*. Yes.

- As you listened to these two short paragraphs, what did you hear?
- Have you ever considered “amen” as “the greatest word of faith that the early Church could muster”?

“The *Amen* runs much deeper than smiles, back-slaps, cheers, whoops, and hype.... It calls each of us to live by faith; not faith in our circumstances, that everything will be fine, but faith in the One who controls our lives and eternity. *Amen* refuses to let us live in the waist-deep No of our lives. *Amen* calls us to lift our eyes beyond the horizon and step forth with renewed confidence.

“This Yes emerges not from a vain sense of invincibility or an egotistical dose of self-confidence but from a deep trust in the Lord’s grace and provision.

- Have there been times when you deeply sensed God’s Yes to you?
- How can we develop a deeper trust “in the Lord’s grace and provision”?
- How can we live in this Yes when we are experiencing deep pain and sorrow?

“*Amen*. This ancient word also challenges our human practice of nay-saying. All too often the No rises up within us and against us, or we blurt it out against others. We receive and dish out truckloads of criticism.

- How can we turn a critical spirit (one of “nay-saying”) into a life marked by resounding Amens?

Your own notes:

Application (10 minutes)

In the course of our conversation what—if anything—has the Lord laid on your heart as important? And what step might you take between this meeting and the next to respond to what He has said to you?

[Once again go around the group, if it is small enough, and ask each person to give a response of some kind.]

Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray for each other in regards to what each person has just shared.
- Open the way for people to share other burdens or needs that they'd like the group to pray for.

Place for you to make notes of the prayer requests and suggestions.
