



THE MODEL PRAYER

Reflections on the Lord's Prayer

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Matthew 6:9 (NKJV)
in this manner, therefore, pray:
our father in heaven

Chapter one

Show us the Father

The beginning and end of all prayer is an understanding of the Father heart of God. The attitude we have towards prayer and the posture we take when we pray have everything to do with our ideas about God.

If we believe God is an angry God, keeping score and seeking to judge our every move, we will probably spend a lot of our prayer time confessing our sins and seeking forgiveness. If we believe God is one who needs to be convinced to respond to our petitions, we will spend our time attempting to persuade God to answer our prayers. We may even plead for his favour and grace.

On the other hand, if we believe God is a loving and benevolent Father, we will surely spend our time in prayer, basking in the presence of a good, good Father. Reflect on the words you say when you pray and you will gain a good perspective on your true understanding of who God is to you.

In Luke 11 and Matthew 6 we see a prayer which is commonly known as the Lord's prayer, that has been a familiar prayer in the mouth of Christians for centuries. It is a mistake to call it the Lord's prayer as it would have never been a prayer Jesus prayed. He was without sin and could have had no need to pray for forgiveness of sin. Luke however tells us that in response to a request by a disciple, Jesus gave them this model prayer.

In Matthew's gospel, we see Jesus giving a series of teaching around prayer and then presents the model prayer. The prayer itself is short yet it has become a definite guide to enhance and enrich the disciple's prayer life. As we reflect on the words of this prayer, it is my hope that our familiarity will not get the better of us and we end up skimming through this study. Let us be open to fresh new revelations brought to us by the Holy Spirit that will ignite a new passion in our prayer life.

In this manner pray

Is there a manner to prayer? Was Jesus giving us a formula or a mantra that we could use daily so we can meet the expectation of God when we pray? As we go through this brief study of the Model Prayer, we will see that Jesus was not giving us a template for prayer, although using this as a guide for our daily prayer is quite helpful. Neither was Jesus introducing a new set of vocabulary to be used when we pray, granted that much of the content of this prayer does require a change in the way we speak about God, ourselves and others.

The manner of prayer Jesus is inviting us to enter into, requires that we relinquish all preconceived ideas about prayer and embrace this new world and ways of thinking. Jesus is calling us to enter into prayer His way, so we can experience prayer the way He did.

Our Father in heaven

The first thing presented to the disciples eagerly listening to Jesus teaching on prayer was the way He invited them to address God when they prayed. Our Father. The beginning and end of all prayer is a healthy Biblical understanding of God as Father.

In John 14:8 Phillip asks Jesus to reveal the Father.

John 14:8 (NKJV)

Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.

Somehow in his observation and interaction with Jesus, Phillip gleaned that Jesus constantly spoke of the Father and lived his life consumed by the Father and His business. Phillip was convinced that a revelation of the Father would sufficiently meet every spiritual need they had.

Jesus’ response may not have been the answer Phillip was expecting.

John 14:9 (NKJV)

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

In other words, Jesus was saying he was the exact reflection of the Father. Observe Jesus. Study his nature, his ways, his person, his being. Know Jesus and you will know the Father. The preceding verses from this conversation reveals the significance to our prayer lives when we see the Father through Jesus:

John 14:12-14 (NKJV)

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

The works Jesus did when he was on earth, was done because he had an intimate, untainted view of the Father. He invites us to do “greater works” once he goes to the Father. The greater works he speaks of is in the context of answered prayers. The challenge to ask “anything in My name” is preempted by the fact that we now have been shown the Father. Having a right understanding of God as Father is key to an effective and fruitful prayer life.

Getting to know the Father

The Father and Jesus are one

“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father”. It amazes me that there are many Christians and non Christians who have a sympathetic and kind view of Jesus but a very distorted view of the Father. To many,

Jesus is the kind, loving, self-sacrificing individual, who sought to break the yolk of injustice and set individuals free.

The Father however seems to be a distant figure, who demands obedience and dispenses punishment as a consequence of sin. Jesus' response to Phillip clarifies one important truth about the nature of the Father. Everything we see in the life of Jesus is an exact representation of the Father.

The Father is good all the time

If Jesus' response was not clear enough for us on how we should view the Father, the apostle James sheds even more light on the Divine Papa:

James 1:17 (NKJV)

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

The Message translation says it this way:

(MSG) Every desirable and beneficial gift comes out of heaven. The gifts are rivers of light cascading down from the father of

*light. There is nothing deceitful in God,
nothing two-faced, nothing fickle.*

In a world full of pain and sorrow, it is hard to discern the source of good and evil. Overwhelmed by suffering we can miss the truth that God is good and His love is like “rivers of light cascading down on us”. God is only good, always good. Never evil. God is good all the time.

Having the right view of God will change the way we approach Him in prayer. Not only is it important to see God as our good Father, we need to experience His love as a good Father.

The importance of experiencing God’s love

Paul linked his ability to conquer the trials and tribulations he faced with the love of God.

*Romans 8:37 (NKJV)
yet in all these things we are more than
conquerors through him who loved us.*

What are the “all these things” Paul speaks of in Romans 8? Verses 35-36 makes a list of some experiences the apostle had in his life and ministry. He also seems to suggest that it is a common experience for

other Christians too - tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword.

Suffering wasn't something Paul shied away from. We see another more comprehensive list of his sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 - in prison multiple times, whipped forty-lashes five times, beaten with rods, stoned once, faced death again and again, three times shipwrecked, spent a whole night and day adrift at sea. He faced dangers from rivers and robbers, Jews and Gentiles, in cities, in deserts, on the seas, from those who claim to be believers but weren't. He was hungry, thirsty, often gone without food, shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep warm.

With all this going on in Paul's life you would expect him to be a little confused about the love of a good Father. Instead he would say in Romans 8 "in all these things we are more than conquerors".

How, you may ask? How can one go through so much pain and suffering and yet be a conqueror? Paul's answer - "through him who loved us". You go under that "cascading love of God" and stay under that love no matter what the circumstances are. Through the Father's love you become "more than conquerors".

What about courage? Yes that will help – but even if fear overwhelms you, you stay under his love.

What about patience? Yes that will come in handy – but even when driven by the urge to give up, stay under His love. That cascading, bucketing, downpour of the unfailing, relentless love of the Father. It is through His love we become “more than conquerors”.

The importance of experiencing the love of the Father is that when trials and tribulations come our way, it is through His love we overcome. Not once. Not twice. We overcome again and again until we become more than conquerors.

As we embark on this study of the Model Prayer, let us begin by taking a closer look at our view of God as Father. The beginning and end of all prayer is an understanding of the Father heart of God. Having a right understanding of God as a good Father is key to an effective and fruitful prayer life. Knowing and understanding that God is only good, always good. He is good all the time.

The importance of experiencing the love of Father God is that when trials and tribulations come our way, it is through His love we overcome – and not just overcome, we become more than conquerors.

Activate your faith

1. Make a short list of words describing who Jesus is to you? Make a second list of words describing who God the Father is to you? Are your 2 lists similar. If not, why not?

2. Read Romans 8:37 again. Think of a difficult situation you have recently experienced. Now close your eyes and picture that event or experience being fully immersed into the waters of the Father's love. Wait in that place for a while and let the Father's love cascade over you like a waterfall. Now write briefly about that event as an overcomer.

Matthew 6:9 (NKJV)

In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Chapter Two

Father of the heavens

In the last chapter, we said that the beginning and end of all prayer is an understanding of the Father heart of God. Having a right understanding of God as Father is key to an effective prayer life.

In this chapter, we are going to look at three questions about prayer. Who? Where? How? The Model Prayer Jesus taught us addresses these three questions right from the onset.

Scholar and theologian David Bentley Hart did a literal translation of the New Testament and he reads Matthew 6:9 like this:

Therefore, pray in this way: ‘Our Father, who are in the heavens, let your name be held holy’¹

I would like to use his translation to answer the three questions – Who? Where? Why?

- Who is this Divine Being we pray to?
- Where does this Divine Being dwell?
- How do we approach this Divine Being?

Who is this Divine Being we pray to?

He is Father

The one we pray to is “our Father”. The structure of the sentence in English seems to suggest that the emphasis is on “our” Father as if we possess Him exclusively to ourselves. The Greek text however places the emphasis on father. It begins the sentence with “patēr hēmōn” (“father our”) - giving preeminence to God the Father.

¹ Hart, *The New Testament: A Translation*.

In prayer, we are never the subject. Our needs, nor our circumstances are never the subject. The Father is always the subject, He is never the object. He is never the one that is acted upon. He is always the one who acts. We come to Him to let Him act upon us and our needs.

He is the originator of all that exist. God did not suddenly become Father. He has been, is and always will be Father. The invitation from Jesus through his teaching on prayer is for all who come to God to let Him who is Father be our father.

Out of all the titles or names Jesus could have used to address God, He chose to refer to God as “*patēr*”. The name suggests a relationship exists between God and the one who prays. In the Old Testament the use of the term father to refer to God was very rare. Found only fifteen times in the entire Old Testament, the term father was used in reference to God’s mercy, forgiveness and love to the nation of Israel.²

Jesus however never used the term Father to refer to the God of Israel but used the term to refer to a relationship he and his disciples had with God. The term became synonymous to a special relationship the disciples of Jesus had with God, separate from ideas

2 TDNT, vol 1 p. 617-618

dictated to by religion. The name Father was always used in the New Testament in the context of God as revealed to us through His Son Jesus Christ.

John 1:12 (NKJV)

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

Galatians 4:6 (NKJV)

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

The privilege to call God Father has been given to a people who have submitted themselves to the Lordship of the One who calls Himself the Son. It is our relationship with Jesus Christ that has given us access to a relationship with Father. With that access comes the empowering of the heart by the Holy Spirit, enabling us to cry out “Abba, Father”.

He is our Father

The other point about the Father we learn from this prayer is that He is not just Father but He is Father to a community of people. He is “our Father”. There isn’t space for an individualistic approach to prayer. My

prayers are part of a community of people in prayer. I matter along with others. I do not stand alone in prayer. Even when I am alone in my closet of prayer, I am one of many in the family of our Father.

Romans 12:5 (NKJV)

*So we, being many, are one body in Christ,
and individually members of one another.*

Matthew 18:20 (NKJV)

*or where two or three are gathered together
in my name, I am there in the midst of them.*

Paul speaks of the many yet one. Individual members but connected to one another. Jesus speaks of the gathering of two or three that invites His presence in their midst.

The Bible is not discouraging personal prayer. Prayer however outside the concept of a praying community is foreign to Scripture. It was never good for man to be alone. We were created to be a community. A people belonging to God. Our individual prayers are part of the prayers of the community of believers in communion with our Father.

The significance of a praying community

Your prayers matter as much as my prayers in the economy of the Father's Kingdom. The Bible is loaded with Scriptures on the significance of being a praying community.

A praying community is the incense around the throne room of God

Revelation 5:8b (NKJV)

... and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Revelation 8:4 (NKJV)

And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

Through a praying community we experience forgiveness and healing

James 5:16 (NKJV)

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

A praying community keeps the church vigilant

Ephesians 6:18 (NKJV)
praying always with all prayer and
supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to
this end with all perseverance and
supplication for all the saints

A praying community can have an impact in society, creating an environment so the people of God can flourish

1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NKJV)
Therefore I exhort first of all that
supplications, prayers, intercessions, and
giving of thanks be made for all men, for
kings and all who are in authority, that we
may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all
godliness and reverence.

Who is this One whom we pray to? He is *Father*. He is preeminent. He is always the focus of all prayer. He is relational. He is invested in this relationship as Father to His people.

Who is this One whom we pray to? He is *our* Father. When in prayer remember, we are one of many and though we are many yet the Father is in relationship

with the individual one. We are a community of individuals in relationship with our Father.

Where does this Divine Being dwell?

The God of the heavens

Where then does this One we call our Father dwell? The Greek text uses the plural “heavens” as translated by Hart. The word can mean air, sky, or heaven. The ancient biblical view saw the “heavens” consisting of three realms:

- The first heaven was the air. The atmosphere around us.
- The second heaven was the sky. The space above us.
- The third heaven was called the heavenlies. The place God resides beyond what’s visible.

The nation of Israel chose to see God as one who dwelt in the third heavens. It made sense to place God above all the chaos below. It gave room for the second heaven to be the place of spiritual warfare, where the angelic and demonic forces would wage war and

determine the fate of the earth below. The first heaven then was left to man and his own devices.

God is as the air that we breath

The coming of Jesus pierced through that veil that separated God from man. Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of Heaven is here. Unfortunately, we haven't fully grasped that concept. What did he mean the Kingdom of Heaven is here? He said it is at hand, within our grasp.

I believe Jesus was teaching us that Father of the heavens is no longer in the distance up yonder. Jesus was shattering the false religious ideas of God being distant and afar. Unreachable, unknowable. God is not just the God of the heavenlies. He is the God of the beyond, the God of the above and the God of the atmosphere around us. Our Father is here and now, near not distant. Our Father is in the "air" – the space around us and in us. He is the "air" we breath.

When Phillip asked to be shown the Father, Jesus replied to him plainly – "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9b, NKJV). God was now relatable. They could now see the Father when they saw Jesus. They could experience the Father when they were with Jesus. They could understand the ways of the Father as they observed the things Jesus did. If Jesus was the

exact representation of the Father, then certainly the Father is truly “at hand”, as is His Kingdom.

The early church apostles understood that. Paul speaking to the Athenians was attempting to convince them that God isn't one who is distant from them. He does not dwell in man made temples unapproachable and mysterious. In Acts 17:28 Paul speaks of God as one whom “*in him we live and move and have our being*”.

We see similar words from the apostle John.

1 John 4:15 (NKJV)

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

To pray “our Father in the heavens” is to recognise that the God we are addressing is in the One whose domain is as far reaching as the heavenlies but is also as close to us as the very air we breathe.

I have found these three phrases used in the New Testament about the Triune God very pertinent to my daily Christian life:

God with us, Immanuel - Matthew 1:23

Christ in us - Col 1:27

God for us - Romans 8:31

God is as close as we choose Him to be

When faced with these questions - where is God when I'm hurting? Where is God when tragedy strikes? Where is God when I need Him the most?

He is with us, He is in us, He is for us.

We may not feel Him, we may not see Him, but as true as His word is – God is with us, God is in us and God is for us.

Norwegian theologian Ole Hallesby puts it this way:

Air our body requires envelops us on every hand. To receive it we need only breathe. Likewise, "the 'air' which our souls need also envelops all of us at all times and on all sides. God is round about us in Christ on every hand, with His many-sided and all-sufficient grace. All we need to do is to open our hearts."³

Where is God? He is with us, all around us, in us, and for us. All we need to do is to enter into His presence through prayer, open our hearts and breathe.

³ Hallesby, *Prayer*.

Who? He is our Father

Where? He is everywhere like the very air we breathe.

How? How do we approach this Divine Being who has revealed Himself as our Father and has made Himself easily accessible?

How do we approach this Divine Being?

The prayer teaches us that the One we are to call “our Father” who is in the heavens (air) all around us, is to be held holy. What does it mean to be holy? The word holy means He is set apart, consecrated. The opposite of holy is common. God is not like any other. We are not familiar with His nature or His ways. He is apart from all others. It requires us to know Him and not presume on His gracious desire to be among us.

When we pray, we hold up our Father in His rightful place. Prayer ensures we do not trivialise the relationship we have with Him. Prayer acts as a safeguard to prevent us from making ordinary or familiar this relationship with our Father. He is not to be reduced to our likeness or brought down to our level of understanding. He is to be held holy. He is beyond comprehension and is mysterious and many times

incomprehensible. His ways are truly higher than ours. Accepting God as transcendent (beyond our experience) is to hold Him as holy.

There is another side to this. To hold Father as holy is not only to revere and honour Him, but it is also to relate to Him as He has revealed Himself to us.

1 John 1:5 (NKJV)

this is the message which we have heard from him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

James 1:17 (Amplified Bible)

every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above; it comes down from the Father of lights [the creator and sustainer of the heavens], in whom there is no variation [no rising or setting] or shadow cast by his turning [for he is perfect and never changes].

Both the apostles John and James make it very clear that this Father that we are to hold holy must also be seen as one who is all light and only light; He is all good and only good. To think of God other than how He has revealed Himself to us, is to reduce him to the common, making Him an image we ascribe Him to be.

Anytime we attribute something evil to God is to make God common. Each time we ascribe a tragic event as an act of God, we taint God with darkness or evil. If we are to hold God as holy, then we must hold Him separate from darkness and evil. His nature is absent of all darkness and evil. He is all light and He is all good.

How do we approach our Father in the heavenlies? Our approach must hold these two ideas together. To always hold Father as one who is holy. Never trivialise this relationship or allow ourselves to stoop to relate to Him as one who is common.

In holding him with honour and reverence, we also ensure our Father is not distant and unapproachable. We are invited to see Him as all light and only light, as all good and only good.

To pray the Model Prayer is to embrace these ideas:

The beginning and end of all prayer is an understanding of the Father heart of God.

May our prayer life be a pursuit of knowing God as Father as revealed to us through the life of Jesus Christ.

Having an understanding of God as our Father is key to a fruitful prayer life.

May our prayer life extend beyond our personal lives into the community of our Father.

Knowing and understanding that God is holy not like any other, and He is good, only good, always good.

May our prayer life be a true representation of who God is in our words and our deeds.

Activate your faith

1. Reflect on your understanding on prayer. What are the changes that are needed in your ideas of prayer so prayer can become a pursuit of the Father heart of God?

2. How connected is your prayer life with others in your faith community? What steps can you take to be part of a praying community?

3. Explore the language you use in prayer. Are there any ideas of God you use in prayer that may misrepresent the nature of God?

Matthew 6:10 (NKJV)
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.

Chapter Three

Your Kingdom Come

The Gospel Jesus preached was the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. Mark 1:14 provides us a glimpse of the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

Mark 1:14 (NKJV)

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God

Right from the onset of Jesus' ministry on earth, he preached what Mark called "the gospel of the kingdom of God". Again in Acts 1:3, after his resurrection, Jesus

spent some forty days with his disciples teaching the Kingdom of God.

Acts 1:3 (NKJV)

to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

It was the message Jesus preached before His crucifixion and continued to preach the Kingdom after His resurrection. If the message of the Kingdom of God was the first and last thing Jesus spoke during his time on earth, it can safely be assumed that everything else in between was all about the Kingdom of God.

What is the Kingdom of God

The word kingdom in the Greek text is “*basileia*”. It means rule, a realm, a sovereign domain, a kingdom. The phrase frequently used by Jesus “the kingdom of God” (*basileia theo*), carries with it ideas about God’s sovereign realm, independent of the kingdoms of this world.

The Kingdom of God is a realm or dimension that is self-contained, sustained by God, under His perfect rule and it is free from the effects of sin, wickedness and evil.

So when Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the “Kingdom of God to come”, he was really asking his disciples to invoke the rule of God. That would include the appearance of God’s Kingdom as a manifestation of “God’s kingly sovereignty and power, to put to flight every enemy of righteousness and of His divine rule, that God alone may be King over all the world.”⁴

Not just His kingdom but also His will

Jesus didn’t just say pray for the Kingdom of God to come. He also instructed his disciples to pray for God’s will to be done. The word “will” which is “*thelēma*” in Greek, means “a determination, choice, purpose, desire, pleasure or will. What one wishes or has determined shall be done”⁵.

To pray for the will of God to be done, is to declare God’s choices, His purposes, things that bring Him pleasure – whatever God has determined from the foundation of the world to be done.

4 Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God*.

5 “Olive Tree’s Enhanced Strong’s Dictionary.”

I suggest the twin petition for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done, requires from us two significantly different responses:

A decisive response

When we declare the kingdom of God come, we are praying for the sovereign rule and reign of God. It will require from us a *decisive* unreserved total surrender to God's rule. The kingdom of God will require a change of allegiance and a change in worldview. There would need to be a change in the *default setting* from self rule to God rule.

When applied to a particular situation, or another person or a city – we are praying for the rule of God over that. It would mean that I come to God without any preconceived ideas on how He should administer this prayer. It is truly a prayer of total abandonment to God's sovereign rule over the matter.

A continuous response

Praying the will of God however, involves a lifestyle of *continuous* shaping. The will of God is something that we bring ourselves to conform to. It is a *process* that brings change of focus, retraining of desires and relearning ways of being. It is not something that comes automatically because we have decided to submit to the

rule of God. It requires effortful thought and awareness, subjecting every decision process to the will of God.

Praying God's will over a situation may require us to submit ourselves to a chain of events or actions that God is requiring of us, in order for His will to be done in that particular situation.

God's kingdom Come, God's will be done

Praying the prayer "God's kingdom come, God's will be done", is an invitation to remind ourselves of the decision we have made to make Christ Jesus Lord of our lives. That once for all decision to be submitted to His Kingdom, leads us to a continuous, moment by moment, daily choosing to seek out His will in every situation.

Many years ago, my wife Rhena was listening to a talk given by the then President of the AIDS Council in Malaysia, where we were residing at that time. Moved by the plight of single mothers living with the virus, Rhena began to pray for them. As a pastor's wife and young mother of three children under ten, she couldn't see how she could ever make a difference in the lives of these women.

Praying God's kingdom and will into the situation however, would require the both of us to surrender

totally to God's sovereign rule over our lives and a willingness to be obedient to His guidance and direction.

God began to speak to us to take steps that would lead us to a life changing experience. Through a chain of events, which included Rhena volunteering at the HIV ward in the hospital, my resignation from pastoring and taking on a managerial position in a HIV drop-in-centre, the Lord connected us to a Christian ministry in the United States called He Intends Victory. Through their help and guidance, along with the support of many Christian brothers and sisters, a ministry was birth which ran a home for single mothers and their children living with HIV and AIDS, and two homes for street based drug users living with the virus.

Praying the kingdom and will of God into situations require a commitment on the part of the one praying the prayer, to be subjected to the sovereign rule of God and submitted to Divine direction that will lead to His kingdom manifested and His will done.

Praying His Kingdom and His Will

There are three things to remember as we embark on praying this prayer Jesus taught us to pray:

- The reason to pray this prayer

- The motivation to pray this prayer
- The attitude when praying this prayer

The reason to pray God's kingdom and will

As we look at the Model Prayer, the prayer for God's kingdom and His will precedes a group of petitions Jesus teaches us to pray for. After the prayer for God's Kingdom to come and God's will to be done, we are instructed to pray for three areas:

- Provision – give us our daily bread
- Pardon – forgive us our trespasses
- Protection – deliver us from evil

It is the Father's nature and desire for everyone to experience Kingdom provision, Kingdom pardon and Kingdom protection, just as it is in heaven. The only way this will be possible is if we see His kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

When God's kingdom is over someone's life, and this person is submitting himself or herself to God's will by being obedient to His voice, this person begins to be exposed to Kingdom provision, Kingdom pardon and Kingdom protection.

When we pray God's kingdom and God's will we are declaring:

- Kingdom Provision – we are appropriating all the resources that are available in the Kingdom of God into the situation.
- Kingdom Pardon – we are declaring kingdom ability and grace to enter into the freedom to receive and release forgiveness.
- Kingdom Protection – we are hedging the environment around from demonic influence, anchoring it to the security that exists in the kingdom of heaven.

The motivation to pray for God's kingdom and will

As we pray God's kingdom and will into our lives and the lives of others, we need to be mindful of the motivation behind praying this prayer. Kingdom praying requires kingdom mindset. The apostle Paul brings clarity on this.

Romans 14:16-17 (NKJV)

Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating

*and drinking, but righteousness and peace
and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

Speaking into a situation where the church was majoring in minors, while ignoring the law of love, Paul presents us with an important principle of the Kingdom of God. Issues around temporal needs are secondary to Kingdom atmosphere. God's ultimate plan is to create Kingdom atmosphere, conducive for the Holy Spirit to make things right, produce the state of peace (shalom) and an environment of joy.

Paul reminds us of the danger of misusing Kingdom principles for worldly gain.

Philippians 3:18-20 (NKJV)

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ

Attempting to apply Kingdom principles, while simultaneously being driven by fleshly desires and

worldly ambition, will only lead to a destructive lifestyle and disastrous consequences.

As we pray the Model Prayer, declaring God's kingdom to come and God's will to be done, let us remember Paul's instruction to focus on the right motivation.

- Kingdom motivation produces righteousness – abiding in a right covenant relationship with God.
- Kingdom motivation maintains an environment of peace - living in a right relationship with others.
- Kingdom motivation preserves an inner sanctuary of joy - cultivating a right relationship with self, where one draws strength and security from the joy of the Lord.

The attitude when praying God's Kingdom and will

We've looked at the reason and motivation behind praying God's Kingdom and will. Finally, I would like to invite you to consider what sort of disposition is required to sustain this kind of praying.

In Luke chapter seventeen, responding to a plea from the apostles to increase their faith, our Lord seems

to indicate that it wasn't so much the lack of faith that was the issue, but the need to watch their attitude.

Luke 17:5-10 (NKJV)

And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, "Come at once and sit down to eat"? But will he not rather say to him, "Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink"? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'"

Jesus responds to the apostles' request for an increase of faith by replying that faith the size of a small mustard seed would be enough to do an impossible task like uprooting a mulberry tree and casting it to the sea

just by commanding it to do so. Faith is a part of the prayer equation. A Christian's attitude in their service to God is also a significant part of that equation.

After serving the Lord in one area do we then develop a sense of entitlement that we deserve to be seated and be served? A sense of entitlement will rob us from a life of service unto the Lord.

How many Christians after experiencing kingdom blessings in their lives, end up complacent and live with a sense that they deserve everything that has come their way. Like the great Nebuchadnezzar they proclaim, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built?", forgetting that everything we have achieved and received has come by the grace and hand of God.

The sense of entitlement will cause us to abandon our pursuit of God's kingdom and will, in exchange for a self gratifying kingdom. Jesus suggests that the key to continuous service to the Lord is maintaining this heart of a servant - "We have done what was our duty to do".

A servant's heart along with a life of gratitude will ensure our ministry of prayer remains a service to the Lord in response to His goodness and mercy towards us.

We are taught to declare “Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Remember each time you make that declaration, God’s kingdom and God’s will:

- precedes provision, pardon and protection
- promotes righteousness, peace and joy
- produces the attitude of a grateful servant

Activate your faith

1. In your own words explain the two different responses that are needed, in order to embrace the biblical concepts of the kingdom of God and the will of God:

My response to the kingdom of God:

My response to the will of God:

2. Based on your understanding of God the Father, how would you see His will in the area of provision, pardon and protection? (see James 1:17)

Matthew 6:11

(NKJV)

Give us this day our daily bread.

(NLT)

Give us today the food we need

(NLT, alternate reading)

Give us today our food for tomorrow

Chapter Four

Only My Daily Bread

So far in our reflection of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray, we have looked at the who? where? and how? of the God we are addressing in prayer.

Who? He is our Father. He is preeminent. He is always the focus of all prayer. He is relational. He is invested in this relationship as Father to His people. We are a community of individuals in relationship with our Father.

Where? Is there a designated space we go to in order to offer our prayers? Where is Father God? He is everywhere like the very air we breathe. He is with us, all around us, in us, and for us. All we need to do is to

enter into His presence through prayer, open our hearts and breathe.

How? How do we approach God in prayer? He is to be held holy. Our approach to a holy God must hold two ideas together. To always hold Father as one who is holy is to never trivialise our relationship with Him. We are to watch we do not get overly familiar to the point we treat Him as one who is common.

In holding him with honour and reverence, we also need to ensure our Father is not misrepresented as distant and unapproachable. We are invited to see Him as who He is - all light and only light, as all good and only good.

Not only does the Model Prayer teach us about the God we address in prayer, but we are also given the position we are to take in our lifestyle of prayer. When we pray, we are to declare God's Kingdom and God's will in all our concerns we have brought to Him in prayer. It requires an unreserved total surrender to God's rule.

Praying God's Kingdom assumes that the one praying has made a decision to change his or her default setting from self rule to God rule.

Along with God's rule, we invite God's will into the situation or person we have offered in prayer. Praying

God's will requires effortful thought and awareness on what the will of God is on the matter, subjecting every decision process to the will of God. Praying the will of God, is a process that brings change of focus, retraining of desires and relearning ways of being.

As we pray to our Father, for His kingdom to come and His will to be done, we are then taught to pray into three areas of our lives – God's provision, God's pardon and God's protection. In this chapter we will look at the first of the three petitionary prayers in the Model Prayer.

Give us this day our daily bread.

The prayer is not to remind God to provide for us but to remind us to depend on Him. In the midst of our concern for our well-being, we are invited to consider Him who alone is able to provide. When we wholly trust our Heavenly Father for all our needs, we can rest in the assurance that His kingdom has come and His will is being done in our lives as it is in Heaven.

There are a few alternate readings you will find in the various Bible translations. This is mainly due to the complexity of the original Greek sentence. Translators have had to make choices based on their preferred reading. The literal Greek sentence reads like this - "our bread, the daily, give to us today"

The prayer petitions God for “our bread” and describes the bread as “daily bread” or “epiousios” bread. The word “epiousios” just means belonging to tomorrow. So the text can also be translated “Give us this day tomorrow’s bread”.

The prayer presumes that Father readily makes available the bread today, tomorrow and in the future. We therefore are not pleading with our Father not to forget our daily needs. We are actually acknowledging the nature of our Father to provide even before we come to need. He pays forward.

This is consistent with Jesus’ teaching around not being anxious about the future. In a later part of the same chapter (Matthew 6: 25-34), Jesus addresses the common human worry about the necessities of life,

(Matthew 6: 25a, 32b NKJV)

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on...for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

The prayer “give us this day our daily bread” invites us to believe that our Father who desires for us to experience Heaven on earth, wills that all our needs be provided for. It is a prayer of assurance that all I need

today, to give me life for today, will be provided for me today.

I also like the idea the alternate reading of the text offers us.

(NLT, alternate reading)

Give us today our food for tomorrow

This possible reading of the original text further suggests that our Father, who understands the anxieties of His children for tomorrow, wants us to understand that He has paid forward, prepaid for our tomorrow's needs today. No wonder the psalmist was able to make the bold declaration, "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing" Psalms 23:1 (NIV).

The discipline of praying "give us this day our daily bread" accomplishes three things:

- The prayer trains us to trust God
- The prayer invites us into a life of contentment
- The prayer establishes us in perfect truth

The prayer trains us to trust God

Reflecting back on the years the people of God dwelt in the wilderness, Moses gives us an insight on the

reason why the Lord led them through the wilderness for forty years.

Deuteronomy 8:3 (NKJV)

So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

Praying the prayer for God's provision is to train our hearts to depend on God as the source of all our needs. The other option is to depend on ourselves or on others. While God may use the generosity of others to provide at times, it is always the Lord who is our source of all our needs. Praying "give us this day our daily bread" is a great way of training ourselves to rely totally on God for all our needs.

The training is not just for the times we are lacking provision. Moses warns us that the times of abundance are hazardous times too.

Deuteronomy 8:11-17 (NKJV)

Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God...lest—when you have eaten and are full...when your heart is lifted up, and you

forget the Lord your God...then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'

Travelling the path of abundance is a treacherous road. We are our greatest enemy. We are warned that the human heart has a tendency to say “my power, my ability, my ideas, my strength” got me here. Each time we pray the prayer “give us this day our daily bread”, we are training our hearts to echo the words of Moses:

Deuteronomy 8:18 (NKJV)

“And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

The Model Prayer helps train us to rely on God for our daily sustenance and acknowledge Him as our source of all good things.

The prayer invites us into a life of contentment

When we pray “give us this day our daily bread” it reminds us that the provisions of God are sufficient for

today. It keeps us living in the now, while promising us that tomorrow's provisions have already been prearranged. The Model Prayer invites us to live life in a state of godly contentment. Whatever has been provided for me this day, is all I need for today.

We see the Lord teaching the Israelites this valuable lesson during their journey in the wilderness.

Exodus 16:17-18 (NKJV)

Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.

It's an amazing passage if we can truly grasp the message behind it. People went out and gathered this "bread from heaven" as they were commanded to do. We are told that some gathered more than others. Why? We are not told. Maybe some lacked the ability or strength to gather more. That is the precise point. It wasn't about human ability to provide for their daily needs. Their act of obedience to go out and gather was the reason for their sufficiency. At the end of the day "every man had gathered according to each one's need."

Another significant principle the people had to learn was that they couldn't "leave any of it till morning" (Exo 16:19). They were being taught that it doesn't really matter if you have plenty or less. Neither does it depend on how much savings you have to tide you over. The foundation of Christian living rests on a total reliance on God as our provider.

I'm not saying that we are to be careless in the way we live our lives. There are plenty of Scriptures that teach us the importance of hard work and wise stewardship. The point I'm making is that in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in, we are called to live our lives in a state of godly contentment. The apostle Paul says it best:

1 Timothy 6:6-10 (NKJV)

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their

greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The practice of contentment

What are some practical ways to live out this prayer of dependency on God as provider? The first recommendation comes from a secret to life which Paul shared with us.

Philippians 4:12-13 (NKJV)

I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

We quote verse thirteen of this passage frequently but fail to see its context. The phrase “I can do all things through Christ” is actually Paul’s secret to a life of contentment. He had trained himself to live on God’s “daily bread”, whether it was in a place of plenty or in a place of need.

Another practical way to develop a life of godly contentment is to be part of God’s economy of giving. In 2 Corinthians chapter 8, we see Paul teaching the

Corinthians the principle of giving which maintains the balance of sufficiency in God's kingdom.

2 Corinthians 8:13-14 (NKJV)

For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality.

I see Paul intimating that in God's economy, God has paid forward so that all who dwell under His kingdom provision will have enough. This sufficiency however requires that all Christians understand God's principle of equality. Equality in the kingdom of God has to do with God's generosity reciprocated by those who receive in abundance, supplying the lack of those in financial burden. Paul draws his inspiration from the lessons learnt in the wilderness.⁶

Godly contentment is a huge part of Christian living. Praying the Model Prayer of provision, keeps us in the right mindset of total dependence on God for our daily needs. The prayer also trains us to live a life of contentment, sufficient in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. When we find ourselves receiving

6 See the link between 2 Corinthians 8:15 and Exodus 16:18

“tomorrow’s bread”, where God has paid us forward, it enables us to partner with our Father, who longs to see everyone under His domain equally lacking nothing.

The prayer establishes us in perfect truth

Proverbs 30:8-9 (NIV)
keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

One of the greatest deceptions in our faith journey is the perils that come with having abundance. Both the Old and New Testaments are full of passages warning of the pitfalls of self-sufficiency. This passage in Proverbs provides us with a good summary of what the Bible teaches us about money and possessions.

In this passage, the wisdom writer makes two requests – to be protected from deception and to be provided only what is sufficient for his daily needs.

The connection the writer makes between deception and self-sufficiency is quite significant. In his prayer for contentment in what has been allotted to him, the writer identifies two possible deceptions that are faced when one is either in poverty or in wealth.

The deception of poverty

In his work entitled “Politics”, Aristotle said, “poverty is the parent of revolution and crime.”⁷ The Greek philosopher may not have known how closely he was echoing the wisdom writer. In verse nine of Proverbs 30, the writer gives us the reason for his prayer to preserve him from poverty.

*I may become poor and steal, and so
dishonor the name of my God*

Poverty deceives a person into thinking that they have no other options apart from taking measures into their own hands and acquiring their needs through illegal activity.

Poverty deceives us into believing that our needs justify the means of obtaining it, even if they contradict Biblical principles.

⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*.

Poverty says, “God won’t help me; I must help myself.”

The deception of wealth

Being in the position of wealth carries with it the danger of another form of deception. Along with wealth comes an abundance of options. Being in a position where one is presented with numerous options and possibilities, God can become an unnecessary restriction to someone spoiled for choice.

Wealth says, “God does not need to help me; I can help myself.”

Proverbs 30:8-9 is a prayer to remove all the earthly facades that the world says we need. It seeks to rid itself of the deception of poverty with its enticement to be free from Divine rule, and the deception of wealth with its enticement to be free from Divine accountability.

To pray for “daily bread” sufficient for today keeps us in this narrow path of truth, free from the deception that comes when in want or in abundance.

The first of the three petition prayers is a prayer for Divine provision. It is far from the usual “bless me” prayers we have a tendency to pray for.

“Our bread, the daily bread, give us today”, is a specific prayer which requires us to take on a posture that includes these three components:

1. It is a prayer to be trained to trust God daily.
Trained to rely on God for our daily sustenance.
2. It is a prayer for Godly contentment. To be content with our portion for today.
3. It is a prayer to live in perfect truth. Unfazed by the glitters of this world. Living a life of truth free from earthly facades.

Activate your faith

1. How much does God feature in your daily decisions around how you spend your money? Which of these most describe the way you conduct your finances?

- I only pray about money when I am in financial difficulty
- I try to stick to my budget and pray when I am in difficulty or before I make major financial decisions
- I am aware of the need to be a good steward of God's provision and seek daily to be sensitive to the guidance of the Spirit over all financial matters

2. The third option would seem closer to the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. What are some of the ways you could train yourself to move closer towards the third tick box?

Matthew 6:12 (NKJV)
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.

Matthew 6:12 (MSG)
Keep us forgiven with you
and forgiving others.

Chapter Five

Forgiven and Forgiving

Forgiveness is a very sensitive subject for many. When such a topic is brought up in a crowd, inevitably we end up seeing the group polarised. There will be a group who end up feeling guilty or condemned because they are struggling to forgive those who have done great harm to them.

Then there will be a group who become defensive and feel they are justified in their actions because of the injustice that will occur should they forgive someone unconditionally.

The second of the three petitions in the Model Prayer is around forgiveness. Asking our Father to forgive us our sins isn't the challenge. It is the connection Jesus made between God's forgiveness and our forgiving others that makes the prayer a little more arduous.

At the end of the prayer in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus further emphasises this connection between God's forgiveness and our forgiving.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NKJV)

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
But if you do not forgive men their
trespasses, neither will your Father forgive
your trespasses.*

At first glance it would seem like Jesus is suggesting a trade off. “If you want forgiveness from God, you better forgive others.” Some may even read it with a legalistic tone - “forgive others or else...”. I'm not convinced Jesus was teaching that the Father's forgiveness had a quid pro quo element to it.

I believe Jesus was showing us the close connection God's forgiveness has with our ability to forgive others.

The Message translation seems to elude to this.

Matthew 6:12 (MSG) Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.

Keep us forgiven, keep us forgiving

To be forgiven and to be forgiving are two sides of the same coin. We cannot experience forgiveness if we aren't experiencing forgiving. The act of receiving forgiveness is inseparable from the act of giving forgiveness. The two are intrinsically linked together.

Once we see the link between the experience of receiving love and the experience of giving love, the explanation Jesus gives in Matthew 6:14-15 begins to make sense.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NKJV)
“for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

This is how I read the text in light of the connection between experiencing forgiveness from the Father and our ability to release forgiveness to others. If you want

to experience true forgiveness, draw from your experience of receiving Divine forgiveness.

As you experience forgiveness from the Father, let it overflow through you by experiencing the act of forgiving another. The more we allow ourselves to experience forgiveness from the Father, the greater our ability to release forgiveness to others. In the same vein, when one chooses not to release forgiveness to another, that person restricts himself or herself from experiencing the forgiveness from the Father.

The parable of the two servants

In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus responds to Peter's question about forgiveness with a parable. The passage begins with Peter asking the question - "*Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?*" Seems like a reasonable act to forgive a brother seven times. Far more gracious than the "three strikes you're out" or "fool me once shame on you, fool me twice shame on me" motto we seem to hold on to.

We can fully understand the sentiment behind the question. Surely at some point of time we have to conclude that a person repeatedly offending is not genuine in their desire to pursue a healthy relationship

with us. The response Jesus gave Peter was quite unexpected.

Matthew 18:22 (NKJV)

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

The phrase "seventy times seven" is a play with the number seven. Seven represented completion. Jesus was saying that one keeps on forgiving until the experience of forgiveness is complete. "Keep it in a loop, Peter. Make it a lifelong activity."

Jesus then tells the disciples a parable to illustrate the point. In the parable there are 2 servants. The first owed the king 10,000 talents and was unable to pay his debt. The NLT translates the amount as "millions of dollars". To give you an idea of the extent of debt the servant had - a denarii is a day's wages. A talent is 6000 denarii. If the servant worked 6 days a week, it will take him about 20 years to earn 1 talent. To pay back 10,000 talents will take the servant nearly 200,000 years.

It would be impossible for the servant to pay back his debt. As per the law, he and his family would be sold as slaves so the king could recuperate his loss. The servant pleads for mercy and the king responds by forgiving his entire debt.

This same servant leaves the presence of the king, after experiencing this amazing freedom from millions of dollars of debt, and goes to a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii (a few thousand dollars) and demands for immediate payment.

The numbers this time are more manageable. A hundred denarii could be paid back in 4 months. It is important we do not miss the comparison of the two debts. 10,000 talents owed to the king, which is equivalent to 200,000 years wages. 100 denarii on the other hand equal to 4 months' wages.

There's a similar plea for mercy from the second servant, but he does not receive the same treatment. He is thrown in prison, to be released only when the debt was repaid. The King hears about this and throws the first servant into prison "to be tortured".

The parable expands this idea of forgiveness that the Model Prayer suggests. The connection between God's forgiveness and our forgiving. If we look at the parable closely, the main character receives forgiveness from the king. Matthew 18:27 describes what the servant experienced from the king. The king was "moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt." The servant experienced compassion, freedom and forgiveness.

As soon as he leaves the presence of the king however, he forgets his experience. He forgets how it felt to be set free and released from such a burden. He forgets the experience of forgiveness.

He then confronts one who owes him a debt. The story follows the same sequence of events. The plea for mercy, the commitment to repay if given more time. The outcome however is the opposite. The first servant does not forgive his debtor and throws him into prison making it impossible to pay his debt.

This is the important point to note in this parable. The first servant was never able to pay off his debt in his lifetime. The second had every opportunity to do so in four months. The first was trapped in an impossible debt but was released by experiencing forgiveness. The second who had the possibility to pay off his debt was imprisoned by the holding back of forgiveness, making it impossible now to pay off his debt. The parable ends with the first servant thrown into prison after the king withheld forgiveness to him as well.

I want to highlight three thoughts from this parable:

1. The act of forgiveness allows someone to experience compassion and release from being bound up by the debt.

2. There was an expectation from the king that the servant who has experienced compassion, freedom and forgiveness, show the same to others. A recipient of forgiveness has the potential to forgive.
3. The act of unforgiveness is a double edged sword. It keeps the person who is not forgiven in a prison, but it also imprisons the one who has withheld forgiveness.

Forgiveness begins with the Father

With the parable at the back of our mind, let us explore the Model Prayer again. In the area of forgiveness, we are taught to first seek it out from the source Himself. Our Father - “*Forgive us our trespasses*”. Implied in this prayer is the idea that no one can truly forgive until they first experience forgiveness themselves. Our greatest offence is the way we have lived our lives outside a relationship with the Father.

The Apostle Paul made it clear in his treatise to the Roman church. In chapter one through to chapter three, he effectively argues that all are under sin. He begins by directing his attention to the world outside the religious circle, by saying “they” are all under sin. He then narrows in to the teachers of the law and says “you” too are under sin for teaching one thing and doing another.

He then zooms in closer and points to all those who think they are practising the law and says “you all” are under sin. You can’t just keep some laws while breaking other laws and say you are keeping the law. Finally he draws the net on everyone when he concludes:

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

No one can ever experience forgiveness from God unless he or she realises the need for forgiveness. Our offence to God is like the first servant. We owe a debt we can never repay in all eternity. The only way we can ever be free, truly free is to experience the compassion of the Father.

John 3:16 (NKJV)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The experience of compassion from the Father, brings about the release from all guilt and shame. One who has received compassion and freedom is then able to experience genuine forgiveness from the Father. Forgiveness begins with the Father.

Forgiveness empowers us to forgive

The one who has genuinely experienced true forgiveness from the Father, is empowered with the ability to release forgiveness. You can only set others free if you are free yourself. The freedom that comes with experiencing forgiveness from the Father, has the potential to release the same experience of forgiveness to others. The forgiven is in the position to be forgiving.

That is why Jesus made the connection between the experience of Divine forgiveness and the ability to release forgiveness. There is an expectation from the Father, that everyone who experiences His forgiveness goes about doing the same. Forgiveness empowers us to forgive.

Unforgiveness is entrapment

The one who has experienced the freedom that comes with forgiveness of the Father, is in danger of returning to bondage if they do not continue the flow on effect of forgiveness on to others. We cannot continue to experience forgiveness from the Father if we aren't experiencing the act of forgiving. The act of receiving forgiveness from the Father is inseparable from the act of giving forgiveness to others.

So we see what looks like two possible outcomes that are produced by either the cycle of forgiveness or the cycle of unforgiveness. The cycle of forgiveness starts with experiencing Divine pardon from the Father, which produces the ability for us to release forgiveness to others. In releasing forgiveness to others, we keep the free flow of forgiveness continuous. We continue to experience forgiveness from the Father while others experience forgiveness from us.

The cycle of unforgiveness on the other hand, begins with the act of unforgiveness on our part to another. The act of withholding forgiveness removes us from the experience of compassion, freedom and forgiveness. The shutting off the gates of these emotions, simultaneously removes our ability from experiencing compassion, freedom and forgiveness of the Father.

The unwillingness to forgive inevitably places both, the one who withholds forgiveness and the one unforgiven, entrapped in a prison of unforgiveness. Corrie Ten Boom said it best:

*“Forgiveness is the key which unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuff of hatred. It breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness.”*⁸

8 ten Boom, *Tramp for the Lord*. p. 197

The Model Prayer teaches us how to break that cycle of unforgiveness and keeps us in the cycle of forgiveness. When we pray “forgive us our trespasses”, we are actually praying “keep us forgiven with you”. “Keep us experiencing your compassion, keep us experiencing your release, keep us experiencing your forgiveness.”

Then and only then can we pray the next line - “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” We are praying “keep us in the *place* of forgiven, so that we can keep ourselves in the *practice* of forgiving”. We are acknowledging that we are experiencing forgiveness from the Father and that’s why we are empowered to forgive others. We are also acknowledging that this continuous expression of forgiving others takes us deeper in our experience of the Father’s forgiveness towards us.

To the extent we experience Father’s forgiveness, that’s how able we will be to extend forgiveness to others. Our inability to forgive others is really an indication of the lack of exposure to Divine forgiveness. The more we experience the forgiveness of the Father, the more we will be able to forgive others.

The next time we pray the Model Prayer let us remember that praying the petition prayer of pardon is actually invoking the atmosphere of Kingdom Pardon

into our environment. We are declaring Kingdom ability and grace to receive and release forgiveness. When we pray keep forgiving us as we keep forgiving others, we are creating a living space for us, free from the shackles of unforgiveness.

A quick note to those who feel convicted by the Holy Spirit to release forgiveness to someone who has deeply hurt or offended you. Forgiveness is a process. As you continue to pray this prayer of pardon, let me suggest you also release a prayer of blessing to those who have offended you. Remember the words of Jesus:

Luke 6:28 (NKJV)

*bless those who curse you, and pray for
those who spitefully use you.*

At the end of this chapter, I have included a prayer of forgiveness that you can use and tweak to suit your needs. I recommend that you keep this prayer in your phone or a printed version in your wallet so that it is readily available to you throughout the day. Each time you remember the person or the offense, feel the hurt that has been caused by the offense, pull out this prayer and pray this prayer along with the prayer of pardon Jesus taught us to pray.

Activate your faith

1. Write down one main thought that stood out for you as you read this chapter.

2. How would you best describe yourself when it comes to dealing with personal offense?

I find it easy to forgive those who offend me and not hold a grudge against them

I am able to forgive the person who offends me but struggle with forgetting what they have done to me

If I'm honest, forgiving people who offend me is the most difficult thing for me to do right now

If your answer to question 2 was not the first tick box, I recommend that you use the prayer in the following page as a guide to pray regularly, until you experience the breakthrough you need in the area of forgiveness. Remember to immerse yourself in the wonderful atmosphere of forgiveness our Father has provided for you as you pray the prayer.

Prayer of Forgiveness

Father I thank you that you know and understand how much I've been hurt by the actions of this person.

I don't want to carry this hurt and pain anymore. I don't want to be a bitter person. Jesus I need your grace and power of the cross to release my hurt and to forgive those who have hurt me.

I thank you for your forgiveness that I experience daily. You know how I have hurt you and hurt others. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Thank you for forgiving me of all my sins.

As much as I have been forgiven by you, I now choose to forgive those who have hurt me. As much as I seek to be blessed by You, I pray that they too be blessed. Every time I remember the hurt, I choose to forgive and to bless, until the pain is gone. I forgive and release those who have hurt me. Holy Spirit, my Comforter, heal my heart with your grace. In Jesus name, Amen.

Matthew 6:13 (NKJV)

*And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.*

Matthew 6:13 (NLT)

*And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.*

Chapter Six

Rescue Us From Evil

The prayer for protection is the final of the three petitions we are taught to pray in the Model Prayer. As we approach our Father, we confidently declare through prayer that His Kingdom come and His will be done in three areas of our lives. We declare Kingdom Provision, Kingdom Pardon and Kingdom Protection.

The petition for Divine protection has a two-fold prayer attached to it. One involves protection from temptation, while the other from the evil one. Both

these are sources that have a negative impact on our body, soul and spirit. Both these areas affect our relationship with God, self and others. The prayer for Divine protection is really a prayer from two most significant dangers that lurk around us – the danger from self and the danger from the devil.

Protection from temptation

The first of the two-fold prayer is a request to be protected from temptation. The Greek word used by Matthew is the word *peirasmos*. The word carries multiple meanings which include to test, to learn by experience, to ascertain how one will behave, to entice one to fall. The prayer implies that it is for protection against temptation that comes from the evil one. The devil's aim would be to cause the believer to experience defeat through enticement and failure.

The prayer is an acknowledgment of our human frailty and the high likelihood that when tested we may succumb to temptation.

Does God tempt us?

The short answer to that is no. The Apostle James is very clear on where the source of temptation comes from.

James 1:13-14 (NKJV) Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

James challenges what was obviously a common misconception that the source of all temptation comes from God. He first points to the incorruptibility of God. God cannot be tempted by evil. He is unaffected by temptation. The reason why God cannot be tempted by evil is because evil does not exist in God. He goes on to reiterate this concept a few verses later.

James 1:17 (NKJV) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Using the metaphor of light, James describes God as light. God is all light to the point that "there is no

variation or shadow of turning”. I like the way the Message Bible translates this passage:

*(MSG) There is nothing deceitful in God,
nothing two-faced, nothing fickle.*

The nature of God is all good that evil cannot attach itself to Him. Neither can a dark shadow form when He is all light. So God cannot be tempted. Not only is it impossible for God to be tempted, His nature of all good and all light tells us that He does not tempt anyone.

God does not tempt us, it is contrary to His nature. So if God cannot be tempted and He tempts no one, where does temptation come from?

We are tempted by our own desires

James tells us that we are our worst enemy when it comes to temptation. It is our desires that set in motion the direction that leads us towards temptation.

*James 1:14-15 (NKJV) But each one is
tempted when he is drawn away by his own
desires and enticed. Then, when desire has
conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin,
when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*

Our desires have the potential to do two things. It can draw us away from God. Once it has put some distance between us and this “all good and all light” Father, our desires entice us towards sin. There are desires in all of us that draw us away from God. These desires are always in seed form. If left unchecked, they entice, allure, entrap us into an environment where evil is present. The presence of evil is a womb that conceives evil desires. Evil desires when fully formed produces sinful actions. The continuous practice of sinful actions eventually leads to death and decay as a final outcome.

Desires need a safe haven

To pray “don’t let us yield to temptation” is to recognise that our desires make us susceptible to evil. We are acknowledging that desires are always present and realise that desires take on the nature of their host. If our desires draw us away from God, they can potentially become evil desires. At the same time, when desires are soaked in an atmosphere of the Divine, they produce good things.

Psalms 27:4 (NKJV) One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple.

When desires “dwell” in the presence of God, it has a different characteristic. It causes one to “behold the beauty of the Lord”. Our desires begin to see things through the lenses of God. We are attracted to His beauty. Rather than being enticed we are enchanted. Being captivated by the beauty of the Lord, leads us to “inquire in His temple”. Hosted by Divine presence, our desires take a direction towards goodness.

The psalmist goes on in the following verses to confidently declare that he is set “high upon a rock”, his head is “lifted up above his enemies”, there is joy, there is singing. When desires are safely dwelling in the presence of God, our desires lead us to a life of goodness.

Psalms 27:13 (NKJV)

*I would have lost heart, unless I had
believed That I would see the goodness of the
Lord In the land of the living.*

When our desires are safely sheltered in the presence of God, we are confident that we are protected from our own vulnerability towards temptations. To pray “lead us not into temptation” is to recognise the danger of self-indulgence and seek Divine protection from ungodly desires.

Protection from evil

The second part of the petition for Divine protection is the prayer to be protected from the evil one. The prayer to be delivered from evil is a prayer specifically for protection from the one who is the source of all evil.

In the phrase “deliver us from evil”, Jesus uses the greek words “tou” (the) “ponēros” (wicked, evil). Taking the preceding article “tou” as a personal noun, it should be read “the evil one”. The prayer actually is “deliver us from the evil one”, as seen in most recent translations NKJV, NLT, NIV. The prayer assumes when one is in the midst of temptation, being drawn away by self-indulgent desires, he or she can be potentially exposed to the influence of the evil one.

The word “ponēros” is the derivative of the root word for pain and poverty. Here we see the true picture of what temptation can do if left unchecked. Ungodly desires that draw us away from God, draw us into the path that leads to pain and poverty. The further we stray from the presence of God, the more exposed we are to the influences of the evil one. The danger lurking in the background of every temptation is being acknowledged in this prayer.

The nature of our enemy

Jesus gave us the best description of the devil and his nature when He compared the evil one with Himself.

John 10:10 (NKJV) The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Evil by nature robs, kills and destroys any resemblance of good a person can experience. God's perfect plan for humanity is for everyone to experience life in abundance. Standing in the way of God's ultimate desire to bless us, is His arch enemy the devil himself.

Jesus in the wilderness

When narrating the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness prior to His ministry, the Gospel of Matthew seems to suggest that God's intention for Jesus during his desert experience was indeed to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4:1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

While it does not in anyway show that God tempts us, I have heard some preachers speak of God leading us into situations in order for us to be tempted. I find that contradictory to the apostle James, who was adamant that God plays no part in our temptation. What is clear from Matthew 4:1 is that the Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness and the devil tempted Jesus.

The devil saw an opportunity to tempt Jesus when Jesus had completed a forty day fast in the wilderness. Tired, alone, weak and hungry, at the most vulnerable human state, Jesus was tempted by the devil.

Let's take a moment to reflect on the nature of the two players during Jesus' desert experience. The Holy Spirit is all good, all the time and the devil steals, kills and destroys. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for a time of solitude and preparation for the work He had to do. The devil however had every intention to enslave Jesus and he made it very clear at the final temptation:

Matthew 4:9 (NKJV) "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

The devil is consistently presented in the New Testament as an adversary, seeking to destroy us when opportunity presents itself.

Mark 14:38 (NKJV) Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

1 Peter 5:8 (NKJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Not only does temptation draw us away from God but it positions us in a vulnerable place where we are exposed to the schemes of the evil one.

Nothing goes to waste

We've looked at the negative implications of temptation - how it lures us away from God and positions us in a very vulnerable place to be manipulated by the evil one. But God still uses times of temptation to strengthen our faith.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation (peirasmos); for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of

life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

Luke 22:28-29 “But you are those who have continued with Me in My Trials (peirasmos). And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me,”

In both these passages, the same word “peirasmos” used in the Model Prayer is used. James talks about a crown of life that awaits those who go through these temptations and come out victorious. Jesus speaks of Kingdom authority which believers experience when they overcome temptation.

The disciples of old saw temptation as inevitable but victory that came after temptation had its rewards. The blessings was not in the temptation but in the overcoming. A Christian is encouraged to endure temptation, so they can “become approved” to receive the crown of life.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

So drawing from these thoughts, let's reflect on what the prayer for Divine Protection teaches us:

1. IT'S A PRAYER FOR PROTECTION FROM SELF

Spurgeon suggested that the tone of the prayer is one of “a humble self-distrust, a holy fear, a sacred self-suspicion, a dread of contact with sin in any degree”⁹.

When I pray this prayer what I'm really saying is,

“I DON'T TRUST MYSELF LORD. SO EVERY TIME I ENTER INTO A PLACE OF TEMPTATION, WOULD YOU PLEASE LET ME NOT YIELD TO IT.”

God's response each time I pray this prayer is:

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13, NKJV)

9 Spurgeon, *The Complete Works of C. H. Spurgeon, Volume 9.*

Allow me some liberty to personalise this passage in response to the above cry.

God says:

“TEMPTATION WILL MEET YOU AS IT DOES WITH EVERYONE. BUT I WILL BE FAITHFUL TO YOU MY CHILD. I WILL NOT ALLOW THE TEMPTATION TO OVERWHELM YOU. I WILL ALWAYS MAKE A WAY FOR YOU TO ESCAPE ALL YOUR TEMPTATIONS.”

Each time we pray this prayer, we are inviting God to overrule our selfish desires.

2. IT'S A PRAYER FOR PROTECTION FROM THE EVIL ONE

Not only is it a prayer seeking protection from self-indulgence, it is also a prayer asking to be protected from our arch enemy. The second line of the prayer recognises another player in all this. He is opportunistic and at the most vulnerable place of pain and poverty, he seeks to exert wickedness and evil.

When I pray this prayer I'm saying,

LORD, WHEN I AM IN THE MOST VULNERABLE PLACE OF PAIN, SUFFERING AND ANGUISH, PLEASE PROTECT ME FROM THE SCHEMES OF THE EVIL ONE. LEST I LOSE MY WAY, LEST I STRAY AWAY FROM YOUR LOVING EMBRACE.

God's response each time I pray this prayer is:

"... I have written to you who are young in the faith because you are strong. God's word lives in your hearts, and you have won your battle with the evil one." (1 John 2:14, NLT)

God says:

DO NOT FEAR MY CHILD, I HAVE AND WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE YOU STRONG. AS YOU CONTINUE TO LET MY WORDS DWELL IN YOUR HEART, I WILL GIVE YOU THE VICTORY OVER THE EVIL ONE.

Two things to remember when you pray the prayer “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”:

- It’s a prayer for protection from my vulnerable self
- It’s a prayer for protection from the evil one

Do also remember each time you face temptation:

- God does not tempt us. It’s contrary to His nature.
- The devil looks for every opportunity to draw us away from God. Stay close to the Lord and His word.
- A Christian is encouraged to endure temptation to “become approved” and receive the crown of life. Keep hope alive. This too shall pass.

Activate your faith

“Desires need a safe haven.”

In God’s presence, our desires can be shaped to prosper us and not harm us. Here’s a practical way of anchoring our desires in God’s presence.

The psalmist gives us some advice on how we manage the desires of our heart to ensure all our desires are aligned to God and His will.

Psalms 37:4 (NKJV) Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

The word “delight” in Hebrew is *’ânag* which means to be soft or pliable. The psalmist is encouraging us to remain soft and pliable in the hands of God so He can shape our desires into what will prosper us and not harm us. It is God’s will to give us the desires of our heart. But He loves us too much to allow harmful desires to cause us pain.

The following is a practical way you can ensure your desires remain soft and pliable in God's hands.

Keep a prayer journal of things you are desiring. Pray for them regularly and be diligent to hear from God. Write out your prayers around those desires. Reflect on the entries and discern by asking the following questions:

1. Has the language around those prayers changed in any way?
2. Are the desires increasing or decreasing?
3. Are there any Scriptures you have received from the Lord encouraging these desires or are they discouraging these desires.
4. After these times of prayer and reflection ask yourself this final question – do I have peace to pursue this desire of my heart?

*For Yours is the kingdom and the power and
the glory forever. Amen. (NKJV)*

*You're in charge!
You can do anything you want!
You're ablaze in beauty!
Yes. Yes. Yes. (MSG)*

Chapter Six

All About Jesus

In most early manuscripts, the Model Prayer ends with the last of the three petitions. The NLT does not have the doxology in the main text but places it at the bottom of the page with a footnote saying “Some manuscripts add...”. It might be helpful to address the reason behind the omission by translations like the NLT, before we delve into the doxology itself.

Earlier copies of the New Testament manuscripts do not have the doxology included in Matthew's gospel. The Alexandrian text (NU) which most modern day Bible translations¹⁰ use as their main source, ends the prayer with the final petition and goes straight into Jesus' discussion on the importance of forgiveness.

The later Byzantine text (Majority Text) which have the largest number of surviving manuscripts (but not the oldest), include the doxology in the prayer Jesus taught the disciples. The importance of its inclusion in NKJV is to acknowledge that certainly by the fourth century the church was ending the Lord's Prayer with the doxology.

I have included the doxology in this study so we can explore the theology behind the doxology. I believe the doxology not only enhances our appreciation for the Model Prayer but re-enforces the authority behind the praying of the prayer. Before we embark on a brief study of the doxology, let's summarise the Model Prayer.

¹⁰ Bible versions that use NU include the NLT, NASB, and NIV.

The Lord's Prayer in a nutshell

Our Father: The prayer begins with God

The beginning and end of all prayer is an understanding of the father heart of God. We asked these questions at the onset of our study:

- Who is this Divine Being we pray to?
- Where does this Divine Being dwell?
- How do we approach this Divine Being?

HE IS FATHER: He is never the one that is acted upon. He is always the one who acts. We come to him to let him act upon us and our needs. When we pray our Father, we are asking Him to father us.

HE IS IN THE HEAVENS: Where is God? He is in the air (the atmosphere around us). He is with us, all around us, in us, and for us. All we need to do is to be aware of His presence, open our hearts and breathe.

HE IS HALLOWED: He is set apart. Holy. God Is Only Good, Always Good. God Is Good All The Time.

Your Kingdom Come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

This declaration about God's kingdom and His will precedes 3 petitions – for provision, for pardon and for protection. By seeking God's Kingdom and His will in every situation of our lives, we anticipate an environment which promotes righteousness, peace and joy. The desire for God's Kingdom and His will also produces the attitude of gratitude.

Knowing that our petitions for Divine Provision, Divine Pardon and Divine Protection come out of Kingdom atmosphere, we pray His Kingdom, His rule, His will into every aspect of our lives, our circumstances and those around us.

Give us this day our daily bread

The first of the three petitions, is not to remind God to provide for me but to remind myself to depend on Him.

- It is a prayer to be trained to trust God daily
- It is a prayer to be content with our portion for today
- It is a prayer to live a life of truth free from earthly facades

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us

The second petition is an appeal to experience true forgiveness. “Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.” The act of receiving forgiveness is inseparable from the act of giving forgiveness. To experience true forgiveness, we need to draw from our experience of receiving Divine forgiveness and let it overflow through us by experiencing the act of forgiving another.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

The final petition is a two fold prayer:

- protection from my vulnerable self
- and protection from the evil one

We must remember when facing temptation:

- God does not tempt us. It’s contrary to His nature
- The devil looks for every opportunity to tempt us away from God. Stay close to the Lord and His word when facing trials and temptations

- A Christian is encouraged to endure temptation to “become approved” and receive the crown of life. So keep hope alive. This too shall pass.

That then in a nutshell is the Model Prayer. A prayer that has withstood the test of time, scrutiny, persecution from within and without, yet remains the greatest of all prayers memorised and recited generation after generation. Such a prayer, a true masterpiece, handed down from the Master Himself deserves, or even demands, a worthy finale - a coda. The doxology provides us with such a conclusion.

The Doxology: The theology behind it

Matthew 6:13b (NKJV)

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word doxology as a “liturgical expression of praise to God”. There are many recorded hymns and expressions of praise recorded throughout the Old and New Testament. Not only do these liturgical expressions offer so much richness in terms of worship to God, they

also provide us with insight into the beliefs and practices of the people of God in Scriptures.

The ending of the Model Prayer in the Gospel of Matthew, mirrors how the prayer begins – acknowledging the sovereignty of God. This then sums up the model prayer - all prayer, as is in life, begins and ends with God. This is the very theme of the entire Scriptures.

As seen in the Bible

The whole tenor of Scripture echoes this concept. The Bible itself begins in Genesis with God,

Genesis 1:1a

In the beginning God...

and ends in the book of Revelation with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 22:21 (NKJV)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

As seen in the life of David

The Chronicle records the last words of the great King David at the end of his life and ministry with these words as part of a prayer offered to the Lord:

1 Chronicles 29:11 (NKJV)

*Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, The power
and the glory, The victory and the majesty;
For all that is in heaven and in earth is
Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, And
You are exalted as head over all.*

The telling of the life of David in the first book of Chronicles is an honest and transparent account, narrating not just his successes but also his failures. The book ends stating that he died in a good old age, full of days and riches and honour. His life was so honoured by God, that God would let His only Son carry his name. What was the theme of David's life? "*Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, The power and the glory*".

As seen in the life of a true believer

2 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV)

*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels,
that the excellence of the power may be of
God and not of us.*

Paul referred to the life of every believer as earthen vessels. Cheap containers that were made of clay which were disposable. It isn't the container but what's in it that is the treasure. The presence of Christ in us - that is the treasure. When God demonstrates His power in and through us, it is really a display of His excellence. All God from start to finish.

All prayer, as is in life, begins and ends with God.

Our prayers reflect how we live our lives. If we truly believe that our lives begin and end with God, then prayer will be seen as our lifeline to God. God has expressed Himself in Christ - the Alpha and Omega, the author and the finisher, the way, the truth and the life. Praying the Model Prayer helps us weave this mindset into the fabric of our everyday life.

The doxology is anchored in these three rock solid, immovable declarations about Christ:

CHRIST'S KINGDOM is established now and forever

Revelation 11:15 (NKJV)

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

Many read this passage and see it as an end time prophecy that will happen during the second coming of Christ. While it is true that the world will see the full manifestation of Christ when He returns, but His kingdom and dominion have been established before the foundations of the world. Christ has been and always will be Lord of all. The "loud voices in heaven" were merely echoing the sound that has been reverberating in the corridors of eternity – *He shall reign forever and ever!*

CHRIST'S POWER is unrivalled and incomparable

Ephesians 1:19-20 (NKJV)

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and

seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

The apostle Paul suggests that there is a difference between believing in the power of God and understanding the “incredible greatness” of God’s power that has been made available to those who believe. Understanding the kind of power that is available “for us” will change our perspective on the efficacy of prayer. The power of God raised Christ from the dead and elevated Him to the highest place of honour. That same power is now available to us so we can overcome the two greatest fears we face – death and failure.

CHRIST’S GLORY is an unfading brilliance

Hebrews 1:3 (NKJV)

The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.

Revelation 1:14 -15 (NKJV)

His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves.

All the glitter this world offers pales in comparison to the shimmering glory of our Lord and King. King Solomon indulged in all that the world could offer and came to his final conclusion: “Vanity of vanities, All is vanity.”¹¹ Only a life in Christ can truly satisfy the vacuum every human being experiences.

A life truly satisfied and blessed is one that has come to a place where the words of the doxology ring true:

*Thine is the Kingdom, Thine is the power,
Thine is the glory. Forever Amen.*

As we come to a close of our study on the Model Prayer, I want to conclude with a brief practical guide on how the prayer can be used to support us on our journey towards becoming effective followers of Christ.

The Model prayer is more than just a guide on how to pray. It is not merely a template for one seeking to learn the nuts and bolts of prayer. The Model Prayer can be a training tool, to train the mind, the body, the soul and the spirit. Praying the Model Prayer regularly will bring our whole being into conformity to the image of Christ.

¹¹ Ecclesiastes 12:8 (NKJV)

Activate your faith

A practical guide on using the Model Prayer as a training tool to bring about change in our thinking, our doing and our very being.

When I pray Father

I acknowledge You as originator of all that exist. I recognise and give You pre-eminence in my life. I am never the subject. I am always the object. You are always the One who acts and I gladly allow You to act upon me and my needs. I thank you for this privilege to call you Father.

When I pray our Father

I remind myself that I am not isolated. I am one of the many in Your family. Our prayers rise up as incense around Your throne.

When I pray our Father in the heavens

I am assured that Your domain though far reaching to the heavenlies, You are still as close to us as the very breath we breathe. You are with us, You are in us, You are for us.

When I pray Your kingdom come, Your will be done

I am declaring that I choose to be under the domain that is self-contained and sustained by You, under Your perfect rule and free from the effects of sin, wickedness and evil. I am committing to a life of continuous, moment by moment, daily choosing to seek out Your will in every situation.

When I pray Give us this day our daily bread

I am confessing that You are the source of all my needs. I look to You and depend on You for my sustenance. I can rest in the assurance that everything will be sufficient for today and I can live a life of contentment. Because You provide for me daily, I am not swayed by the fear of poverty or the glitter of abundance.

When I pray forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors

I am encouraged that the forgiveness I experience from You empowers me to release forgiveness to others. The more I dwell on the depth of Your forgiveness towards me, the more I will increase in my capacity to forgive others.

When I pray lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one

I recognise the danger of ungodly desires that make me vulnerable to temptations. I ensure my desires are safely sheltered in Your presence where I am shielded from such temptations. And when I am in the most vulnerable place of pain and poverty, I am confident of Your protection from the evil one who seeks to exert wickedness and evil.

When I pray thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory

I am declaring with every fibre of my being that my life begins and ends with You. I acknowledge that You are the Alpha and Omega, the author and the finisher, the way, the truth and the life.

About the Author

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Andrew currently pastors the Welcome Bay and Carmel Community churches in Tauranga, New Zealand. He is one of the Directors of Faith International, a missions agency that trains church planters and Christian workers in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Vietnam and Burundi. His heart is to see men and women equipped to carry the Gospel of the Kingdom to the uttermost parts of the world.

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For more free resources or if you would like to support the author and this ministry go to www.activefaith.org.nz

