

THE WHOLE STORY

From Genesis to Revelation

Matthew 6:1-21

Introduction:

Matthew chapter 6 contains what we have come to know as the Lord's Prayer. Many of us have heard this prayer in church services, repeated it before group activities, or even asked to memorize it. This prayer is a piece of Scripture so well known that it is often tempting to forget that it is only one small part of a chapter. A chapter that is seated in the middle of a sermon. A sermon where Jesus himself is explaining how the law of God judges humanity's heart and intentions instead of the precision of their ritual.

Jesus is explaining to the people of Israel that what they have heard and seen from religious leaders their whole lives is actually quite far from God's desire. Matthew 6 opens with Jesus giving us a new paradigm for many of our spiritual disciplines. "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your father who is in heaven." (Matt 6:1) Jesus goes on to apply this paradigm to giving (v 2-4), praying (v 5-14), and fasting (v 16-18), and follows up with an exhortation to trust in the Father's provision and his eternal rewards (v 19-34). Amid all this we are left to ask: Why is a model prayer the centerpiece of this discussion?

It is the natural human tendency to attempt to justify us through deeds and rituals. Our sinful nature causes us to default back to believing that if we can be better than everyone else we will be justified before God, or that if we do a ritual just the right way God will be obligated to accept us. Jesus models a prayer for us that teaches us how to come before God humbly seeking his mercy and grace instead of vainly attempting to offer our own righteousness as justification. Jesus shows us that neither the merit of our deeds nor the precision of our rituals will be enough for God. Jesus shows us that he is making a way for us to come before God just as we are and have genuine communication with the creator of the universe. The Lord's Prayer is neither a magical formula, nor an obligated recitation, but an example of how Jesus restores our relationship to God.

This Week's Main Focus:

1. Study Matthew 6:1-21
2. Go over your SG's GroupLink plan / best practices for welcoming new people into your group (Use this week's Weekly Update to help this discussion).
3. Pray with your group.

Bible Study Questions: Read Matthew 6:1-21

1) What commands does Jesus repeat and emphasize in Matthew 6?

2) What things specifically does Jesus tell us to ask for in his prayer?

3) What are some reasons Jesus commands us to give, pray and fast in secret? Are they not a good example for others?

4) Why does Jesus follow his model prayer with a discussion of God's provision and power?

How to welcome guest into your SG through GroupLink.

Group Prayer Time:

Use the ***ACTS*** model for prayer:

- *A* - Adoration, praise God for who he is and what he has done.
- *C* - Confession, tell God how *your* motives and actions have not honored God.
- *T* - Thanksgiving, thank God for what he has done in history and in your life.
- *S* - Supplication, ask God to intervene in your life and those around you according to his word.

Suggestion Scripture to pray through: ***Psalm 8***