

**PRAY**  
**LIKE THIS**

*Living the  
Lord's Prayer*

STEVE GAINES

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# Introduction

Jesus was a prayer warrior. Although He was the Son of God, He recognized the necessity of constantly abiding in a relationship of dependency on His Father. His disciples, noticing Jesus' habit of seeking time alone with the Father, requested, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). Jesus' response, as recorded by Matthew, was both simple and profound, both practical and deeply spiritual:

Our Father in heaven,  
your name be honored as holy.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And do not bring us into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.

**MATTHEW 6:9-13**

The Lord's Prayer, as it's known today, is one of the most familiar passages in Scripture. Yet far too many Christians, caught up in the rush of daily life, don't make time to pray. In failing to follow Jesus' example, they're neglecting a discipline that's absolutely critical to an intimate, growing relationship with God.

*Pray like This* takes a fresh look at each phrase in the Lord's Prayer to reveal its meaning and its implications for our prayer lives and our daily lives. We'll understand the significance of calling on God as Father, honoring His holy name, seeking His kingdom and His will, acknowledging our dependence on Him for every daily need, forgiving other people as He has forgiven us, and relying on His protection and deliverance from evil.

Following Jesus' Model Prayer will lead us to fall more in love with our Heavenly Father and grow in our desire to engage in conversation with Him. As we study and apply Jesus' words, may we develop a more vibrant prayer life that leads to worship, spiritual maturity, dependence on God, and a knowledge of His will.

# *How to Use This Study*

This Bible study provides a guided process for individuals and small groups to explore Jesus' Model Prayer in Matthew 6 and to apply it to their prayer lives. This study follows a six-week format that examines these topics:

**WEEK 1**

The Fatherhood of God

**WEEK 2**

The Worthiness of God

**WEEK 3**

The Kingdom and Will of God

**WEEK 4**

The Provision of God

**WEEK 5**

The Forgiveness of God

**WEEK 6**

The Protection of God

Each week is divided into five days of personal study. In these studies you'll find biblical teaching and interactive questions that will help you understand and apply the Lord's Prayer to your relationship with your Heavenly Father.

In addition to the personal study, six group sessions are provided that are designed to spark conversations based on brief video teachings. Each group session is divided into three sections:

1. **"START"** focuses participants on the topic of the session's video teaching.
2. **"WATCH"** provides key ideas presented in the video and space to take notes.
3. **"DISCUSS"** guides the group to respond to and apply the video teaching.

# Tips for Leading a Group

## Prayerfully Prepare

Prepare for each group session with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

**REVIEW** the weekly material and group questions ahead of time.

**PRAY** for each person in the group.

## Minimize Distractions

Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what's most important:

**CONNECT** with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they'll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience.

**CONSIDER** seating, temperature, lighting, refreshments, surrounding noise, and general cleanliness.

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they're welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. At worst, people may never notice your effort, but they're also not distracted.

## **PRAY LIKE THIS**

### *Include Others*

Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to include and invite.

**INCLUDE** anyone who visits the group.

**INVITE** new people to join your group.

### *Encourage Discussion*

A good small-group experience has the following characteristics.

**EVERYONE PARTICIPATES.** Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.

**NO ONE DOMINATES—NOT EVEN THE LEADER.** Be sure your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

**NOBODY IS RUSHED THROUGH QUESTIONS.** Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses to questions they've just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

**INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP.** Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have experienced similar things or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.

**GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL.** Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust Scripture to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone, but God can. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

## *Keep Connecting*

Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending.

**ENCOURAGE** group members with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through emails, texts, and social media.

**BUILD** deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for meals; fun activities; and projects around your home, church, or community.

*WEEK 1*

***THE FATHERHOOD  
OF GOD***

# START

Welcome to group session 1 of *Pray like This*. Ask to introduce themselves by giving quick answers to the following questions.

**What's your name, and what brought you to this group?**

**What's one word you would use to describe your prayer life?**

**If you could make your prayer life different in one way, what would it be?**

Prayer is a subject that is or should be close to the core of every Christian's walk with God. Despite that, many of us live with a sense of longing when we think about our prayer lives. We know we ought to pray, we might even desire to pray with greater fervency, yet we aren't growing in our capacity for and joy in prayer.

In Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus taught us what we need to know about prayer. When His closest followers asked Him to teach them to pray, He answered with the Model Prayer, a text that still instructs Christ followers today in the discipline of talking and listening to God.

Over the next six weeks your group will examine this Model Prayer line by line, each week growing in your understanding and practice of prayer. Together you'll learn from Jesus to "pray like this" (v. 9) so that you can grow in intimacy with your Heavenly Father.

**Read together the text of Jesus' Model Prayer, found in Matthew 6:9-13. Then watch video session 1.**

## **PRAY LIKE THIS**

# **WATCH**

Through grace and faith in Christ, not only does He bring us into His kingdom; He brings us into His family, and we are now His adopted sons and daughters.

Jesus said, “I want you to do more than call Him Father. I want you to call Him Papa, Abba.”

Ultimately, what drives our worship, what drives our intimacy with God, is the sense of Him being Father.

It’s only through Christ and the gospel that we actually come into a Father-child relationship with the Lord. Father is the Christian name for God.

When you connect with God as Father, you’re looking for two things:

1. Protection
2. Provision

God is the perfect Father. That’s why we can go into the throne room through Jesus Christ and say, “Abba, Father.”

The Model Prayer starts with “our Father,” not just “my Father.” The church is a family. He’s the Father of our church, of our family.

Feelings never drive our faith. It’s the facts of the Word of God.

God is an intimate, loving, caring, long-suffering Father who desires a relationship with us.

When I start my prayer with “Father God” or “God the Father,” that reminds me that He delights in me, that He welcomes me into His family, that I’m adopted.

Once we know the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, we can go to Him anywhere, anytime, about anything in life.

When people take prayer casually, it shows they don’t really understand the intimacy and the cost.

## DISCUSS

The first line of Jesus' Model Prayer reads, "Our Father in heaven ..." (Matt. 6:9).

**What's one insight in the video that challenged you?**

**Why is it essential for our prayers to begin by acknowledging God as our Father?**

**Is acknowledging God as your Father difficult for you? Why or why not?**

Jesus began His Model Prayer with a very intimate title for God. In doing so, Jesus reminded us that we, as Christians, have an intimate relationship with God. Yet many believers might have trouble addressing God this way because of past experiences with our earthly fathers. Acknowledging God as our Father reminds us that regardless of who our earthly fathers are or were, we have a Heavenly Father who loves, provides for, and plans good for us.

**When we call God Father in prayer, what are we communicating about ourselves?**

**How can remembering that we're God's adopted children change the way we pray?**

**Read Hebrews 4:16. How does knowing that God is your Father give you confidence to approach Him in prayer?**

If God is our Father, we're His adopted children because of the gospel. Therefore, we can come freely and boldly into His presence, knowing He won't turn us away.

## PRAY

*Thank the Lord for being your Father. Ask Him to help any group members who have difficulty relating to Him as Father to accept by faith His love and care for them.*

# DAY 1

## *The Adopted Children*

### **Read Ephesians 1:3-14.**

What does the word *father* mean to you? Depending on your past, it might bring to mind images of care and protection. Conversely, it could bring up feelings of neglect and bitterness. Joy, anger, rejection, affection—all these emotions are packed into the single word *father*. This is the word Jesus used to begin the Model Prayer:

You should pray like this:  
Our Father in heaven.

### **MATTHEW 6:9**

The starting point for approaching God as Christ followers is summed up in this single word: *Father*. Because that word is loaded with preconceived notions for all of us, depending on our relationships with our earthly fathers, praying in this way can be either extraordinarily comforting or extraordinarily problematic. Part of our growth in Christ, as well as our growth in prayer, involves recovering the meaning of this word as it's applied to God.

What does it mean to call God Father? It means, first and foremost, recognizing that addressing God like this in prayer is a unique privilege for Christians. Because all of us have been born in sin, we're separated from our holy God. Far from being our Father, we're His enemies—opposed to Him—for in our sin we would much rather live under our own authority than His.

But when we believe the gospel, He who was once our enemy becomes our Father. We who were once orphans are brought into God's family. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus and our belief in Him, we have a place at God's table.

The astounding reality for Christians is that our adoption by God doesn't have an expiration date. Once adopted, we're forever His children, and as Paul would say in Ephesians 1:3, God has given us "every spiritual blessing in the heavens." As our Father, God has held nothing back from us, because He has given us everything in Jesus Christ.

This is why Jesus wants us to begin our prayers with the word *Father*. When we do, we remind ourselves that God has made a way for us to be in His family.

We remind ourselves of His abiding love and care. We confess that no matter what the circumstances might be in our lives, He's with us and for us. Regardless of what we've experienced from our earthly fathers, God is redeeming that word for us. So we can come to Him over and over again, knowing that He's indeed our Father.

**Are there any obstacles to your calling God Father in prayer?  
What are they?**

**Why is it significant to you today to remember that you're God's adopted child?**

**How does remembering that fact change the way you pray?**

## **PRAY**

*Embrace the great joy and privilege of calling God Father. Using Ephesians 1:3-14 as a guide, thank Him specifically for the cosmic benefits of being His adopted child.*

## DAY 2

# The Loving Father

### Read 1 John 3:1-2.

When Jesus told His first followers to address God as Father, it must have come as a shock. It wasn't the first shocking thing He had said to them, for this Model Prayer comes in the context of Jesus' great Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus had warmed up the crowd with controversial statements about what it really means to be called blessed and with the assertion that thinking badly of people is the same as killing them. But the introduction of the word *Father* took the sermon to another level.

Judaism strongly held to the established belief that God was absolutely unapproachable. Was He to be loved? Certainly. Respected? Absolutely. Feared? Without question. This was the culture that wouldn't even speak the revealed name of God, and when people had to write it in Scripture, they did so with great honor and respect. Some traditions say scribes broke the pens they had used to write the name of God after they had finished.

Enter Jesus, this strange rabbi who had no fear of or regard for the religious leaders of the time and who spoke with unmatched authority. There He was on a hillside talking about the revered God of Israel with an air of unmistakable familiarity. And that's just what God was going for.

God's purpose wasn't to be disrespected or approached casually—far from it. It was that God wanted to be in a relationship with His people that wasn't marked by fear but by love, not by apprehension but by an appreciation of His great grace and compassion. He wanted to be their dad.

That's where the love of God takes us. John described it like this: "See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children" (1 John 3:1). God's great love doesn't make us His servants. It doesn't make us the people He puts up with. God's great love makes us His sons and daughters. *Father* is the Christian name for God.

A real father cares. He protects. He encourages. He advises. But above all, a real father loves. Always and without condition. A real father waits on the porch to welcome home his children, regardless of where they've been or what they've done. A real father is proud of his children and takes no greater pleasure than giving them what they need.

God has such an intense desire for fatherhood that He's willing, day in and day out, to adopt spiritual orphans from the world into his family. *Father* isn't a universal term for God, for not every human being is a child of God. God's family has only one natural child, and that's Jesus Christ. Everyone else comes into the family by adoption. God has brought us into His house, never to be put out in the cold again. That's what a real father does.

**Why is it crucial to embrace God as Father when you pray?**

**What might your prayers sound like if you didn't see God as a loving Father?**

**What are some ways you can embrace God's loving fatherhood without treating Him flippantly or casually?**

## **PRAY**

*Ask God to help you recall tangible examples of His fatherhood from the past few days. As you name them in prayer, thank your Father for His love and care.*

## DAY 3

# *The Spirit Who Reminds*

**Read Romans 8:14-16.**

It's amazing and miraculous to think that we, as sinful humans, can know God as our Father. This reality could be accomplished only by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of the gospel, we now know God as Father, and He relates to us as His beloved children.

God is very concerned that we understand and remember the nature of our relationship with Him. For this reason one of the primary functions of the Holy Spirit is to remind us of the reality of our Father's closeness:

All those led by God's Spirit are God's sons. You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children.

**ROMANS 8:14-16**

This function of the Holy Spirit is very different from the one many of us tend to think of. Many of us think of the Spirit of God as the voice in our heads that constantly tells us to stop doing what we know is wrong or to start doing more of what we know is right. We think of Him as the source of the refrain of guilt inside our heads saying either "No! No! No!" or "More! More! More!"

While the Holy Spirit of God lives inside us to convict us of sin and righteousness, another big role is to remind us of our true identity. He's there to whisper to us over and over, "You're a child of God. He's your Father." The word *Abba* points to the familiarity and intimacy God wants us to experience with Him. It's a term of closeness. It's a term of love. It's not just Father; it's Daddy. And let's be honest: we need that reminder.

We need to be reminded of God's fatherhood because of our overwhelming tendency to look at our circumstances and doubt whether it's true. We struggle financially. We undergo chemotherapy. We can't seem to overcome sin. We're tired and poor and unfaithful. And because we are, we often forget that God is our Father. So the Holy Spirit reminds us again and again. He reminds us when we're in pain. He reminds us when we're self-reliant. He reminds us when we're in the throes of temptation. Time and again comes the echo of the Spirit in our hearts: "You're a child of God."

**Read Romans 8:14-16 again. Do you typically think of the Holy Spirit as having this function—to remind you that you’re a child of God? Why or why not?**

**How does knowing that you’re a child of God change the way you think about and relate to God’s Spirit?**

**How does knowing that God wants you to relate to Him as your Father give you confidence to pray today?**

## **PRAY**

*Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you that God is your Father and that you’re His child. Remember this truth as you let Him quiet your heart and your mind. Then pray in confidence because your Father hears your prayer.*

## DAY 4

# *The Father Who's Right*

**Read Matthew 7:9-11.**

When we reach out to God as our Father, we recognize that certain realities are baked into that designation. When we call God Father, we're implicitly saying He's loving. We're also saying He's a provider. We're saying He's wise. These are characteristics that all fathers—and certainly our Heavenly Father—should embody.

But all fathers other than God fall short in all these attributes. They may want to be perfectly loving, they may strive to be faithful providers, and they may aspire to be perfectly wise, but fathers, like the rest of us, are broken people. Despite their best efforts, they always fall short. But not God.

God is the Father who always makes right decisions. In Matthew 7 Jesus not only pointed out the difference between God and our earthly fathers, but He also used that difference to give us confidence in our prayers:

Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?  
Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him.

**MATTHEW 7:9-11**

Jesus' point was that God knows what He's doing, and He's generous. But by implication Jesus was also saying our good Father knows, better than we do, the difference between a fish and a snake. That's important because often we don't. For example, we might come to God in prayer asking for something. What we're asking for might be, in our view, the best thing for us. But because God is perfect in His wisdom and fatherhood, He knows there's another side to what we're asking for that will actually harm us. In other words, we might think we're asking for a fish when we're really asking for a snake. We might think we're asking for bread when we're really asking for a stone.

To approach God as Father is to acknowledge that He knows what's best for us. He isn't content to be our butler, simply giving what we ask for when we ask for it. He's a good Father who not only knows the difference between a fish and a snake and between bread and a stone but is also so committed to our good that He will give us what's best. And He will do so even when we might not realize that what He's giving us is exactly what we need.

**Describe a time when God didn't answer your prayer the way you thought He should, but in the end His answer was for your benefit.**

**How does recalling that experience give you confidence in God as your Father?**

**How might you pray differently when you're convinced that your Father's decisions are always right?**

## **PRAY**

*Begin by thanking God for His wisdom and generosity. As you think about the time when God answered your prayer in a different way than you thought He should, confess your inability to know what's best. Then express your confidence in Him as your Father, telling Him that all His ways and decisions are right.*

# DAY 5

## *The Celebration of Children*

**Read Zephaniah 3:14-17.**

If God is our Father, then we're His children. This is a wondrous reality, one the children of God should never get over. It's even more amazing to realize that God doesn't reluctantly hear from His children but instead lovingly and enthusiastically welcomes us into His presence.

This truth highlights another difference between our Heavenly Father and our earthly fathers. Though our fathers might be good and faithful men who strive to love, provide for, and protect their children, they're also still men. Because they are, they grow tired and weary. Surely every father shares the experience of having been so tired after a long day at work that he didn't have the energy to laugh, play with, and spend quality time with his children.

But not God. The prophet Zephaniah described God's posture toward His children in wonderful detail:

Sing for joy, Daughter Zion;  
shout loudly, Israel!  
Be glad and celebrate with all your heart,  
Daughter Jerusalem!  
The LORD has removed your punishment;  
he has turned back your enemy.  
The King of Israel, the LORD, is among you;  
you need no longer fear harm.  
On that day it will be said to Jerusalem:  
"Do not fear;  
Zion, do not let your hands grow weak.  
The LORD your God is among you,  
a warrior who saves.  
He will rejoice over you with gladness.  
He will be quiet in his love.  
He will delight in you with singing."

**ZEPHANIAH 3:14-17**

The prophet began with an exhortation for the children of God to sing and shout with joy and not to hold back in their celebration. Why? Because God had removed their punishment. Though these words were originally applicable

to God's discipline of His people in the Old Testament, they're also gloriously true of people today who've believed the gospel.

The ultimate source of our ongoing, everlasting joy is that God has removed our guilt and shame through the sacrifice of Jesus. In doing so, He has also overcome our last and greatest enemy—death.

God isn't ashamed for us to call Him our Father; indeed, He celebrates over His children with gladness. He exuberantly welcomes us into His presence time and time again, and no matter how much joy we might feel there, it doesn't compare to the amount of joy He feels.

Consider that for a moment. For a child of God, coming to the Lord in prayer is an opportunity to join God in a celebration. Though we might come to prayer with a heavy heart, burdened by serious trouble, disease, or discouragement, we find our Father waiting there who's exceedingly glad to welcome us into His presence.

**Do you have trouble believing God is excited to meet with you in prayer? Why or why not?**

**What obstacles keep you from seeing prayer as a celebration with your Father?**

**What are some specific ways you can celebrate the reality of the gospel before, during, and after your prayers?**

## **PRAY**

*Even now God is rejoicing over you with singing. Keep that thought in your mind as you enter His presence and join Him in the celebration. Celebrate the Father as He celebrates His children. To begin, consider singing a song of celebration to the Lord.*