

FUEL FOR YOUR PRAYER LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

No one in their right mind would start a car journey with their fuel tanks empty. Yet how many of us start our day/week/year with our spiritual tanks empty?

Our everyday life needs fuel. That fuel is our prayer life. A prayerless life is missing a spiritual dynamism that is the difference between surviving and thriving.

But at a deeper level, it's not just every day life that needs fuel – the fuel of prayer. It's our prayer life itself that needs fuel.

A recent survey in the USA revealed that though 95% of people believe in God – yet 99% of people pray. Which means that a full 80% of atheists pray! So even if you don't believe in God, this book will provide some tips to your prayer life.

Jesus was once asked by his disciples how to pray. He answered by teaching them the Lord's Prayer also known as The Our Father.

'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.'

Now there are a ton of ways to think about the Lord's Prayer. But in it Jesus gives us the three most critical ingredients for the fuel that our prayer life needs. Your prayer life needs three things, says Jesus, to be catalyzed and moved to optimal performance. Each chapter of this eBook will look at one of these critical ingredients.

Fuel Ingredient One: Adore – Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Fuel Ingredient Two: Align – Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Fuel Ingredient Three: Ask – Give us ... Forgive us ... Lead us ... Deliver us.

CHAPTER ONE - ADORE

“Our Father, hallowed be your name”

Let's begin by asking what 'hallowed' means. It's a strange word. No one uses it in modern culture. And yet most of the new translations of the Bible still use it. That's because there is no perfect equivalent. The closest meaning to 'hallowed' would be 'adored, praised, prized, cherished, delighted in, treasured, find deepest joy in.' And when we speak about God's name we mean, 'Everything about you.' So to say 'Hallowed be your name' means 'I adore, praise, prize, cherish, delight in, treasure and find my deepest joy in everything about you!' To hallow God means to see him as supreme, ultimate and unparalleled in beauty, power and worth.

WHEN YOU PRAY, ADORE GOD AND GOD ALONE

We all hallow something whether we realize it or not. Let me briefly read the words that precede the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 to illustrate this:

Matthew 6: '5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ... 9 "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...'"

Who are the hypocrites Jesus refers to? They are people who would only pray in public, but – when no one was looking – didn't pray. They appeared to be praying to God, but they weren't hallowing God. What were they hallowing? They were hallowing 'human acclaim'. What they delighted in and adored more than anything was people saying, 'Wow, you sure are somebody.' And praying an eloquent prayer in public could have that effect. Nowadays if we were to walk into Cavendish and start praying aloud people would probably say, 'Wow, you sure are nuts.' But back then in that religious world it was pretty impressive. The point is that what they hallowed was people's praise of them. They hallowed recognition and acclaim. That was their reward.

You need to know something about yourself: you are a great hollower, adorer. Everyone is a great worshipper. Here's the bottom line when it comes to hallowing: You are going to spend your life declaring the worth of something. And at the heart of it, that is what worship is: Worship is our response to what we value the most. We may value a person the most. We value an object the most. We may value an experience the most. It might be a relationship. It might be dream. It might be friends. It could be status. It might be stuff. It might be a sports team or a particular athlete. Or it could be certain kinds

of pleasure. Whatever you name it, it is the person or thing that is of greatest worth to you. Whatever we hold as greatest worth - we worship!

There has never been a shortage of worship. If you look throughout history you can see trillions of little idols. Every culture, every corner of the earth, every age has had its gods. Just circle the globe and watch for worship. Study the great civilizations and explore their temples. It is everywhere. We cannot help but worship something. But the compelling question for me is "why?" Why do we crave something to worship? Why are we so completely drawn from idol to idol, desperately needing something to exalt, something to adore? Ever since we came out of the womb and entered this world we have been wired to praise something. And that's why, from the youngest age, we begin to worship.

We were born with a craving and gravitational pull toward worship. The question is not whether we will worship. We cannot not worship! The question is who or what will we worship? Will we worship the creation? Or will we worship the Creator - Father God? Ask yourself - what is it that you worship? What do you value the most? Is it the creation or the Creator?

There are addictions that we return to on a daily basis: a bottle, pills, pornography, using the credit card, exercise, looking for a relationship, kids, the best school, the best job, the list goes on. We would never call them gods; but we return to them everyday. So no matter what we say, there is no denying they take up valuable space in our everyday lives. And tragically we can value these substances more than the people we care about the most.

Ask yourself: what is it that you worship? What do you value the most? If we were to follow the trail of your life, your affection, your time, your money, your energy, and your allegiance what would be at the end of that trail? And once you figure out what you worship there is a natural question that follows. Is what you are declaring to be of greatest value really worth worshipping after all? Is it worthy of your life's devotion? Is it worthy of your time, your energy, your affection, and your allegiance? If it is not God, then the answer is definitely not! When we live for good things rather than God, centering our lives on these things rather than God it tears our lives apart.

Tim Keller has this to say on the subject:

- If you hallow your spouse or partner, you will be emotionally dependent, jealous, and controlling. The other person's problems will be overwhelming to you.
- If you hallow your family and children, you will try to live your life through your children until they resent you or have no self of their own. At worst, you may abuse them when they displease you.
- If you hallow your work and career, you will be a driven workaholic and a boring,

shallow person. At worst you will lose family and friends and, if your career goes poorly, develop deep depression.

- If you hallow money and possessions, you'll be eaten up by worry or jealousy about money. You'll be willing to do unethical things to maintain your lifestyle, which will eventually blow up your life.
- If you hallow pleasure, gratification, and comfort, you will find yourself getting addicted to something. You will become chained to the "escape strategies" by which you avoid the hardness of life.
- If you hallow relationships and approval, you will be constantly overly hurt by criticism and thus always losing friends. You will fear confronting others and therefore will be a useless friend.
- If you hallow a "noble cause," you will divide the world into "good" and "bad" and demonize your opponents. Ironically, you will be controlled by your enemies. Without them, you have no purpose.
- If you hallow morality, you will, if you are living up to your moral standards, be proud, self-righteous, and cruel. If you don't live up to your moral standards, your guilt will be utterly devastating.

In short these things – good as they are – cannot truly fill and fulfill you. They will all ultimately fail you. And when you fail them, they will not forgive you. Wonderful as they can be, they are not worthy of your worship.

How about you? Are you adoring God? Or are you adoring something else? There are two questions that reveal the answer...

1. What takes up your thought life when you are in alone – 'in secret'? Where do your thoughts flow? Acclaim, hobbies, success, love? What do you do with your secrecy? Whatever you think about most is what you treasure most. What you do in secret tells you what you truly treasure. When you are alone, there is nothing to do, what do you think about? If you adore God and God alone, you will find your thoughts turning to him again and again. He will take up the lion's share of your secret thoughts.
2. What heats up your prayer life? We have already seen in the case of the hypocrites whom Jesus spoke of, that it is possible to pray to God while we really are hallowing something else. For example, imagine a person seldom prays, but then suddenly their partner is threatening to leave them. Now they start to pray more than ever, begging God for help, nicely heated up prayer life. What does that say about them? They are praying to God but hallowing the love of this person. You see there is a kind of person who only prays when your ultimate treasure is at stake! If God is your true treasure you would pray all the time – but when we treasure other things – when those things are threatened then and only then you pray with some heat.

So what's the solution? The solution is to adore God and God alone. Jesus says, 'Let God himself, not human acclaim or anything else in creation, be your reward. And do this by adoring him. As you hallow and cherish him everything else will be demoted. You will realize that God alone is worthy of being hallowed. He alone is truly strong enough to not fail you. He alone is truly substantial enough to fill and fulfill you. He alone is truly gracious enough to forgive you when you fail him.' God wired us to hallow and worship him, and so until God is the one whom you are giving a lifetime of praise and adoration to then you will always be on a search for something more. But once you discover how great and good God really is, you will abandon everything else to worship Him. It's as you learn to adore God in the secret place of your heart that all the other things fall out of the hallowed place.

WHEN YOU PRAY, ADORE GOD'S GOODNESS AND GREATNESS

In his book *Soul Searching*, Christian Smith summarizes perceptions about God that are prevalent in the church nowadays. His research shows that many churchgoers think of God in terms of "moral, therapeutic deism". 'Moral' implies that God wants us to be nice. He rewards the good and withholds from the naughty. 'Therapeutic' means that God just wants us to be happy. 'Deism' means that God is distant and not involved in our daily lives. God may get involved occasionally, but on the whole, God functions like an idea not a personal being actively present in our world.

We could also call this "the Santa Claus god". Can you see what has happened? Without realizing it, our culture has quietly molded and shaped our view of God. But we can't grow in our relationship with God when we insist on relating to God as we think he should be. That's why our surrender to God-as-he-is, as revealed in the Bible, is so important. Otherwise, we will have a god of our own imaginations—and, embarrassingly, our god is an obese, jolly toymaker who works one day a year. Jesus defined God – 'Our Father in heaven.' Jesus teaches us that the secret to a fully fueled prayer life is that we remind ourselves who it is we are talking to! We should make sure the God we are praying to, is the God who is really there not the god of our culture or our imagination. We don't get to create God. No we're talking to the One who got to create us. We don't get to invent God. We get to discover him. So who is he? Jesus tells us that he is good. And he is great.

Theologians who have studied that 1000s of verses in the Bible that describe God tell us that, roughly speaking, these qualities of God can be divided into two categories: 1) Qualities that describe God's goodness 2) Qualities that describe God's greatness. It's fascinating then that in those words 'Our Father in heaven' Jesus chooses two phrases that summarize both categories.

'OUR FATHER'

This reminds us that God is good. The Bible tells us that he is good in many ways. Let me mention just 6 of these qualities:

1. He is good because he is a Father. If you want to judge how well we understand the Christian faith, ask yourself how much you make of the thought of being God's child, and having God as your Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls your worship and prayers and your whole outlook on life, it means you do not understand God very well. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. 'Father' is the Christian name for God.
2. He is good because he is holy. This means that God is absolutely and uniquely excellent above all creation and without sin. "And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'" God is good because God is holy!
3. He is good because he is judicial. This means that God promises to deal with, punish and ultimately eliminate, all wickedness and evil in his world. "It is destined for man to die once and after that face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). I know this point unnerves us – because it means that none of us can get away with anything. But it should also comfort us because if he was a God who planned on letting the wicked get away with their atrocities that would be terrible. God is good because he is judicial.
4. He is good because he is love. This means that God freely and eternally gives of himself. The ultimate historical demonstration of God's love is seen in the cross of Christ where he takes the punishment that we deserve. "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to take the punishment our sins deserve" (1 John 4:8-10) God is good because God is love – and this love is spelt C-R-O-S-S.
5. He is good because he is wise. This means God always knows and chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals. Wisdom is a moral as well as an intellectual quality. "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might" (Dan. 2:20). God's wisdom is not always clear to us, but it is great, deep, valuable, and should be highly desired and sought, and we should not doubt its reality even in circumstances that upset us. God is good because God is wise.
6. He is good because he is unchanging. God is unchanging in his being, purposes, and promises. "For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6). God can always be trusted because he always keeps his word,

and is never capricious or moody. God is good because God is unchanging.

7. Imagine God wasn't Father, holy, judicial, love, wise, unchanging. It would be impossible to adore him!

'IN HEAVEN.'

Jesus did not just say we should pray to Our Father but that we should pray to our Father in heaven. That phrase in heaven reminds us that God is great. The Bible tells us several ways that God is great. Here are just 6 of these qualities:

1. He is great because he is sovereign. This means God has absolute rule over creation as King and total control and determination over all that happens. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'" (Dan. 4:34–35). God is great because he is sovereign.
2. He is great because he is omniscient. This means God fully knows himself and all things actual and possible—past, present, and future. "Whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything" (1 John 3:20). God is great because he is omniscient.
3. He is great because he is omnipotent. God is able to do what he wants. "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose'" (Isa. 46:9–10). God is great because he is omnipotent.
4. He is great because he is omnipresent. God does not have spatial dimensions and is present everywhere with his whole being, though he acts differently in different situations. "'Am I a God at hand,' declares the Lord, 'and not a God far away? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?' declares the Lord. 'Do I not fill heaven and earth?'" (Jer. 23:23–24) God can be sought anywhere regardless of place. Believers should never feel lonely, and the wicked should never feel safe. God is great because he is omnipresent.
5. He is great because he is self-sufficient. "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:24–25). God does not need us or the rest of creation for anything, rather it is us who need him. God is great because he is self-sufficient.
6. He is great because he is eternal. God has no beginning or end and is in no way bound by time, although he sees events and acts in his world in time, which is in fact one dimension of the created order. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting

you are God” (Ps. 90:2). That’s why we can know peace, rest, and comfort in the busyness of life and in spite of impending death, for God keeps us in safety and joy forever.

Imagine God wasn’t sovereign, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, self-sufficient and eternal. It would be hard to praise and worship him. I for one am delighted that the God who is is such a great God! Just thinking about his greatness makes me want to adore and praise him.

God is BOTH great and good. If he was just good but not great, we could love him but not put our lives in his care. If he was great but not good, we would fear him but not love him. But he is both great and good. And when we get that our hearts melt, our knees go weak, and our voices raise ... ‘OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN.’

When you see God like this – as he really is – both good and great – and your heart is opened up to him in faith, love, awe – then he becomes your great reward, the One who alone lives in the secret place of your heart, the Hallowed Place. You see how spending time alone with him, thinking about him, talking to him, hallowing him, singing to him comes as naturally as breathing.

We all already hallow something, but chances are that we’re hallowing something on earth not the One in heaven. That being the case, no wonder our lives are tearing apart. We need to demote the false god! But the only way to demote the false god is to promote the True God – the God is who at the same time is both good – ‘Our Father’ – and great – ‘in heaven’. When those words ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name’ sink their way into our prayer life, we will have the high-octane catalyst we need to live right and serve God excellently every day.

CHAPTER 2: ALIGN

“Your Kingdom come, your will be done”

In this chapter we’re looking at that double-barrel phrase: ‘Your kingdom come, your will be done.’

I assume most of you learnt that prayer somewhere and said that prayer a lot of times – ‘thy kingdom come, thy will be done’ just rolled off your lips! But did you mean them? How often we say stuff we don’t mean. Maybe when you were little, you got mad at somebody and said “I hate you”. You said it, but you didn’t mean it. Or maybe when you were little your mom or dad said, “This is gonna hurt me more than it does you.” They said it, but they didn’t really mean it. Or ladies, how about if your friend gets a new haircut and it’s not a particularly good hair cut, and you say “Oh, I like it, it’s cute”. You say that, but you don’t mean it. Or my favorite of all, how about when somebody is breaking up with somebody and they say “It’s not you, it’s me.” Just one time I wish somebody would say “It’s not me, it’s you.” They say “it’s not you, it’s me”, but they don’t mean it.

Everybody says stuff they don’t mean, and these words that so easily slide off our lips, we don’t really mean: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is heaven.” We have all prayed it, but do we really mean it? Because here’s what it means. “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done” means “God, I want to happen in my life what you want to happen in my life. I want your will to happen in my life just like my life was a place where exactly what you wanted to happen, happens.” I don’t know about you, but most of my prayers are about asking God to do what I want Him to do. My prayers are usually not “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” but rather my prayers are “My kingdom come, my will be done on earth then it will be heaven.” I usually just want God to do what I want God to do, like if He would just do that, everything would be fine for me.

Is that just me? I don’t think it’s just me. And don’t get me wrong: its ok to pray for what you want – we’ll look at that next week. But notice that Our Father doesn’t say “my kingdom come, my will be done.” It says “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”

So what do we learn about prayer from these words? We learn that at the heart of prayer, we should be aligning ourselves to God! Let me say that again. We learn that at the heart of prayer, we should be aligning ourselves to God!

WHEN YOU PRAY, SEE BROKENNESS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GOD'S KINGDOM TO INVADE

In these words of Jesus are some pretty heavy truths. One thing this part of this prayer reminds us is that God's will is not always done.

Maybe you're going through something right now: something in your health, something in your marriage, something in your family, something at work, and it is so not what God wants to be happening. Maybe you live every day with pain, frustration, and heartache because what is happening in your life is not what God's will looks like. I just want to take this moment right now and remind you: so much of what you're going through is not God's will.

There are those who will tell you that everything that happens in your life is God's will, but don't listen to them. It's just not true. Yes, these things don't catch God off guard. And yes, God does work in the midst of all things, He is at work in your pain and suffering. And yes, ultimately nothing happens unless God allows them to happen. But when God gave us the freedom to choose he gave us the power to do a lot of damage to ourselves, to each other, to the planet – and this damage is not at all what he wanted for us. So much of the pain and suffering that happens in our world is because God's will was not done. The vast majority of human suffering is because somebody somewhere sometime did not do what God wanted them to do, or did do what He did not want done.

Yet all this brokenness, which results from God's will not being done, doubles up as an opportunity for God's kingdom to invade. Where there is darkness, God's kingdom brings light. Where there is confusion, God's kingdom brings clarity. Where there is agony, God's kingdom brings comfort. Where there is weakness, God's kingdom brings strength. Where there is death, God's kingdom brings life. Where there is rebellion, God's kingdom brings rescue. Where there is selfishness, God's kingdom brings servant-heartedness. Where there is indifference, God's kingdom brings compassion. In short every need and pain is an opportunity for God's kingdom to break in.

WHEN YOU PRAY INVITE GOD'S WILL TO BE DONE IN YOUR LIFE

God's will is not always done. Which brings us to something that is absolutely crucial about this prayer: This prayer is not so much a prayer asking God to do something as it is a prayer asking that we would do something. This prayer isn't so much about what we want God to do as it is us saying what we want God to help us do. It is ALIGNING our will and choices to God's will. It is recommitting ourselves to do God's will in every area of our lives, in every situation we find ourselves in.

Think about it this way: Suppose you got in a car wreck over here on The M3 and broke your arm and help hasn't arrived yet. And I come driving by, see you there stuck in your wreck and pray, "God, may your will to be done in this situation" as I drove on. If I did that, you know what God would be saying: "Funny, I was just thinking the same thing when I sent you."

See, this part of the prayer is reminding us of an incredibly remarkable reality: God's will being done on earth is deeply connected to the choices we make. Me and my choices. You and your choices. God's will is done when I align my choices to God's will. So when I say "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done", if I mean it, I am asking that I will have the wisdom, courage, faith, and obedience to do what God wants me to do – a life fully aligned to God's kingdom.

And if we pray that and mean that, it's a total game changer. Work with me. If you're single and really wanting to be able to change your Facebook status to "in a relationship", my guess is you've prayed about that and asked God to make your romantic life what you want it to be. And that's ok. It is. But let me ask you, have you ever prayed "In my love life, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done"? And meant it? Have you? What would be different if you prayed that and meant it? Or if you're married: odds are you've prayed about your marriage. You've prayed that God would fix your husband. That God would change your wife. You've prayed for God to help your marriage be what you want it to be. And that's ok. It is. But let me ask you. What if you prayed "In my marriage, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done"? God let me be a man who loves my wife the way you want me to love her. God let me be a woman who loves my husband the way you want me to love my husband. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

I know a lot of us are struggling financially these days, and we've prayed and asked God to make things like we want them to be. And that's ok. But have you ever prayed "In my finances, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done", and meant it? How about in your job or in your education if you're in school? "In my job, my career, thy kingdom come, thy will be done". In my undergraduate degree, in my school, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."?

WHEN YOU PRAY INVITE GOD'S KINGDOM TO BE DONE THROUGH YOUR LIFE

This isn't just about God's kingdom coming and God's will being done in our personal lives. This is about God's kingdom coming and God's will being done through us in the lives of others. Remember, there's this astounding reality that God's kingdom come and God's will being done is connected to us doing what He wants us to do. Each time we do what God wants us to do in our world and the lives of those around us, God's kingdom comes a little bit more. Erwin McManus says it well in his book *Wide Awake*: "This planet is made better or worse by the people we choose to become. If you live a

diminished life, it's not only you who loses, but the world loses, and humanity loses. Though you may not recognize it, there are the seeds of greatness within you. The world needs you at your best."

And for you and me to discover the seeds of the kingdom that God has put within us and for you and me to touch the world like we were meant to, we need to pray "thy kingdom come, thy will be done" and mean it.

One great Christian writer, NT Wright, puts it this way: "We are praying for the redemption of the world; for the radical defeat and uprooting of evil; and for heaven and earth to be married at last, for God to be all and in all. And if we pray this way, we must be prepared to live this way."

So what does God want to do through you?

He wants to use you to reach rebels.

What do we mean by rebel here? We refer to those who have not recognized Christ as the king he is. Once God rescues us from being rebellious and brings us into his kingdom of grace through faith in his Son, he sends us out to help others who are not yet in his kingdom find their way into it. For those of us who are already in the kingdom, who are the people you know and love that are – as we speak – far from God, outside his kingdom? Are you praying for them – asking God to draw them in through the circumstances of their lives? Are you stepping out as Christ's representative, sharing your faith with them in unforced ways as the opportunity arises, inviting them to come along on Sundays?

He wants to use you to build up believers.

Once we are a Christ-follower we start to pray to Our Father. Who do we share the Father with that we use the word 'Our'? Our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Scriptures tell us that we have a responsibility to each other – to build relationships with some fellow-Christ-followers, and then to support, encourage and, if need be, challenge each other in the direction of a life fully aligned to God's kingdom. He wants to use you to heal the hurting. God's kingdom is a kingdom of love and wholeness. Yet we live in a world marked by such indifferent and brokenness. But God plans that our lives become envoys of his kingdom – bringing a measure of love and healing to a broken world.

He wants to use you to influence your industry.

Whatever sector or industry you find yourself in in the workplace, God plans for you to be salt and light – bringing out certain God-colours and God-flavours in that environment. He is very interested in your work. He does not just commission believers to lead and serve in the church, but to lead and serve in society.

“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done” is not a prayer of escape from the created order of things. It’s a prayer for the redemption of it.

This prayer is saying: “I will not passively sit by and hope you do your thing, God. Your thing is my thing. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.”

So aligning ourselves to God in prayer is:

1. When we pray see brokenness as an opportunity for God’s kingdom to invade.
2. When we pray invite God’s kingdom to be done IN our life.
3. When we pray invite God’s kingdom to be done THROUGH our life - through reaching rebels, building believers, healing the hurting and influencing our industry.

When we pray this prayer and mean it, things will start to change. We will change, our relationships will change, and the world around us will change through us. God’s Spirit-empowered obedience will flow from us praying this prayer and meaning it. This is a prayer for Lordship, about God being the king, about Jesus being Lord of our lives, where the cry of our hearts is “thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” And Lordship, friends, is not a one time, I-gave-my-life-to-Christ one time decision thing. Lordship starts there, but it never ends there. Lordship is an everyday thing. It’s everyday going through our day with this prayer on our lips and in our hearts “thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” And meaning it. In every area of our lives...

- Physically, with our bodies and how we treat our bodies and how we use our bodies: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.”
- Financially, with the rands that come into our hands: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.”
- Relationally, with our friends and family and husbands and wives, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.” If we prayed this prayer and really meant it, what might happen at home? This could change everything.
- What if we prayed for God’s kingdom to come in our neighborhoods? And in our work place? And in our schools? That His peace, His love, His joy, His will would flow through us where we live and work? And what about “thy kingdom come, thy will be done” in our towns, our cities, our suburbs as it is in heaven? What if we prayed that and meant it? How about in our country?

Through these kinds of prayers, God invites us to join him in what he is doing in the world through his Spirit. The belief in God’s kingdom is a belief that God is at work in this world. God sees. God acts. God speaks. God touches. God calls. God heals. God awakens. God breathes. And he does all of this through those of us who have learnt to pray, ‘Thy kingdom come, they will be done.’ But notice that he is the driving force. Whatever we do is merely a participation in a movement he has already started!

CHAPTER 3: ASK

Give us ... Forgive us ... Lead us ... Deliver us

Our question is: how potent is your praying? There is great difference between the impotent, lifeless praying that we so often do, and the high-octane, high-combustion, super-catalytic prayers Jesus would have us praying.

THE ORDER OF PRAYER

The first and arguably the most important thing to learn about asking prayer is found in the order of the Lord's Prayer. First we adore – 'Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name' and align – 'thy kingdom come, thy will be done'. Then – and only then, after adoring and aligning – do we ask – 'give us'. First adore and align, then ask. But why can't we just go straight to asking?

As you adore him, you get a stronger sense of who it is you are praying to. The greater and better we perceive God to be, the more confidence we pray with! Now our prayers are not panicky and anxious, they are calm and confident. Since God – as one verse says – 'owns the mountain tops and the sheep on a thousand hills' – we can always ask with the knowledge that nothing is impossible for him, and that he is for us not against us!

Also, first we align then we ask. First we pray 'your kingdom come, your will be done' before we pray 'give us'. What happens we ask God to give before we hone in on his kingdom coming? We tend to get focused in on our own little needs and problems. We tend to use prayer as an intercom as we sit downstairs by the pool and ask our mom via the intercom to bring down some drinks. Prayer, in this case, is all about making my life a little bit better. But as we take a little time to remind ourselves what God is up to – he is setting people free, driving back the darkness, advancing light, reclaiming a rebellious world, healing a hurting world, restoring a broken world – and he is using us to do it, then we pray very differently. Now prayer is more like a walky-talky that we use as we are in the trenches of war through which we contact the control room, asking for back-up troops! By aligning first we realize the situation is far more critical than we first realized, and that our lives are not on a kingdom mission, and that prayer is our way of drawing in all the reinforcements we can get from God to succeed in our God-ordained mission! Now our prayers are not small and self-absorbed, they are bigger and kingdom-focused!

In summary, first adore then ask. Why? Because it will determine how you ask – we are gripped with a sense of his goodness and greatness. And first align then ask. Why?

Because it will determine what you ask – we are gripped with a sense of his kingdom and will.

4 THINGS TO ASK FOR

There are 4 things Jesus tells us to ask God for. Of course there are other things over and above these 4 things, but they are a good place to start, says Jesus.

'Give us this day our daily bread.'

God provides as we ask him to. "The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing" (Psalm 34:10).

"Bread," says Martin Luther, "refers to everything necessary for the preservation of life, like good food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, wife, children, good government and peace." Although our Father is not stingy (Matthew 15:37 reminds us that he sometimes enjoys giving us baskets full of bread), we are not to ask God to satisfy our greed but our needs.

The word "daily" means "for the coming day". If prayed at night, it means for the next day. If prayed in the morning, it means for this day.

'Forgive us our trespasses'

When a person first comes to Christ, and asks for mercy, he justifies them. That's what he speaks about elsewhere (e.g. Luke 18:14). This means that God accepts you on the basis of Christ's work on the cross for you. You stand fully accepted by God with no fear of being banished from God eternally. We're only justified once and forever. Justification is a kind of eternal, positional forgiveness. Eternal – it lasts forever. Position – it's true of you even if you can't feel it.

But when Jesus says we should regularly ask for forgiveness he is referring to something over and above our being justified. He speaks about something we can experience daily. He is speaking about daily, experiential forgiveness. Daily – it is something for today. Experiential – you can feel it. You see, when we sin we feel guilty, and this guilt disrupts our relationship with God. Jesus is instructing us to simply own up to our sin, our letting God down, and asking him to cleanse us from the guilt of it, so that we can enjoy intimacy with him again. For the disciple of Jesus, intimacy with the Father is as important to the soul, as food is important for the body. We must regularly "come clean" before God. We are to freshly appeal to the wonderful, undeserved mercy and grace of our Father toward us. There is nothing like that feeling of being cleaned by the washing mercy of God.

'Lead us not into temptation'

'Lead us' reminds us that God is our leader, and he is available to provide guidance every step of the way. In particular he wants to guide us away from things that will damage our relationship with him.

The word "temptation" refers to both temptations and testing. We will be tempted – enticed to sin – and we will be tested – experiencing great pressure. God tests us. Satan tempts us. There is no way around this. Enticements to sin and experiences of great pressure are part and parcel of life on this planet.

What does it mean to pray, "Lead us not into temptation and testing"? The key word in understanding it is the word 'into'. It means, "When I am tempted or tested, let me not be so overwhelmed that I fall 'into' it." The word 'into' is the main point. We will be tempted and tested, but with God's help, we can stop ourselves from falling "into" sin. By God's grace, we will remain standing strong.

'Deliver us from the evil'

This phrase literally means 'deliver us from the Evil One'. Now I know that the idea of a devil is unfashionable nowadays, but the Scriptures are emphatically clear – there is a highly powerful, highly intelligent spirit who leads a network of millions of spirits who conspire to draw people away from God and God's purpose for their lives. In prayer we recognize that we in ourselves are defence-less in the face of Satan's schemes, but with God's help we can withstand his attacks.

When we pray for deliverance, what are we praying? We are praying at least three different things. We are praying that God will spare us from trials. We are praying that God will put a sudden end to some trials we are facing. And we are praying that God will help us to faithfully persevere through some trials. We trust God, our loving Father, to decide which trials to help us avoid, which trials to deliver us from, and which trials to help us withstand.

Jesus has taught us in the second half of the Lord's Prayer that we should regularly – even daily – ASK for 1) provision – 'guide us' 2) forgiveness – 'forgive us' 3) guidance – 'lead us' and 4) protection – 'deliver us'. Now if we actually do what Jesus is telling us, I wonder how many requests we would be sending up a day? The point is that we should do a LOT of asking God!

4 COMMON MENTAL BARRIERS TO ASKING PRAYER

There are several prayer barriers – all barriers in our minds – that cause us to do so little asking.

The Automatic Blessing Barrier

'Why bother praying if God was going to help me anyway?'

Sometimes we tend to think that if we are God's child we don't need to ask God for anything. We think to ourselves, 'God knows what we need.' 'He has what I need.' 'He cares about me.' 'So I can just relax – he will look after me. Blessing will come to be automatically.' And there is truth here, of course. God does know what you need. And he has what you need. And he cares about you. All true!

But God still likes to be asked. He has all these blessings lined up for you. But he likes to give them one at a time as we ask for them. If that weren't true, why would he tell us again and again to ask.

'Why do we need to pray to a God who already wants to give us what we need?' The answer is simple but profound. He is a Father – and like all fathers, he likes to be asked. He is honoured by the request. God sometimes does bless automatically, but he likes to bless especially when we ask. He is a typical dad in this way.

The Independence Barrier

'Why bother praying when I got this one covered?'

Most people suggest that the reason they don't pray is that they are not disciplined enough, but in reality they don't pray because they aren't dependent enough. We don't pray because – deep down inside – don't feel we need God's help. We have got this one covered. We have the reserves in the bank, dates in the diary, plans on a list, people on our team, prediction charts of sunny skies.

Why does Jesus teach us to pray for bread everyday? It's because he expects us to express our dependency on him by praying for even our most basic needs. And of course Jesus knows that most people already have some bread lined up for the day – yet he teaches us to ask for it anyway. Why is this? It is because he wants to remind us that even the food that we have paid for, with the money we have earned, with the skills we have developed, and the energy we have expended, is food that comes from him. After all, the food, the money, the skills, the energy, and the opportunities all ultimately come from him.

Have you noticed the overall flow of the Lord's Prayer? We start with declarations of how loving, powerful and holy God is. And we end with confessions of how unloving,

weak and sinful we can be. The sooner we realize how real the devil is, how easily corrupted we are, how great the kingdom mission is, how strong the resistance is, how weak we are, how much is totally beyond our control – the sooner we will humble ourselves and get more dependent on God.

It seems like God's parenting of us is exactly opposite to the way earthly parents parent their kids. Earthly parents start off with kids who are highly dependent, then progresses us to a place of independence. But our Heavenly Father starts off with kids who are highly independent and then progresses us to the place of dependence on him. He helps you break through the Independence Barrier.

The Productivity Barrier

'Why bother praying when I have so many more productive things to do?'

It feels sometimes that we just don't have enough hours in the day, days in the week, weeks in the year to get it done. And prayer just seems like a luxury. And an unproductive one at that – in the category of having a massage, or going for a walk. Now there are two ways to counter this. If we only ever do productive things we will die prematurely of a heart-attack. We need time to recover, to enjoy relationships, to just smell the roses. But the better way to counter it is this: prayer is profoundly productive. If we give yourself to daily prayer, at the end of the year and at the end of our life we will have a lot more things of substance to point to than if we did not.

Centuries ago a British missionary called J Frasier went as the first missionary to the Lisu tribe in the mountains of Western China. There were two tribes separated by a great distance – the Northern and the Southern Tribe. He asked God which he should go to. God told him 'Locate yourself in the Northern Tribe. Every morning spend several hours praying for the Southern Tribe then for the rest of the day work amongst the Northern Tribe.' He did this faithfully every day for decades – pray for the South in the morning, work amongst the North in the afternoon. For several years he never left the Northern Tribe. In that time he could point to a church with a 100 Northern Lisu's that were the fruit of his labour. Then he went for the first time to an outpost village to get supplies. There he met his first Southern Lisu. Over a period of several weeks he introduced this man to Jesus and taught him all he knew. As Frasier went back North he urged the Southern Lisu to share this message with his fellow Southern Lisus. Years later a delegation from the South arrived in the North looking for Frasier. When they found him, they said, 'There are 1000s of Southern Lisus following Jesus. Please come and help us.' Tears of joy welled up in Frasier's eyes as he realized that his impact through prayer exceeded his impact through work!

You want to be truly productive, building something enduring with your life – then daily ask Jesus to invade the impossible through his Spirit! Results won't likely come instantly, but they will come eventually!

The Disappointment Barrier

'Why bother praying when our prayers fall on deaf ears?'

Some of us have prayed for something in the past, and we didn't get what we asked for. Now we wonder if God is even really there. We wonder if God really is good or really is great. And if he is, we wonder if God is good to us, and great for us.

Anyone here have a story to tell of the disappointment of unanswered prayer? Lots of us. All of us. But we're not alone. The most famous unanswered prayer is the one Jesus endured. He prayed on the night before he was crucified, 'Father, take this cup of suffering from me.' And we know that God never answered that prayer. Why? Because God had a higher purpose in not answering his prayer – the salvation of the world. So if Jesus, the one we are to bank our lives upon, didn't have all his prayers answered, we can be sure that not all our prayers will be answered either. For a simple reason – God often has a higher plan for our lives than we do! That's why we call him God, right?

But there is another reason God sometimes declines our prayer. We ask him for what will be hurtful to us, though we can't see it from where we are. It's like having your 5 year old asking you for his own car. To say yes to him would be to kill your own kid. So what do you do – you try meet the need underneath his request which is mobility and you buy him a bike. He might sulk and be disappointed with me but I love him too much to give him what he wants. You give him what he needs.

So what is Jesus saying? He is saying ask, ask, ask. Of course, let adoring and aligning be the background hum behind your asking. But don't stop at adoring and aligning – get onto ask, ask, ask!

Keep a prayer journal and write prayer lists by all means – that way you can tick off items when the answer comes and rejoice in God's goodness.

4 QUICK TIPS FOR YOUR PRAYER LIFE

Tip One: Pray some time somewhere.

Find a place and a time in your day where you do nothing but pray. If you are new to this set your phone timer for 5 minutes and pray for those 5 minutes non-stop. If you are stumped about what to pray for, go through the Lord's Prayer as a kind of outline – 1) Adore 2) Align 3) Ask.

Tip Two: Pray all the time everywhere.

When you do pray sometime somewhere, don't say Amen at the end. Keep the conversation open. Just keep talking to God throughout the day. Learn how to operate on two levels simultaneously – going through the run of mill stuff that makes up your day while keeping your heart in God's presence at the same time.

Tip Three: Pray with others too.

Seek out some people to pray with. After all Jesus opens this prayer with Our Father not My Father. Don't wait for small group to pray - when you are with someone else who prays and you're talking about some need or challenge, say, 'Do you mind if we just take a minute right now to pray about that?' That might unnerve some of you, but I dare you. It will make your faith come alive!

Tip Four: Use your mouth, ears and hands when you pray.

Let me explain. Prayer is one part talking to God. That's using your mouth. Prayer is one part listening to God - his promptings and whispers. That's using your ears. And prayer is one part neither talking nor listening to God but simply enjoying his presence, bringing him into what you are busy doing - that's using your hands, as you simply hold onto him, depending on him, staying close to him.

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CONCLUSION

9 This, then, is how you should pray:

Jesus gives his disciples what has been called “the Lord’s prayer”. It is not the prayer he himself prayed. It is the prayer we are to pray. All disciples of Jesus should memorize it, which is easy to do. There are two ways we can use this prayer:

1. We can pray it word for word, giving thought to the words and not just repeating it mindlessly and mechanically
2. We can use it as a pattern that reminds us of some themes to keep returning to in our prayer life, which is what this verse suggests with the line, this is “how (not ‘what’) you should pray”.

First theme: remind yourself who it is you’re praying to.

Second theme: Pray for the spread of God’s fame and reign.

Third theme: Pray for practical provision.

Fourth theme: Pray for the restoring of relationships.

Fifth theme: Pray for deliverance from temptation and trials.

Through these kinds of prayers, God invites us to join him in what he is doing in the world through his Spirit. The belief in God’s kingdom is a belief that God is at work in this world. God sees. God acts. God speaks. God touches. God calls. God heals. God awakens. God breathes. And he does all of this through those of us who have learnt to pray, ‘Thy kingdom come, they will be done.’ But notice that he is the driving force. Whatever we do is merely a participation in a movement he has already started! This eBook aims to help us ignite our prayer lives into rejuvenated and life-giving communication between us and our Creator, as commanded and taught by Jesus, who set the best example of a active and dynamic prayer-life. Through the teaching of Jesus, we are invited to have a prayer life that is just as life-giving and vibrant.