



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Our Father

Your will be
done

MIDWEEK SCRIPT

And do not
lead us into
temptation

2016

April

Session 1 – Our Father

Welcome!

During the month of April, through our small group discussions and the Sunday divine services, we will be delving into the Lord's Prayer. While this prayer, given to the disciples by Jesus, may be familiar to us, it also runs the risk of becoming mundane and habitual. I believe that with a closer look at each phrase, we will be able to renew our understanding of what Jesus was teaching, and find new meaning in this prayer which is so fundamental to our Christian life.

Let's start at the beginning.

Our Father in heaven...

How many times have we said these words? How many times have you said the words, "Dear Heavenly Father...?" But what do these words really mean to us?

Just the word "**our**" tells us something about how Jesus wanted us to pray. We must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others. We are members of one Body and are all fellow children with the rest of the household of God.

Father. What does the fatherhood of God mean?

Jesus introduced a concept that was revolutionary at that time – that God wants to have an intimate relationship with believers – a relationship that is to be characterized by the intimacy that exists between a child and a loving father. The actual name of God was never spoken by the Jewish people, except the High Priest and only when he was in the Holy of Holies. God was almighty, holy and revered. He was perceived as being distant, but this changed when Jesus came to earth. In Second Corinthians (6:18) the Lord Almighty says, "*I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters...*"

Jesus spoke of the prayer that we have come to call "The Lord's Prayer" multiple times, as recorded in the Bible. In Luke (11:1-4) we read that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Why do you think the disciples asked that of Jesus? They were witnesses to the raising of the dead, the healing of the sick, the calming of seas, His teaching in parables...why prayer? Maybe they saw the link between Jesus' prayer and His power, between His prayer and His teaching, between His prayer and the essence of His being. Jesus constantly referred to His Father as the source of all that is good, as His guide in all decisions. One can easily conclude that the disciples recognized that prayer was an essential part of this incredible relationship.

The deep relationship that Jesus has with His Father is what He desires for us. In 1st John 3, we find the exclamation, *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!* The Psalmist, in chapter 139, speaks of a God who searches us, knows us, and is acquainted with all our ways. What does it mean to you that God, the Father, **knows** you, and that He wants you to know Him?

As our Father, God provides for us and cares for us. Let's consider this excerpt from Matthew 6, that we heard about in a recent service:

Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ...Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?'

or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ...For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

In the Lord's Prayer, only one line, *Give us this day, our daily bread*, speaks to material needs. Our Father knows what we need. He wants us to depend on what He provides and on His guidance. So, our prayers do not need to be a list of the necessities of life, rather they can be focused on our desire to know Him, to worship Him, to become more like Him, and to seek His kingdom.

Another facet of calling God our Father is that it should unify us as the Body of Christ. Ephesians 4:6 teaches us that there is *one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*. Think about the unifying power of the simple words, "Our Father" when spoken together by the congregation!

The last part of the Ephesians verse says the Father is in all of us. When Jesus was on the earth, He wanted people to discover who the Father was by seeing what He, Jesus, was doing. Jesus said to the people in the temple, *"I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me..."* (John 8:28). God the Father was revealed to the world through the actions of Jesus: *"He who has seen Me has seen the Father"* (John 14:9). When we call God our Father, we are making profound commitments. First, we are committing to grow in our understanding of the Father by continually studying the life of Jesus, who perfectly reflected the character of *His* Father on earth. Secondly, we are making a bold, utterly risky statement that our actions reflect the nature of Christ to the world around us. These are the commitments that belong to being a true Christian.

Our Father in heaven...

Consider a final point from the opening phrase of the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father," that is, God, is in heaven, the realm where He has established His throne. Psalm 115 says, *But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases*. In this phrase we are reminded of God's omnipotence, His glory, His majesty; He is not of *this* world. He is our Father, and therefore we can come to Him with boldness, but He is our Father *in heaven*, and therefore we must also approach Him with reverence (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

Session 2 - Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Welcome back! This week we are continuing our discussion of the Lord's Prayer by focusing on a key phrase from among the opening petitions: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Like anything that we repeat often, the true meaning of these words may easily be lost on us. This expression cannot simply be a reference to a concept. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" should be a statement of our resolve to subordinate our will to God's will. Additionally, there must be outward evidence of this resolve in how we live and in our willingness to struggle to accomplish it. If this is not the case, the other petitions expressed in the Lord's Prayer become superficial – then the entire prayer becomes a vain repetition, something that Jesus strongly warned against.

Jesus provided a relevant picture in Matthew 7:13-14 – *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."* Here He makes it clear that a choice must be made, the broad way or the narrow way.

This picture was a reference to the architecture of walled cities in Jesus' time. The main entry to a city had to accommodate every type of transportation used, along with whatever goods were being transported. However, at night, the main gates were closed in order to keep the city safe and secure. Night-time entry was only possible through much smaller gates, called the "eye of the needle." They were so small that only one person could pass through at a time and one had to bow down in order to enter.

It is not difficult to visualize the meaning of the broad way. On such a pathway, restrictions are not necessary. It has room for everyone's opinions, perspectives, and ideas. This could readily lead to the question, "Is God narrow and small? How is it that only those who subordinate their will to His can find the way to salvation?" All too readily we focus on, what we might perceive to be, restrictive aspects of this teaching about the broad and narrow ways. But please don't overlook the promise found herein – "narrow is the gate and difficult is the way **which leads to life.**" Jesus makes an invitation to 'life' – eternal life with Him and the Father. This is simply a statement of fact – the way that leads to eternal life is the narrow way.

Walking on the narrow way requires that we subordinate our will to God's will. Subordination is NOT mindless following, but rather, choosing to be obedient. The definition of subordinate is "inferior in nature, power or importance." So, subordinating our will to God's will means that we recognize that His perspective and His wisdom are always superior to ours. This subordination also implies that we adjust our living to make Jesus' life and teaching our model.

Let's consider some examples of when we might need to struggle to submit to God's will. These will be elaborated on in the study guide.

1. **Disagreement** - It is safe to say that, generally, where two or more people are in contact with one another, disagreements are very likely to arise. Can we imagine that there is room on the narrow way for disagreements? What solution did Christ provide?
2. **Selfishness** - We live in a time where the prevailing sentiment seems to be, "I must take care of myself first, even if that means that I step on someone else to do it, and ignore the effect of my actions on others." How does Jesus address this in the great commandment?
3. **Discrimination** - In Acts 10 we can read about Peter and Cornelius. Jesus' lesson to Peter on this occasion was a teaching about something that did not fit on the narrow way. What is our reaction when we realize that something in our own lives does not fit on the narrow way?
4. **Gossip** - The eighth commandment provides guidance of something that does not have a place on the narrow way – bearing false witness. Can it really be that this Old Testament teaching has New Testament implications?
5. **Convenience** - The narrow way is, by definition, a way that is not always comfortable. Does the Lord take joy in our not being comfortable in life?

When we reflect on how we can make the petition, "You will be done," a reality in our lives, with God's help we will be able to better recognize opportunities to leave our will on the side and make His will our own.

Session 3 - And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

This month we have been taking an in-depth look at the Lord's Prayer. In today's session we will be focusing on the sixth element of the prayer, "and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." No one is excluded from having to battle against temptations. Temptations are real and can have an eternal effect on our soul. That is why we

cannot speak this plea lightly, as a bland repetition, because we truly need God's help to resist the powers of temptation.

How many times have you heard the phrase "don't tempt me"? It gets used very loosely today as one or the other receives an offer for a cookie when they are on a diet. It is used when we've made a decision, like buying a car, and the salesman sneaks in one more offer before the final papers are signed to get us to purchase something bigger, better, and greater. We say "don't tempt me" in sort of a joking way. Have you ever faced a temptation that could have eternal consequences and approached it with the same, superficial sentiment? In the Lord's Prayer, we have a special opportunity to ask God for His help. We pray for help with our temptations because we know that God is more powerful than the devil, who is the author of temptation.

Jesus told us in John 8:44, the devil "was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." It is the desire of the devil to separate mankind from the presence of God.

The devil entices us to sin by appealing to the weaknesses of our human nature. He exploits our desires, pride, and ego, causing us to doubt, and lose our faith and trust in God. Through sin we are led away from fellowship with God. When temptation enters our life, we stand at the summit of a slippery slope where we are faced with a decision. If we allow it to overwhelm us, and doubt to overtake us, our human nature can overpower our love for God, and we begin to fall into sin. Let's consider some of the consequences. Our relationships are damaged. We lose credibility. Trust is lost. Sometimes our lives are flipped upside down. And the ultimate consequence of sin is death.

How do we battle temptation? By never taking our eyes off of Jesus! Jesus walked the earth just like you and me and was tempted by the full forces of the evil one. He resisted every temptation, lived a sinless life, and went to the cross and died for all of our sins so that we could be set free from their consequences. With the plea "do not lead us into temptation", believers ask God to help them resist sin with all their strength. With the plea "deliver us from the evil one," believers acknowledge that God is the Deliverer and that we can only overcome temptation through Him. We are encouraged by what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:13: "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." When temptations push you to the point where you feel like you will not be able to bear it, continue to trust in God – He will provide a way of escape.

Whether a temptation becomes proof of our faithfulness or a lure to evil depends on how we respond to it. How did Jesus respond to temptation? Let's take a quick look into Jesus' experience in the wilderness. In Matthew 4:1, the Gospel says, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." This verse tells us that both God and the devil were involved. God is not the tempter, but He allows us to be tempted. By overcoming, we prove to ourselves that, with God's help, we can do it.

Matthew tells us about three temptations that the devil offered Jesus. Each time, He responded to the offer with a verse from Scripture and resisted the temptation. We can all learn from Jesus' example. When temptation knocks on the door, be armed with the knowledge of the Scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' words in John 14:26 teach us that we can trust the Holy Spirit to help us in times of temptation. Jesus said, "but the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things I said to you." We resist temptation by clinging to Jesus, who has overcome the world. We resist temptation by uniting ourselves with God in prayer. Please ponder these verses from Apostle Paul, found in Ephesians 6:14-18:

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

When we are able to overcome temptation we show our allegiance to God and our desire to live a life that testifies to all around us that we are followers of Jesus Christ. Each time you pray the Lord's Prayer, evaluate the sincerity of the petition, "do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Temptation and Satan are real. They seek to steal our peace and joy, and future with the Lord. Jesus received help and strength from His Father to overcome evil. We also have the wonderful privilege to seek this Godly assistance.