



## Session 3: God-Space



**For Jesus, praying and talking with God was not a chore or duty.**

It was the joyful and loving conversation between Father and Son. We too can talk to God as our father. We are welcome in the presence of God as his special children.

### Previous session review

- Recap on your experience of the previous challenge. How did it go? Was it helpful?
- If you weren't able to try the challenge, explore the question: Where and how did you experience God last week?

## Read

*Read the passage several times through, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section. As you read, look out for shockers and blockers.*

**Shockers** – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

**Blockers** – something from the text that raises questions for you.

### Matthew 6.5-15

Prayer

Jesus continued:

When you pray, don't be like those show-offs who love to stand up and pray in the meeting places and on the street corners. They do this just to look good. I can assure you that they already have their reward.

When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private, and he will reward you.

When you pray, don't talk on and on as people do who don't know God. They think God likes to hear long prayers. Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask.

You should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, help us to honour your name.

Come and set up your kingdom, so that everyone on earth will obey you, as you are obeyed in heaven.

Give us our food for today. Forgive us for doing wrong, as we forgive others. Keep us from being tempted and protect us from evil. If you forgive others for the wrongs they do to you, your Father in heaven will forgive you. But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

### Setting the scene:

- This passage sits in the centre of the 'Sermon on the Mount'. Gathering his disciples, Jesus addresses the issues that wreak the most havoc on society – anger, adultery, divorce, retaliation, lust. He then turns his attention to prayer, advocating simplicity, correct motivation and the centrality of the heart's desire to be with God.
- Jesus is not saying we shouldn't pray in public – but that prayer should not be to impress others. Prayer should be between you and God.
- The Lord's Prayer is short and pithy – Jesus wants them to see they don't need to try and be wordy or sound religious. We can speak with God about the ordinary things of life – food, sin, temptation. But the prayer, from the start, recognises who God is and our standing before him. The last two verses remind us the condition of our hearts is most important.
- Jesus uses the Aramaic word 'Abba' – often the first word a child in the Middle East would learn. It is a term of great respect for a superior and of profound personal relationship.

## Reflect

*After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.*

*Begin your reflection time by each naming your shockers and blockers. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.*

### You might also like to explore these questions:

**Q1.** In what ways is prayer both easy and difficult, a delight and a struggle?

**Q2.** What does the Lord's Prayer teach us about prayer?

“The goal of prayer is to live all of my life and speak all of my words in the joyful awareness of the presence of God. Prayer becomes real when we grasp the reality and goodness of God's constant presence with “the real me”. Jesus lived his everyday life in conscious awareness of his Father.”

*John Ortberg*

## Respond

*This session leads us to explore prayer. As a group, try to create a challenge to help you actively deepen your prayer life this week, or choose one of the following.*

### Challenge ideas:

#### 1. Distracted

Sometimes when we pray, we might encounter all kinds of distracting thoughts. Instead of pushing these thoughts away, allow them to become part of the conversation with God – they may well be things that God wants to address in your life. Use these thoughts as stepping stones to prayer. Let them help you become fully present to God in this moment. If you are feeling sleepy, bored, anxious or pre-occupied make these feelings part of the conversation.

#### 2. Journal

Write down your prayers and conversations with God in a notebook or journal. Writing helps to clarify our prayers and also provides us with a reminder of the things we have prayed for.

#### 3. Fixed hour prayer

Try incorporating this rhythm of prayer into your life this week: in the morning, pray Psalm 63 or Psalm 95. At noon, stop to pray the Lord's Prayer (silently or out loud). In the evening read Psalm 4, 91 or 134 to prompt a final time of prayer. Although this requires some discipline, it helps to remind us of a powerful and sovereign God. You could set a watch or phone alarm to remind you to pray.

## Group Prayer

You might like to commit to praying for each person in the group this week as you look to deepen your individual prayer lives. Pray for each person to experience a deeper relationship with God as they spend time with God over the coming week.