

Teaching Your Counselee To Pray Through the Lord's Prayer

By Wendy Wood



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

In our counseling department, part of the intake paperwork that the counselee fills out is the question, "how often do you pray?". They may check never, occasionally, often, or all the time. While this gives me some idea of what my counselee's prayer life is like, there are still a lot of unknowns. I find it very helpful to ask questions about where and when the person prays during the day. What does the person talk to God about? Is it primarily asking for specific needs or asking God for help with the day's tasks? Are they praying alongside scripture or while they are driving in the car? Is repentance and thanksgiving a part of their prayer life? These questions, and many others, are helpful to determine how you can help your counselee grow in prayer. Using the Lord's Prayer is a wonderful way to help your counselee understand God's purpose in prayer and to make his/her's prayers more God-honoring.

Our Father in heaven. This short statement is full of meaning. God is our Father and we are His children. The Father to child relationship carries the picture of intimate care and love. Our Father is FOR us and loves to bless us! This statement

also reminds us that we are talking to a Person, not just having a conversation in our minds. We are addressing a personal Father who is the Father of all mercies and the God who is near to the broken-hearted. Teaching your counselee to address God directly, using His name, orients our prayers to God. This opening also reminds us that God cares and listens intently.

Hallowed by Your Name. God's name is holy and set apart. There is none like God. This statement focuses on God being Supreme and worthy of worship. Our Father is a comforting view of God who calls us His friend, but God is also holy and Sovereign. This statement teaches us to revere God and to be in awe of who He is. It is a surrender to His rule and reign in our lives. It is a plea for the world to adore God and praise and worship Him. Teaching your counselee to address God as holy, righteous, Sovereign, majestic and completely unlike anything else, orients him/her to think soberly of self. Hallowing God's name immediately puts us our rightful place as creature and sinner to a Creator and holy God.

Your kingdom come, God is the King. God's kingdom is eternal and He will be reigning Supremely for eternity. This statement reminds us that we are bowing down to our King. Praying this phrase means our counselees are expressing the desire to surrender more and more to what God wants to do in their hearts. It is a plea for God to bring more people into His kingdom through the spread of the gospel. Teaching our counselees to pray this way will help them to continue to focus on God's kingdom and not building their own through idolatry and pride. Praying for God's kingdom to come shows a desire for God to continue to work of sanctification in their own lives and the lives of other believers.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. God is Sovereign. His ultimate purpose is always happening, even through sin and suffering. God's sovereign will is what has happened and what will happen in the future. As sinners, we will disobey God's moral will, His written commands, but even then we cannot thwart God's sovereign will. **Your will be done** is a prayer expressing that you are surrendered to the plan God has for you and your life. Whether it is suffering or blessing, whether you are advanced or withdrawn, whether you are winning or losing, you are content in the place God has you. This phrase means you trust God and the plan He has for you, no matter what it is. **On earth as it is in heaven,** expresses a desire for a universal surrender to God's will and that you and others

are obedient constantly, quickly, and eagerly. Picture the angels in Isaiah 6 and their eagerness to serve God and surround Him with praise. Teaching our counselees to pray **Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven** encourages them to joyfully surrender their desires to God's desires. It encourages our counselees to examine their hearts and pray with Jesus "not my will but Yours be done."

Give us this day our daily bread. God is the Provider. We are dependent on God for life, breath, food, shelter, everything. We need to go to God daily for His grace and strength to walk with the Spirit. Just as the Israelites collected manna each day, we must depend on God for new grace and mercy each day. "Our daily bread" means that God gives us what we need for the day. My neighbor and I have different daily bread. God will give me what I need, not what my neighbor needs or what I want. Teaching our counselees to pray this phrase reminds them of their dependency and humility before God. It reminds them that God knows what we need and He will provide. We can trust His provision and be content with whatever that is, knowing that He is the Sovereign Father who reigns and loves us.

And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. We are sinners in need of forgiveness through a Savior who shed His blood for our sins. We are debtors to God. We cannot pay for our own. We needed a substitutionary atonement in Christ. We must confess our sins, ask for forgiveness, and humbly accept Grace from God. **As we also have forgiven our debtors** means we need to forgive as God forgives us. God forgiveness is like a burden lifted (Psalm 38), He covers our sin (Psalm 85). God puts our sin behind His back (Isaiah 38). God casts sin into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). He remembers our sin no more (Jeremiah 31). God cleanses us from sin (Ezekiel 36) and wipes out our sin (Isaiah 44). This prayer teaches our counselees that we must be quick to forgive others as God has so completely and graciously forgiven us. As we think about the metaphors God uses to show how He removes our sin so we can be in relationship with Him, we are compelled to forgive others similarly. Our counselees must see the connection that God forgives us for His sake, that as we also forgive others, His glory is on display.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. This phrase reminds us of the horror that sin is. Evil is anything that we think, say, or do that is not in perfect conformity with God's will. This plea in prayer is a cry for help. We need God to

keep us from wandering from His commands. We need God to incline our hearts to His testimony. We need God to establish our steps because we are prone to wander. God promises in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that He will provide a way of escape when we are tempted. By depending on His Spirit, we can choose to honor God in those moments of temptations. Teach your counselees that they cannot fight temptation alone. They must implore the Sword of the Spirit, God's word, to fight against temptation and depend on the Holy Spirit within to guide and lead us to deny our sinful flesh. God is the Deliverer.

You can help enrich your counselees prayers by teaching them to pray like Jesus.