

ORIENTING TO GOD: A CBWC COLLECTIVE PRAYER INITIATIVE

2022 Video Transcripts 1-4

Week 1: Lord Teach us to Pray | January 9

As we orient ourselves to God, we frame our CBWC Collective Prayer within the prayer structure Jesus teaches us. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus encapsulates the intention of the regular set prayers the Jewish people prayed daily.

So, we begin where the disciples began: "Lord Teach us to Pray."

Rather than assuming we know how to pray in Jesus' framework, we invite the Spirit of God to guide us. We take a posture of humility. In Scripture, God instructs his people in 2 Chronicles 7:14 to come to him in prayer first by humbling ourselves. It's a posture of listening, with the desire to submit to God.

In our posture of humility, we firstly seek God's face, his heart, his pathway for healing of the land. We give space for God to guide and to inform our prayers, granting both wisdom and revelation. We do not assume we already know the way God will lead – he leads, we follow.

We repent. Of our self-righteousness, our biases, our own places where we fall short of the glory of God. In repentance we invite the Spirit to convict, shape, form and reform us, and bring healing to our hearts, souls, minds and our world.

We acknowledge that we only "see in part" and rely on the Spirit of God to reveal his path and his way forward. Jesus, though the very Son of God, prayed to the Father often for guidance as he ministered reconciliation in our broken world.

So you will now be led in a prayer that many in a CBWC church this morning will be praying. We invite you to picture that while you pray. Picture many churches praying collectively. Together may we hear the voice of God as we orient ourselves to him in prayer and invite him to teach us.

Week 2: Our Father in heaven, make Your name holy | January 16

The very first phrase in the Lord's prayer orients us towards both God and community. Jesus teaches us to pray "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name," or as in other translations, "make your name holy."

Beginning with *Our* reminds us this is a corporate prayer – it is God's people in his church praying *with* the church. Praying *with* the church means praying the same things together, which is different than praying *in* the church where we pray for individuals and our own individual needs using our own words.

Our reminds us that prayer is about relationships: God to humans, humans to one another, and humans to creation itself.

Our places us immediately into a posture of prayer that is kingdom oriented. It launches us back into the meaning of the Shema which Jesus would have prayed daily and which he proclaimed as the greatest of all the commandments. Love the Lord your God with all our heart, mind soul, strength, and to which Jesus added: love our neighbours as ourselves.

We pray "Father in heaven" to state we pray not to unknown gods, or even a distant God, but to God who is close at hand, who is near and all around us. He is Our Father who knows us intimately, and we are his beloved children.

Praying "Our Father in heaven, make your name holy" also reminds us that we were created to glorify God. We are his image-bearers, made in the likeness of the Holy One.

We were created to reflect God's character to one another and to the world. We make God's name holy when we "act justly, love mercy and walk humbly" as servants to others, laying down our lives for the sake of the other.

As we orient ourselves to God through these words to our Father, we pray together *with* the Church.

Week 3: Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven | January 23

Baptist theologian Stanley Grenz writes, "ultimately all prayer is a cry for the kingdom...when we comprehend this basic truth regarding prayer, we are better equipped to become effective pray-ers for the sake of the kingdom of God."

Passages like Psalm 146 reveal God's kingdom to be a realm where the poor are blessed, the oppressed find justice, the sick are healed, the hungry are satisfied, the prisoners set free. Scripture's inspired vision of what God's kingdom on earth will look like leaves us wanting it even more fully – it calls us to pray for it to come "on earth as it is in heaven."

God's will in Torah and in the prophets is revealed as love and justice. When we pray "Your will be done," this is the heart of what we are praying. We pray for God's love to be manifest and for his justice to deliver us from slavery, oppression and inequity, and that restores community relationships – both to God and his will, and to one another. When we participate in both praying and joining God in this, we participate in God's righteousness.

As we pray for God's kingdom and God's will to continue breaking into our world and circumstances, we also offer our very own selves to God. Our prayer is an offering to join God in his work to "provide food for the hungry," to "uphold the cause of the oppressed," to "give sight to the blind" to "lift up those who are bowed down."

We join with Jesus' cry for the kingdom with all who have, who are and who will pray this prayer. As Grenz writes, "In this way they not only cry for the kingdom but also come to enjoy a foretaste of the future kingdom in the midst of brokenness of this present age."

Week 4: Give us today our daily bread | January 30

In the first half of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to address our Father by first praying "your, your, your." "Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done." It's only after this that we are we invited by Jesus to pray "us, us, us." And, therefore, the Lord's Prayer orients our hearts, minds and souls toward God, aligning us with his will before we bring our requests in the second half of the prayer.

These are not so much our own requests but reflect essential marks of the heart of God's kingdom. Jesus instructs us to pray to the Father for his action in us and through us in the world.

We not only pray these words, we are meant to live them, to put them into action. If we are going to pray this prayer, then we must be prepared to live out the intent of the prayer in our daily lives.

We seek to live in ways that make pathways for all to be provided for and cared for. We endeavor not to overconsume but to be content with enough. In these ways we become co-labourers in God's kingdom breaking into our world for *his* name's sake.

Jesus, with Isaiah 58 clearly in mind, points this out in Matthew 25:31-46. Whatever we do for the least among us, we do for Jesus. When we set aside the plight of the poor, the oppressed and the needy, we ignore Jesus and our piety is "unacceptable fasting" to God.

Thus, we again take the posture of a servant, both in word and deed, and we pray for God to enable us to justly use his provisions to live out Jesus' prayer.

As we pray collectively for the concerns of the kingdom, we find our hearts increasingly oriented to God's will for this world he so loves.