

Kingdom Series - Autumn 2005 - King's Centre Church
Week 8 – The Lord's Prayer (LifeShapes™ Hexagon) (30.10.05)
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Reading = Matthew 6:5-15

The context here (from Luke 11) the disciples come to Jesus and having watched him pray, they ask him 'Lord, teach us to pray.' And this is what he says (recorded here as part of the Sermon on the Mount):

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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But 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. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹"This, then, is how you should pray:

" 'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,

¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

¹²Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.' ¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Intro

This week we continue our series on the Kingdom of God by looking at prayer. I'm taking one particular slant of teaching on prayer (the model Jesus gave us to pray in Matthew 6), and I'm not going into any extra depth on the many dimensions of prayer which can be ascertained from reading the bible and our own experience.

At the start of the sermon – I'd like to recommend a couple of good books on the subject instead, if you want to delve a bit deeper: (also on website)

- Prayer explosion – Colin Dye
- Don't just stand there, pray something – Ronald Dunn (available to borrow)
- Mighty Prevailing Prayer - Wesley Duewel - deeper
- A Passionate Life – Lifeshapes™ (Hexagon)

In other words – there is plenty out there already which can teach you about prayer in more depth than I can this morning, and there are people here this morning who could teach me a thing or two about prayer as well. I don't expect to say anything *new* today about prayer, but I do want to remind ourselves of the power and simplicity of the model for prayer which Jesus gave us.

We've chosen to speak on this subject today, because tomorrow is the start of our 40-day season of prayer and fasting. I don't know how and when each of you prays, but I encourage you to press into prayer more during this season as we ask God for breakthrough.

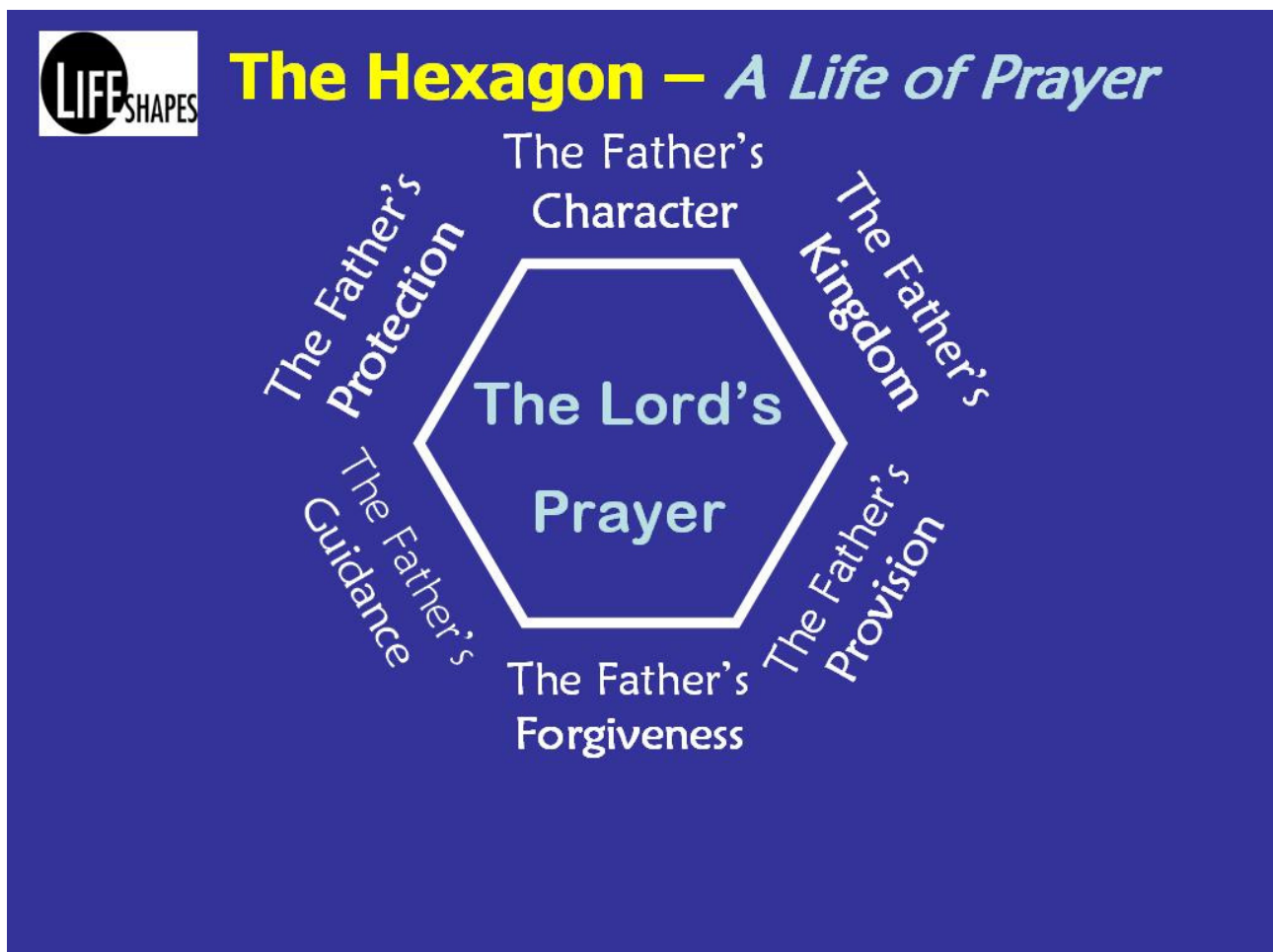
The easiest way I have found to remember the model is to use the Lifeshapes™ idea of the Hexagon. It takes the 6 key phrases of the prayer as a model, a framework around which to pray.

My own experience is that I have over the past year begun to use this model much more deliberately in prayer. Its funny to think, because most of us from a church background (or even in schools) have been brought up to know the LP and recite it. Its familiar to us – yet, how many of us actually take a step back and consider it not just as a set of particular *words*, but as a framework around which to hang our prayers upon? I find it is an incredible helpful structure in its 6 component parts. Its very helpful in being *intentional* in prayer, rather than just going off on tangents, or getting distracted by your own thoughts and losing your direction in prayer.

The Prayer wasn't given by Jesus to be used as a liturgy. Its alive! Its dynamic. You can take its framework and turn it into an incredibly rich source of prayer ideas. One day you might find yourself desperately praying for God's provision for your needs, the next day you could spend half an hour mulling over the reality that God is our loving Father in heaven.

Learning to pray in this way will help us to learn how to align our lives with God's will for us and others (that's what prayer is all about). If we want to see God's kingdom break out in the present, we need to learn to be the most effective we can in prayer.

So that is why I recommend this approach to you – quite simply, its how Jesus taught his simple, non-religious disciples to pray – and if its good enough for them, its good enough for me.



1. The Father's Character - "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name"

Daddy

The first thing Jesus teaches is that God – the all-mighty, the maker of heaven and earth – is our Dad. He uses the Aramaic word 'Abba' – 'Daddy'.

When you think about it, this is a radically different from how we are often taught to approach God, or the way that society might portray God as an angry old man, full of wrath, who is cross with us all the time.

It's not like that. He is Daddy. He cares for us. He wants the best for us. What Jesus is helping us to remember when we pray is that we are to be in an intimate relationship with our father in heaven. Its about building a relationship.

- Remember our 'realities' (sermon week 2) – we are free, new creations, children, heirs – we *do* have access to the heavenly throne of God, we *do not* need to hold back.

Try starting prayers with "Daddy" this week!

Hallowed

This means to "honour as holy", to glorify God.

Don't forget, God is our Daddy but at the same time he is *most* worthy of our praise and our respect. Our primary purpose is to glorify God and to enjoy his presence for ever.

As we deliberately honour God, recognising his holiness, glory, majesty, power, love and so on – what we are doing is aligning ourselves with Him (because God's chief purpose is to be glorified) – we are aligning ourselves with His will. We are putting Him first as King of his Kingdom in our lives. We are getting hold of the upside-down kingdom – He is high, we are low.

2. The Father's Kingdom – "Your kingdom come, your will be done."

In my life, I've found this possibly the most powerful phrase of this prayer. This is all about submitting yourself and your agenda to God, because the outcome will be far better than you could ever make happen in your own strength.

As we pray for this, we are inviting the King to come and rule in our lives. We are proclaiming that we want the glories of the future kingdom on earth, in our lives and other's lives, *now*. We are aligning ourselves to God's will, his power and presence. This means things like healing, freedom, joy, peace, restoration etc.

Remember, our membership of the Kingdom of God is by choice – God doesn't force it upon us. So this part of the prayer is deliberately choosing to be part of God's plan.

The more available we make ourselves – the more God's kingdom can break out.

3. The Father's provision – "Give us today our daily bread"

Notice the order here – first we acknowledge God, align ourselves to His priorities..... then we are in a place where God promises to provide for all our needs, and all we have to do is ask.

Obviously this isn't just about bread or food. We all have needs, legitimate needs in life. Each day is different, each day has its challenges, and each day we should ask God to provide for us. God is not lacking in anything. So we know we can come to him for everything we need in this life. He will provide for our needs.

One thing I have learnt about praying is that it is fine to be specific and go into detail sometimes. I first learnt that when I began praying in a pair regularly with my accountability partner some years ago he prayed in quite a different way to me. I tended to be quite general – “oh lord please bless me” or “please make John better from his illness”. He, on the other hand, detailed out exactly what he felt he needed from the lord “please heal John from his bad back, fix up the ligaments and vertebrae, make his legs not hurt when he walks and allow him to return to work by the end of the month...” And as we kept a record of the specific requests we put before God, we were amazed at how he would answer so many of them, in the same amount of detail. I'm sure that's your experience too!

Needs, or course, are not the same as wants.

And notice too, that Jesus tells us to pray just for what we *need today*. If he gave us everything we need for the whole of our lives, do you think we would ever bother talking to him again? Probably not.

So it's a hand-to-mouth existence. We have to keep returning to the Father, who delights in giving us what we need, and in the relationship that comes from this regular contact. At the end of the day, its about love. He loves to be with us, and loves to provide for our needs.

4. The Father's forgiveness – “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Debts/trespasses – basically means sin. When we come before the Father it is virtually impossible not to realise that we are sinful. We don't always keep to his paths, his ideas, his commandments, his best. Although we seek his kingdom, we will stray into the wrong territory from time to time, and its important to acknowledge that, and ask for forgiveness.

Essentially, when we sin we are saying ‘God, what you have given me is not enough’ – we are turning our back on what we just prayed 3. The Father's Provision. We are choosing not to be part of his kingdom.

Regularly asking for forgiveness (and making sure we receive it in the right heart) is a key discipline in the Christian life.

Notice – this is the only part of the prayer which Jesus expounds to his disciples afterwards. In Matthew 6, he picks up the theme of forgiveness straight away and says: ¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

The Father's forgiveness to us is never-ending – but it is conditional – upon our willingness to forgive others. (Freely you have received, freely give. Matt 10:8)

5. The Father's Guidance – "Lead us not into temptation"

Take that phrase apart – "Lead us," – that's again is asking for God's leading in life (rather than our own agenda).

"not into temptation" – this is about our life beyond the boundaries of our room where we pray. As we go out into the world, we are seeking to see his kingdom come, to pass on the good news about Jesus to those we do life with, but at the same time we are faced with temptations daily.

Its praying for help from God and his Spirit that we will not fall into the traps of the enemy – one of which is temptation to sin (to abandon God's kingdom for the kingdom of darkness).

The trails and temptations of life are actually a battle ground. And we need to fight that battle every day. So Jesus encourages us to bring those issues to God, and ask for his help and his battle strategy to get through.

6. The Father's Protection – "And deliver us from evil"

This prayer ends, like it started, by asking God to intervene in our lives – by pushing back the kingdom of darkness and extending the kingdom of heaven.

This again acknowledges that we are in a battle – the devil is battling for our souls (and the end result of that is very bad for us!). The bible speaks of principalities and powers warring against us. Jesus explained elsewhere that the devil comes like a thief only to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10).

- Steal our health
- Steel our joy
- Steal our souls ultimately

It may sound a bit scary, but it doesn't need to be! Because the promise is that God will provide for our needs. We are asking God to protect us in the battle – as we seek to do life under his will, and his ways.

To finish - Quote from Mike Breen

"This prayer is a framework in which to pour all of the thoughts and concerns of your life. Take the thing most burning in your heart at the moment and pray through it using the prayer Jesus teaches us as the model. In this way you are communicating with God as he has taught us to. It really is that simple." (*A Passionate Life*, Mike Breen & Walt Kallestad, published by Cook Communication Ministries, 2005, p.175)

Applying this model to our prayer life

1) all 6 phrases in order

- filling in with your own words the issues of life

2) a phrase a day

- focus on what one phrase really means. Think it thru, pray it through, Swill it around and chew on it!

- What does it mean for God to be your father
- If I'm trusting for God's provision, what do I need to let go of first?
- etc

3) see where it 'clicks' – what phrase really jumps out at you

- as you pray, something may well become the most urgent, or worrying, or important issue on your mind (eg. Those bills to pay, that family issue, my exam later today....)

- It OK to pray those most pressing issue (bc its likely to be God's will for us to pray about it, if we've already asked for 'your will to be done'. The Spirit can pin-point exactly what to pray about.

4) A phrase at certain points through the day (set your alarms, phones, computer)

- Father – first thing
 - Kingdom – 9am at the start of the working day
 - Provision – at lunch time!
 - Forgiveness – at the end of the working day, after all its action
 - Temptation – later in evening, as we get tired and perhaps more vulnerable
 - Protection – at the end of the day
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