

The Model

Me:

Not long after we got married, Abi and I moved to Clearwater, Florida. We're both rollercoaster junkies, so we bought season tickets to Busch Gardens in Tampa. We lived about thirty minutes away, so that was a treat for us. We both had Mondays off at the time, so it was not uncommon for us to spend all day on Monday at the theme park. This was especially true during the school year, because the park was empty on Mondays when people were at school. We have always been pretty protective of our time together. I say unapologetically that she is my favorite human. So we would head to the park, turn our phones off, and enjoy the whole day together. We both like to travel light as well. I don't like carrying things around the theme park all day. I sweat enough as it is; I don't need extra weight to carry around. One day, we had an amazing time at the park. We were walking to the car at the end of the day, and I was doing the whole check your pockets routine to make sure that I had everything. I didn't. We got the car only to realize that I had locked the keys in the car. It's 10,000 degrees outside, and we've been sweating in the Florida sun all day. Now, the keys are a pretty important component to making the car run. That sweet air conditioning is calling my name, but I can't reach the keys. No problem, I have AAA, we'll just call them and have them unlock the car. It will take a bit of time for them to get here, but it will be fine. Not a big deal. Then, to our horror, we realized that we had left our phones in the car as well. We had this brilliant idea that we would leave them in the car, because the only person we wanted to talk to that day was with us. It seemed like a great idea at the time. But now, we're standing in the sun, exhausted, frustrated, and wondering what to do. I sheepishly walked up to customer service, explained the situation, and asked if I could use a phone. That dude looked at me like I was from another planet. What kind of moron locks his keys and his phone in the car?

All I wanted to do was go home. But I forgot the key components. My keys and my phone would have been very helpful, but I forgot all about them. The power to get home was available to me, but I had left it behind.

We:

It's interesting how often we do this in life. Mark Batterson, in his book *Circle Maker*, said this: "Miracles are the by-products of prayers that were prayed by you or for you." I don't know anybody who would say they don't want a miracle. No thanks, I'll pass. Many of us are working really hard to try to manufacture a miracle in our lives right now. Maybe it's a

financial breakthrough after years of struggle. Maybe it's a job search that has gone on much longer than we anticipated. Maybe we've been dreaming of marriage and happily ever after for what seems like forever. Maybe it's health challenges or struggles within our family. We've been working hard and giving it everything we have, but it feels like we're standing out in the heat with the keys locked in the car. I can't even tell you how many followers of Jesus tell me the thing they struggle with is prayer.

For many of us, we struggle with prayer and often feel guilty for how little we pray. When we finally do make time to pray, we often don't know what to say. It's wild because there are so many things in our lives that can only be unlocked through prayer. Before you get too excited or angry with me, depending on your theological bent, this is not going to be a series about how to get God to give you what you want. He's not our genie. However, I believe that prayer is the key to unlocking the life God has called us to live, and I believe that many of us are leaving miracles on the table because of our unwillingness to pray in faith and recruit others to pray on our behalf.

God:

As we begin our journey into prayer, let's start with how Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. During Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, he provides his followers with instructions on how to pray and how not to pray. Jesus concludes his teaching by including a model of prayer that has become known as the Lord's Prayer. Over the next three weeks, we're going to memorize the Lord's Prayer together. We're going to read it together, and then we'll break it down. So open your Bible to Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV). Let's read this together.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. " -
Matthew 6:9-13 NIV

Before we get too far into this, I want to address something. If you grew up like me, you might have memorized the Lord's Prayer as a kid. Right about now, you're wondering why we didn't finish it. Why doesn't my Bible say, "For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen"? That's because the earliest evidence of these words being used with this prayer is from A.D. 130. It was apparently an ending used by the early church when they prayed this prayer publicly, but it is unlikely that these words were actually written by Matthew or Luke, which is why they are not found in most modern translations. That being said, there is nothing theologically wrong with the addition, so if you want to include it

when you pray the Lord's prayer, I think you're good. For our purposes, we're just going to stick with the Scripture for our memorization and explanation. Fair enough? So let's examine how Jesus taught the disciples to pray.

He begins with, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9). Jesus did not direct his disciples to begin their prayers with "Our God" or "Dear Jehovah" or "To Yahweh." Rather, Jesus taught his disciples to pray to "Our Father." In Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, the word would have been "Abba," which was "a term of great intimacy and affectionate respect. Jesus teaches us that we come before God as His dearly beloved children, and He is our Father. Jesus is teaching us that prayer is built on a relationship of intimacy. By telling us to pray, "Hallowed be your name" (v. 9), Jesus is setting the tone for prayer. As we mentioned a minute ago, God is not the genie in the lamp that grants our request. Rather, our chief concern in prayer is that God would be honored and glorified.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (v. 10). This teaches us that prayer is a partnership, in which we join with God to accomplish his purposes on the earth. What does He want us to do? What's our mission? Our mission is to glorify God and make disciples of the nations. Jesus invites us to join God through prayer to see his kingdom extended throughout the earth.

"Give us this day our daily bread" (v. 11). Jesus teaches us that through prayer we can ask God to meet our daily needs. Martin Luther said the bread was a symbol for "everything necessary for the preservation of this life, like food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, wife, children, good government and peace." God wants to, and does, provide what is necessary for us to live.

"And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (v. 12). Praying for forgiveness is something we all need to do. We still battle with sin, and the battle will continue until we die. We need the mercy of our Father, and He is glad to give it if we will ask.

But in addition to confessing our sins, we are also to release others from the ways they have wronged us and from anything we might hold against them. Jesus modeled this on the cross when he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (v. 13). We are all tempted, and we need help to resist the temptation in our lives. Bring your temptations to God and give them to Him. He can handle it, and He wants to help.

I want to read the Lord's Prayer one more time together, but this time, there will be some blanks in the middle of the passage. Let's see how we do.

"Our _____ in heaven, hallowed be your name, your _____ come, your _____ be done, on earth as it is in _____. Give us today our _____. And forgive us our debts, as we also have _____ our debtors. And lead us not into _____, but deliver us from the _____ one." - Matthew 6:9-13 NIV

You:

Not bad! So, what do you do with all of this? Knowledge is great. But it doesn't do you any good if you don't apply it. I knew where my keys were. They were in the car! They weren't doing me any good in there, though. If prayer is the key that unlocks the life that God has planned for you. If miracles are the by-products of prayers that were prayed by you or for you, you'd better learn to pray! The best way to learn to pray is not by reading a book on prayer or hearing a teaching on prayer. The best way to learn to pray is to pray. D. A. Carson wrote, "Good praying is more easily caught than taught."

Jesus gave us a model to use when we pray. I want you to notice that Jesus started verse nine by saying, "This, then, is HOW you should pray." He said this is how to pray, not what to pray. So, you're going to memorize this prayer, not so you can simply pray this, but so you can learn how to pray.

We:

We're going to practice right now, together. I'm going to put up on the screens the actual prompts that are in my prayer journal. They are based on the Lord's Prayer! If you find them helpful, you can take a picture of them, and we'll post them on social for you to save if you like. I personally set up a template in my Day One Journal, which I use on my iPad each morning during my devotions. For this next week, we're all going to set aside five to ten minutes each day and use this model that Jesus gave to us to pray. We won't simply repeat it, but instead use it as an outline to pray for ourselves and others. We're going to pray that He shapes us into the people He wants us to be. We're going to pray that He uses us to glorify Him and to make disciples of the nations.

Prayer is a simple concept. It is in prayer that we talk to God. But if you think about it, talking to the God of the universe is a pretty big deal. We're no longer going to leave power on the table. We're no longer going to leave the keys in the car. We're going to pray in faith, the way Jesus taught us to pray. The disciples saw Jesus' prayer life and asked Him to teach them to pray. This was His response in Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV). Let's say it one more time, together. *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*