

JESUS' MANIFESTO



Discussion Questions

Mar 15: The Lord's Prayer: The Way of Simplicity

1. Take some time to share how you experienced the practices from last week. How did they impact your daily life? Did you notice any changes over the course of the week? How might this practice help you on a regular basis in the future?
2. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that seemed timely or relevant to you? Was there anything which made you uncomfortable, or with which you disagreed?
3. In this week's section of the sermon on the mount Jesus talks about almsgiving (Matthew 6:1-4), prayer (Matthew 6:5-6), and fasting (Matthew 6:16-18). How do you relate to each of these spiritual practices? Why do you think Jesus addresses them specifically? In what ways have they helped you grow?
4. What common themes does Jesus address when he talks about the above spiritual practices? Why are they important? What does Jesus seem to be saying about how to relate to God?
5. Read Matthew 6:7-9. Jesus suggests not using many words during prayer. How might this affect our approach to prayer in general? Jesus also suggests that God already knows our needs. How might this affect our approach to prayer in general?
6. Matthew 6:9-13 has become known as "The Lord's Prayer" and a template for prayer in general. Discuss the following as you reflect on your own approach to prayer:
 - The speaker on Sunday suggested that Jesus taught us to pray in our own language, any time, in simple ways, and to address God in very familiar, intimate terms ("Abba" in native Aramaic tongue). What does this say about Jesus' understanding of God? How might this affect how you pray?
 - Read the first part of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-10 which is known as the "Thou Petitions". How might each petition help us open our hearts to God and surrender to the flow of God's love to us and the world? How could this change our approach to prayer?
 - Read the second part of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:11-13 which are known as the "We Petitions". How might each petition help us align with God and partner in the flow of God's love through us to others? How might this change how we pray?

Prayer practice for this week: The Lord's Prayer

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)

Take some time this week to meditate on the Lord's Prayer above. Meditate on two readings of it:

1. Begin by opening your heart to God as the eternal and ever-present source of love ("Our Father in heaven"). Read the prayer slowly and then sit with eyes closed and center yourself by focusing on your breathing. Consciously be aware of God's complete love for you. Let it flow to you, all around you, and into you. It might help to imagine you are in a river of God's love or imagine God's love as light of warmth flowing to you. Just remain in this conscious flow of complete love and acceptance. Open your heart and surrender to it.
2. Then read the prayer again and this time imagine God's love flowing from you to others. Imagine the people dear to you – friends, family and loved ones. Imagine also people you find difficult or who you feel don't love you. Just let love flow without judgement. Align yourself with the will of God for love to pervade our world and accept the call to partner in that will. Let it become yours.

Alternative Practice: Sing the Lord's Prayer

If silent meditation does not feel natural for you, consider praying the Lord's Prayer through music. Throughout the week, listen to different sung versions of the prayer and allow the music to carry the words into your heart. You might sing along, sit quietly and listen, or simply let the sound and rhythm surround you.

Artists across many traditions have set the Lord's Prayer to music. Return to your favorites and challenge yourself to explore something new. Many artists have recorded versions that offer different tones and styles of prayer. Some examples include: Sister Janet Mead, Elvis Presley, Mahalia Jackson, Andrea Bocelli, Perry Como, Aretha Franklin, and Jim Nabors.

As you listen or sing, notice how the words feel when carried by melody. Let the music slow you down and help the prayer move beyond your mind into your body and emotions. Allow yourself to feel the love, light, and peace within the prayer.

Rather than analyzing the words, simply receive them. Let the music become a way of resting in God's love and sharing that love with the world.