Pray Like This

MATTHEW 6:9-13 (BSB) · SMALL-GROUP LESSON · DIGDEEPER.AI

The Big Idea

Jesus hands us the words to pray, and before we ever ask for a thing we own, we start by wanting God's name, God's reign, and God's way more than our own.

Opening Lines

Count with me. How many times does this prayer talk about God before it says one word about you? Go ahead — count the lines.

Before You Teach

- Goal: The room leaves able to pray the first three lines from the heart — God's name, God's kingdom, God's will — before rushing to their own list. They should feel the order of this prayer, not just recite it.
- If you're short on time, cut: Cut the extended cross-reference walk through Ezekiel and 1 Chronicles if time runs short. Keep the counting exercise and the forgiveness line.
- Where the moment lives: It lives at the moment someone names a real thing in their house they're handing back to God's will instead of forcing their own. Not in explaining the prayer, but in praying one line of it out loud and meaning it.
- Your prep: Pray this prayer slowly by yourself before you teach it, stopping at each petition. Come ready to say which line is hardest for YOU to mean.

Run It In Your Setting

The same lesson, sequenced three ways. Pick the one that fits your group and your clock.

CLASSROOM · ~20 PEOPLE · 45 MINUTES

Classroom opening (count the petitions) — 5 min. Read the passage aloud, teach the order 'God first, then us' — 8 min. Teach the word 'Abba' with the child-walking-in image — 7 min. Questions 1-3 — 12 min. Question 4 (forgiveness, drill the silence here) — 6 min. Question 5 (argue the other side, assign to two people) — 5 min. Out-loud commitments and close in prayer over what was named — 2 min. Transformation lives in the forgiveness question. Cut the Ezekiel/1 Chronicles background first if you're tight.

SMALL GROUP · ~8 PEOPLE · 60 MINUTES

Small-group opening (who can recite it — when did you last mean it) — 6 min. Read passage, teach the order — 8 min. Teach 'Abba' — 8 min. All five questions with room to breathe, especially the silence on question 4 — 28 min. Table question about generosity woven into question 4 or 5 — folded in. Out-loud commitments — 6 min. Close praying their actual words back — 4 min. Transformation lives in commitments plus the

forgiveness silence. Cut question 3 down to one answer if time slips.

COFFEE · 2-3 FRIENDS · 30 MINUTES

Coffee opening (the surprising 'Father/Abba' fact) — 4 min. Read the passage together once, slowly — 3 min. Talk through the order: God first, then us — 6 min. Go straight to question 4, the forgiveness line, and let it sit — 10 min. Each name one line they'll actually pray this week — 5 min. Close with one short spoken prayer over what they named — 2 min. Transformation lives in the forgiveness conversation. Cut the word-study to one sentence if needed.

Silence

Silence is a habit for every lesson you'll ever teach — this week we drill it deliberately. Remember week 2 and week 7, when you just practiced not rescuing the room after you asked a question. Level 3 asks for a harder rep: this week, after your single most important question, you will count a full ten seconds of silence in your head before you say anything, AND you will resist the urge to soften or restate the question during that silence. No 'or, you know, whatever comes to mind.' Ask it once, cleanly, then close your mouth and let it be uncomfortable. The forgiveness question in this lesson is where you'll be most tempted to bail people out. Don't. The person doing the real work in the quiet is not being awkward; they're deciding whether to tell the truth.

Why This Passage Matters

Most people in your room have said these words a thousand times. That is exactly the problem. Familiarity has sanded the shock off of them. So your job tonight is not to teach a prayer nobody knows; it's to make a prayer everybody knows land like they're hearing it for the first time. Here's the thing worth teaching: a devout Jew in Jesus' day already had rich, ancient, Scripture-soaked prayers. Jesus isn't correcting people who never prayed. He's handing well-prayed people a new pattern, and the pattern itself is the lesson. Three petitions about God pass before a single word about bread. You come as a child — 'Abba,' the ordinary word a kid uses at home — and in the same breath you honor the holy God of Sinai and ask him for lunch. Worship and need refuse to split apart. And the intimacy of calling him Father was never something anyone earned; the Son opened that door. When your people feel the order of this prayer — God first, then me, and both at once — they will pray differently for the rest of their lives. You get to be the one who makes the most-prayed prayer on earth feel dangerous again. That's a privilege.

Catch the Fire First

Before the room does it, you do it. Sometime this week, sit down alone and pray this prayer out loud, slowly, stopping cold at each line. When you hit 'Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,' name one actual thing in your own house you are handing back to God instead of forcing your way. When you hit 'forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,' name the one person who owes you something right now — an

apology, money, an explanation — and notice how hard that line gets. Come into the room having already found out which petition you can't say without flinching. Teach from that. Don't teach the prayer as a thing you've mastered; teach it as a thing that just exposed you.

Bring Your Own Story

- Tell about a time you 'said' this prayer without hearing a word of it — and what finally made one line stop you.
- Tell about a person you found nearly impossible to forgive, and what praying 'as we also have forgiven our debtors' cost you.
- SAMPLE (polished vs. real): Polished — 'I learned that surrender brings peace.' Real — 'I prayed "your will be done" about my son's job for three months while secretly hoping God's will matched mine exactly.'
- Guardrail: keep it one honest moment, not a raw dump — one specific scene, not your whole history.

Three Ways to Open

CLASSROOM: "On the handout, before I say anything, count how many of these six petitions are about God and how many are about you. Write the two numbers down. We'll compare in a minute."

Start with a task, not a talk — give the room something to do in the first thirty seconds.

SMALL GROUP: "Show of hands: who could recite this prayer from memory without looking? Good. Now here's the harder question — when did you last mean it? Sit with that one before you answer."

Name the familiarity out loud so people stop hiding behind it.

COFFEE: "Did you know that in Jesus' day, opening a prayer by calling God 'Father' with the warm word a kid says at home was rare and striking? What do you think that would've felt like the first time you tried it?"

One concrete, low-stakes question that goes straight to the surprising fact.

Teaching the Word

The word to teach is 'Abba' — the Aramaic behind the Greek that gets translated 'Father.' It is not the formal word. It's the ordinary, warm, unguarded word a child uses at home for a dad — closer to how a small kid actually says it than to anything stiff or religious. Here's the physical image: think of how a child walks into a room. They don't knock. They don't clear their throat and state their credentials. They just come in, climb up, and start talking. That's the posture Jesus is handing you. Now feel the weight of it — the same lips that just said 'hallowed be Your name' about the God of Sinai turn around and say 'Give us this day our daily bread.' Reverence and dependence in one breath. No pagan reached for

that word so freely. Only in Christ, adopted through his blood, do we come near enough to call the Holy One by that name. You are welcomed to call him Father because the Son made the way. [Let that sit. Say nothing for a slow count of ten.]

Discussion Questions

1. Count it out: how many petitions in this prayer are about God, and how many are about us? What does that order tell you?

Coaching note: Let them do the counting themselves — three about God, three about us, God first. Don't rush to the point; let them say it.

If it stalls: Just read the first three lines out loud. Is Jesus talking about God there, or about you?

2. Jesus teaches us to open with 'Father' — the ordinary word a kid uses at home. What's easy about that word for you, and what's hard?

Coaching note: Some people had good fathers and some didn't. Handle the 'hard' answers gently; don't fix them, just let them be named.

If it stalls: When you pray, is 'Father' a word that comes easy to you, or does it stick a little? Just yes or no to start.

3. 'Give us this day our daily bread' asks for enough, not extra. When does your prayer life run ahead of that — asking for the whole month, the whole future?

Coaching note: This exposes anxiety. Watch for the person who realizes they never actually ask for 'today.' Affirm honesty about worry.

If it stalls: Think about the last time you prayed about money. Were you asking for today, or for the anxious math of everything ahead?

4. 'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.' Jesus ties our asking to our giving. Is that fair — or does it make forgiveness sound earned?

Coaching note: This is your silence question. Ask it once, count ten, don't restate. Let the tension of 'as we also forgive' actually land.

If it stalls: Name one thing someone owes you right now — an apology, money, an explanation. You don't have to say who. Just is there one?

5. Someone at this table could argue that this whole 'God first' order is backwards — that a loving Father would want to hear our needs first. Make that case as strongly as you can. Then let's see if the text survives it.

Coaching note: This is the 'argue the other side' move. Assign it as a role so it feels safe. The room that has honestly felt the objection holds the truth differently than the room that never let it in.

If it stalls: If your kid ran into the room, would you rather they first tell you they love you, or first hand you their list? Now — why do you think Jesus ordered it the way he did?

Questions You May Hear

"Didn't Jews already have prayers? Why did Jesus need to give a new one?"

They absolutely did — the Amidah, prayed three times daily, was rich and Scripture-soaked. Jesus isn't teaching people who never prayed; he's handing a well-prayed people a new pattern, and the pattern itself is the point.

"What's the big deal about calling God 'Father'? We do it all the time."

Behind the Greek is the Aramaic 'Abba,' the ordinary word a child uses at home. Addressing the holy God of Sinai in such warm family terms was not common in that world — it rests on the whole point of the sermon, that through Jesus God is genuinely a Father to those who are his.

"Does 'forgive us as we forgive others' mean God's forgiveness depends on mine?"

Paul puts it plainly in Colossians 3:13 — 'Forgive as the Lord forgave you.' Jesus binds our asking to our giving because grace that's really received starts to flow outward; a forgiven heart forgives.

"If the Kingdom already came in Jesus, why do we still pray 'Your kingdom come'?"

Because it's both already and not yet. The King has already come and secured the throne by his cross and empty tomb, so when you pray 'Your kingdom come' you're leaning into a future he's already made certain, not flinging a wish into the dark.

For Experienced Leaders

- When you ask them to count the petitions, physically wait until pens move. If you narrate the answer, you've stolen the discovery.
- The forgiveness question will bring quiet. That quiet is not failure — it's someone deciding whether to be honest. Guard it; don't fill it.
- Don't over-explain 'Abba.' One warm image of a kid walking into a room does more than three sentences of Aramaic background.

Landing the Lesson

Commitments: Before we close, say it out loud to the table: one line of this prayer you're going to actually pray this week, and — if you're brave — the one person or thing that makes that line hard.

Close by praying out loud over the specific things people just named — the actual person someone can't forgive, the thing in someone's house they're handing back to God's will. Don't reach for a written prayer; saying their real words back to God is the whole point.

If you run out of time: If the room only gets to the forgiveness question and stays there, stay there. That's not falling short — that's the exact place this prayer does its work. Don't march to question five just to finish.

Midweek follow-up: A week from now, text each person one line: 'Which petition did you actually pray this week?' No sermon attached — just the question.

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/matthew/6-9-13/lesson

Handout

MATTHEW 6:9-13 (BSB) · DIGDEEPER.AI

During the lesson:

- Petitions about God: ___ Petitions about us: ___ What does that order tell you?
- The word 'Father' (Abba) — for me, that word feels: ___
- One line of this prayer I can't say without flinching: ___
- One person who owes me something right now (apology, money, explanation): ___
- One line of this prayer I'll actually pray this week: ___

Take-home actions:

- Tonight, pray this prayer out loud at home (or alone). Start with 'Your will be done,' and before amen, name one thing in your household you're handing back to God instead of forcing your own way — plainly enough to tell someone tomorrow what you prayed.
- Tomorrow, before you check your bank balance or open a bill, pray 'forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors' — then forgive one person who owes you something. Release it before you look at your own account.
- Someone near you is carrying an anxious weight tonight. Text them this prayer and offer to pray it with them.

Matthew 6:9-13 · On the Mountain, Lesson 12 · You are welcomed to call him Father because the Son made the way.