

OUR WAY HOME

A Journey through the Lord's Prayer

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

INTRODUCTION

1. What are some of your best memories of coming home to your childhood home? What lights were on as you drove up? Who was waiting for you?
2. Describe a time when you have said with either joy or a fierce determination, "I'm going home!"
3. How long does it take for a new place to feel like "home"?
4. The book describes heaven as our true home. What are the best aspects of your childhood home—or your present home—that are small reflections of our home in heaven?
5. Prayer invites us into the heavenly courts to speak with God, though we're only children still living on earth. What are some of the astonishing aspects of this invitation?
6. Given the remarkable opportunity of prayer, how are the exact words of the Lord's Prayer a reassurance and an encouragement as you begin to pray?
7. Besides the Lord's Prayer, what other commands and promises from Scripture encourage you to pray?
8. The book describes the Lord's Prayer as both a unified journey and a single, solid stone. How does the image of the Lord's Prayer as an integrated whole help your understanding of the prayer and its distinct petitions?
9. The book suggests that you could take a different way home each day and yet still end up in the same place. When do you take a longer, wandering way home? In the same way, when have you taken a longer way through the Lord's Prayer, lingering on one or more of the petitions along the way?
10. The book suggests that prayer is both an adventure and a return to those we love—for when we pray, we likely remember the times we prayed with family,

friends, and congregation members, many of whom have passed on. What aspects of the Lord's Prayer are a familiar, reassuring reunion? How can you also pray the prayer as an adventurous journey?

CHAPTER ONE

1. This chapter begins by asking how you see the action of prayer. In your praying, how have you tugged on God's necktie or pulled Him down like a window shade? When are you most likely to approach God like He is a window shade that needs to be pulled down?
2. What do you misunderstand about God and the opportunity of prayer when you tug on Him like a window shade, show Him what's wrong in your life, and then snap Him back up to heaven to tend to your requests?
3. When you pray, your words reach your Father in heaven. How is prayer like the two natures of Jesus, who is both true God and true Man at the same time?
4. Knowing that when you pray your words reach your heavenly Father, what images and truths do you need to keep in mind concerning the nature of your Father in heaven when you begin to pray?
5. James 1:5 is noted as a powerful verse concerning prayer: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." How does this both calm your fears and surprise you with His generosity?
6. As your prayers reach heaven, your Father assures you that you are His child. How does this truth change your prayers, both how often you pray and what you pray about?
7. The chapter suggests that Christ is the lens through which the Father sees us—the illustration of this being parents who record their child at a concert. How does God's view of you through Christ give you confidence in your prayers and in your relationship with Him?
8. The chapter has the image of a child coming to parents wrapping Christmas gifts, hearing the discussion about himself, and then going to bed happy and confident. When you pray, what might you overhear in the conversation between the Father and the Son concerning you?

9. In this chapter's section on "No Mirrors on Mountains," the story concerns a man looking for a mirror on the mountaintop. How do you sometimes foolishly follow that same pattern in your prayers? Why would you focus on yourself in the setting of heavenly glory?

10. Instead of seeking a mirror view of yourself, how might the setting of heaven raise your prayers to go beyond a quick list of what you want?

CHAPTER TWO

1. This chapter begins with the challenge of passing a choir audition. When have you auditioned for choir? Or, if you have avoided singing in a choir, what parts of a choir audition would be a nightmare for you?

2. How do you imagine the heavenly choir as it sings right now? Is it fast or slow, loud or soft? Is the choir singing new words or repeating familiar phrases?

3. Consider the challenge of photographing a single moment as water rushes over a rocky riverbed. In doing so, you try to stop a river or hold a waterfall in place, but the charm of a river or a waterfall is in its movement. How is your prayer of "Hallowed be Thy name" like an attempt to sum up in four words and a couple of seconds the praise that never ends?

4. The chapter describes three groups with whom we sing: angels, saints, and all believers here on earth. Of these three groups, who do you most easily see yourself joining when you pray, "Hallowed be Thy name?" Explain.

5. The choir of heaven's angels and saints is a huge number. Yet, God hears each of us individually in the midst of the heavenly choir. Why is it a joy and a reassurance that God hears you even while you sing with the whole choir?

6. We sing with all the saints who have gone before us. With whom do you want to sing in harmony as you hallow God's name?

7. We pray with all the believers on earth, joining them in the same instant in so many languages. How does this truth broaden your prayer and remind you that you pray to your Father and that you request your bread and forgiveness?

8. When you pray for the hallowing of God's name, how are you praising God for the holiness of His name that is already complete? How is there also a hallowing of His name that is still to come?

9. Luther's Small Catechism reminds us that God's name in and of itself is holy. However, the work of sanctifying the world was not immediate or free. What was the cost and work of God that reconciled the world to Himself? How do you recognize that cost in your prayer of thanks and praise?

10. In the First Petition, we pray for the holiness of God's name. The chapter gives several of the names attributed to God. Which ones do you especially think of when praying this petition?

9. In this chapter's section on "No Mirrors on Mountains," the story concerns a man looking for a mirror on the mountaintop. How do you sometimes foolishly follow that same pattern in your prayers? Why would you focus on yourself in the setting of heavenly glory?

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CHAPTER THREE

1. Chapter three begins with Robert Frost's poem "The Pasture." In this poem, the farmer invites us to join him in clearing the spring and fetching the calf. What everyday chores would you be glad to have someone join you in doing? How would it be better to do the work together?

2. A key part of the petitions of His kingdom and will is our desire that some of that which we have glimpsed and heard in heaven would be a larger part of our everyday life. What parts of heaven, what peace, praise, and more would you want to have as part of each day here on earth?

3. This chapter describes going on a tour of homes, a showcase of recently built or remodeled homes. How do those houses look? After being in those homes, what is it like going back to your home? How is this experience like your visit to heaven singing with the choir and then returning to your everyday chores?

4. In the tour of homes analogy, the carpenter who built the best mansion offers to go home with you to work on your house. Think of your life as the house in which you live. Where would you want the Carpenter to start work today?

5. This chapter describes the two killdeers walking happily on the street, unafraid of Buicks and beagles. Creatures of the air, they were happily and confidently walk-

ing on earth. How is this a picture of our situation, children of our Father assured of our heavenly home, yet walking firmly on earth?

6. This chapter recalls Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." How does this hymn and the words of Psalm 46 (on which the hymn is partly based), Isaiah 41:10, and Luke 12:32 strengthen your journey from heaven back to your challenges on earth?

7. In this petition, we ask for the kingdom of God to come. In what ways do you see Jesus as the king within His kingdom through His ministry? You might consider Mark 1:14–15 where Jesus announces the kingdom and the following work in Mark 1. Also consider Jesus' transfiguration and, finally, the sign above His head on Good Friday.

8. The chapter describes camping in the rain for three days. What is your best camping story? Or, where would you want to go camping someday?

9. How are you a child now, tent camping far from home, but assured that one day your Father will say, "Let's go home"? Since you are not in heaven yet, how can you at least live in some ways as someone who has a heavenly home?

10. This chapter has four main images: the farmer inviting us along on chores, the carpenter coming home with us, the killdeer on their trusting walk, and the camping trip. Which of these is especially clear to you as an expression of the prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done?" Explain.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. What was the worst drought you've experienced? How did it change your life?

2. This chapter describes clouds that are raining on others but not on you. When has it seemed that God knows how to rain on others but has forgotten how to reach you?

3. When you are in a drought, lacking at least one important part of daily bread, how much of that "bread" would you rain down on yourself at one time? Why might God restrain the abundance that you would pour over yourself? How is this like the people of Israel living for years on manna?

4. The chapter discusses the dual meaning of "daily" bread as that which is both necessary and intended for today. How are both meanings appropriate for the gifts

that God rains on you?

5. You might imagine that God only visits your dry life, watching it from the clouds. But how does God show that He truly knows your dry life and has felt it on Himself in the life of Jesus?

6. The parable of the friend at midnight is a good parallel to “Give us this day our daily bread” (see Luke 11:5–8). How does the reluctance of the friend match your image of a drought and clouds that rain only on others?

7. You can stare at clouds and wish that they would come over you. But wishing on clouds does nothing. However, how does the urgency and repetition of your prayer have an actual effect on the bringing of daily bread? (See Luke 11:5–8.)

8. Jesus feeding the five thousand is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. Why is this miracle so important that not just one, two, or even three evangelists recorded it, but all four? How does the willingness of Jesus to feed the crowd and the abundance of the meal encourage your prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread?”

9. The chapter discusses the mystery of why droughts happen in our lives. Why would a loving Father ever allow you to experience a drought of daily bread?

10. The chapter’s final answer to our droughts was not about us but about the Father allowing a drought to come to His Son. How is the difficult life and death of Jesus an answer to your own feelings of living in a drought and your painful waiting for daily bread?

CHAPTER FIVE

1. What has been the biggest disaster you and your house have faced? Flood, fire, storm, or worse? How long did it take to put things back together?

2. We’ve pictured daily bread as a shower, but forgiveness is a drenching flood. In what ways is forgiveness a completely soaking flood?

3. When waiting for daily bread, you stand on a dry hill and exercise patience. But how is the prayer for forgiveness answered immediately, and, in fact, long before you have asked?

4. If forgiveness is the essential spiritual gift, why might it come after the prayer for

daily bread? Why do you ask first for ordinary needs of food and shelter and then ask for forgiveness?

5. The chapter describes how a flood in June 1997 changed all the plans my family and I had for that day. How does the flood of forgiveness also change the plans you have? How does it change your goals and what you find satisfying?

6. What new freedom would come from a day that is dominated by the flood of forgiveness? How would it be a welcome simplicity?

7. We all have people who have trespassed on our lives. If the waters of forgiveness are deep enough, how might this change the way you see those trespassing footprints?

8. Floods not only cover but also remove things for good. How does the flood of forgiveness not only cover your neighbor's trespasses but also remove your sins? You might remember the work of the scapegoat as described in this chapter.

9. Floods make a mess, scattering our belongings everywhere. No one wants their personal papers ending up in the neighbor's yard. How does the work of God in Colossians 2:13-14 reassure us that the decrees against us will never float about to accuse us anymore?

10. A final image in the chapter is the hose from your basement reaching to your neighbor's house, supplying him with some of the water from the flood that has filled your house. Recall Luther's description of the forgiven neighbor as a great comfort. Why would this description of the flood of forgiveness and the sharing of the flood be a daily reminder and comfort?

CHAPTER SIX

1. When have you been in a situation in a pool, lake, or waterpark that turned dangerous, such as the scene described at the beginning of the chapter? Who came to save you and say, "That's far enough"?

2. In the Sixth Petition, you hear your heavenly Father say, "You come home." How does this balance well with the earlier phrase, "You come too," which summarizes the petitions, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done?"

3. Do you get confused when praying for deliverance from temptation? If God tempts no one (James 1:13-14), why do you pray for Him to deliver you from temp-

tation He doesn't create?

4. The chapter describes my experience with the Model A when the pulley broke. The point was that the worst didn't happen, only what could be handled. When have you had a similar problem, bad enough, but it wasn't the worst trouble in the worse time and place?

5. How, then, does God also put a limit on the trouble and temptation that would otherwise come to you at a time and in a measure that would be overwhelming?

6. We're not alone in our temptation. The chapter describes the older men who all had their stories of broken water pumps and fried condensers, saying, "They all do that." How are you reminded that you are not alone in your temptations? What power and comfort comes from this shared experience?

7. The older men not only had stories of broken parts, but they also had a way to fix those parts. How does your prayer, "Lead us not into temptation" remind you that a great crowd of witnesses, the heavenly saints, have seen these same problems and have endured? What might you remember and learn from those who have conquered over certain temptations?

8. As valuable as the examples of the saints are, there is a greater One who has been tempted as you are and yet has completely overcome temptation. How is His complete victory over all temptation both an example and a victory for you?

9. The chapter describes the man sleeping at the motocross race, surrounded by the world's greatest racers. What an opportunity lost! When have you also seen an extraordinary moment lost, perhaps simply by sleeping? How can a careless spiritual slumber be one of your temptations?

10. At the end, the chapter suggests that forgiveness and temptation make a reasonable sequence. Why is it natural to first ask for forgiveness and then ask not to be led into temptation?

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. When have you been visiting someone and all you wanted to do was to go home? How did you make it known that it was time to go home?

2. When you pray to be delivered from evil, what exactly are you asking for? How is this more than trying to escape the tired disappointments of life? Who is the ulti-

mate evil from which you seek relief?

3. There is a wide range of evil in the world. See Romans 8:35–39. What is your deliverance from these many aspects of evil while you still live in this troubled world?

4. The chapter describes the four “who” questions of Romans 8:31–35. In Romans 8:34, what are the good words you need to hear, the words you are to concentrate on each day despite all else you might hear?

5. The would-be jailers of Romans 8:35–39 whisper constantly that you are guilty and about to be condemned. What can you say against them on the basis of Romans 8:1 and 8:31–34?

6. This chapter speaks of the Father’s hand upon us. When has someone’s hand holding yours made all the difference for you?

7. How has God placed His hand not only on you in comfort but also over you in protection?

8. “Deliver us from evil” doesn’t remove all evil or take you to a new Eden on earth. But what security does it give you?

9. Besides deliverance from evil, you pray in the Seventh Petition that God would take you home. You have the certainty that He is lifting you upward to a lasting home. How is this the ultimate deliverance from evil even while you are still here on earth?

10. In Revelation 22:20, Jesus says, “Surely I am coming soon,” and we say, “Amen. Come Lord Jesus!” We began this chapter with the image of waiting at a door anxious to leave after a long visit. How do you express that same impatience as you hear the words of Revelation 22:20?

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. When you came home as a child or young adult, how easy or hard was it to talk with your parents? What was a topic that almost always generated good conversation?

2. When we think of coming home to our Father, especially in the end of the Lord’s Prayer, what topics, requests, and thanksgivings come to mind? Are these things you’ve already said in the previous petitions but want to repeat, or are they the

things you haven't gotten to yet?

3. This chapter describes the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem and singing Psalms 120–134. What parts of those Psalms and of that experience are appealing to you as you finish the Lord's Prayer?

4. As you pray, "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory," you join the heavenly choir again. Why is it fitting that you end the Lord's Prayer with these notes and words of victory and praise?

5. In Revelation 21:1–4 and 22:5, you get a glimpse of heaven. How do those images of heaven lift up and animate your closing words of the prayer?

6. The chapter suggests that you might become louder and more confident as you pray the Lord's Prayer. Why might you become especially louder and bolder as you end the prayer, seeing His kingdom and praying with a growing body of saints?

7. The chapter uses a scene from *Pride and Prejudice* where Elizabeth discovers Mr. Darcy's mansion and his surprising love for her, even when she was somewhat trespassing on his estate. How is this astonishment over mansions, mercy, and welcome similar to your experience when you pray the Lord's Prayer and draw near to heaven?

8. Much of our thought has been on our coming home to our heavenly home and our eternal life there. But how is the truth of heaven and the security of your place with God also a present reality? How does His present kingdom, power, and glory involve you today?

9. How does "Amen" give a satisfying, cymbal-crashing end to the Lord's Prayer?

10. In what ways does "Amen" say "I'm home"? How does this just begin the conversation with our Father rather than end it?

CHAPTER NINE

1. The book has pictured the Lord's Prayer as a journey from heaven to earth and back to heaven again. Of the many steps in this journey, which petition and step in the journey is the clearest for you?

2. The book has also had many images associated with the prayer, from the lights on at home to the idea that your words reach your Father waiting in heaven. How

are your opening words, “Our Father who art in heaven” answered by your Father saying, “You’re home!”?

3. This chapter suggests that there are some natural places to linger while saying the prayer, such as “Our Father who art in heaven” and “Hallowed be Thy Name.” Where do you most often linger while you say the prayer?

4. When you ask the Father to come with you, saying, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,” how are you asking for more than just a souvenir from your heavenly trip?

5. You go between drought and flood in the Fourth and Fifth Petitions, “Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Which are you most conscious of today: the daily drought of what you lack or the depth of His forgiving flood?

6. The Fifth Petition of forgiveness is the center of our chart and journey. Why does it make sense that forgiveness is the middle of the prayer and perhaps the center of your thoughts and requests?

7. The journey is only a success if you get safely home. What are the dangers threatening your final trip home? What are the assurances you have in the prayer that your Father will take you home?

8. The book has used many images that are distinct to my personal experiences—Model T Fords, motorcycle races, and floods. What unique experiences and images would you use instead of mine?

9. Our final image is Mark Twain as a Mississippi riverboat pilot who forgets what he knows. He is reminded to never let anyone shake his confidence in what he knows. You know the words and promises of the Lord’s Prayer. How should you pray it in the certainty of what God has said and the promises you know?

10. The Lord’s Prayer is often used as the end of prayers. However, the closing of this chapter suggests that it can also be the beginning of your prayers where you expand on several of the petitions. How can the journey home in the Lord’s Prayer begin your unique words and prayers that go well beyond the exact words of the Lord’s Prayer?