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SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Praying the Lord's Prayer

Every Sunday, in churches around the world, the Lord's Prayer is recited. But many of us repeat the words without really paying attention to what we are saying.

The Lord's Prayer is how Jesus taught the disciples to pray. It wasn't intended to be a 'magic formula' prayer that is recited without thought, but a guideline to teach us how to pray. The Lord's Prayer is still applicable today, and we can learn much from it about how to pray.

Matthew 6:9-13

New International Version (NIV)

9 "This, then, is how you should pray:

10 "Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us today our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,^[a]
but deliver us from the evil one.^[b]"

The Lord's Prayer has two parts. The first part focuses on God and His Kingdom. The second part focuses on us and our needs. That is the first lesson of praying: first focus on God and His Kingdom, then turn to your own needs. God wants us to bring our needs before him, but first we should glorify God.

The first half is made up of three parts: remembering who God is, worshipping Him, and seeking His Kingdom.

First, Jesus said, 'Our Father, who art in heaven.'" As we start to pray, we need to turn our eyes to God and think about who we are praying to. He is the Creator who made the heavens and the earth. He is the Father who loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for us. To start your prayer time, you could read a Psalm or look at creation. Take time to remember who God is.

Focusing our attention on God should naturally lead us to the next step—worship. The next thing Jesus prays is, ‘Hallowed be thy name.’ Hallowed, means holy. ‘Thy name’ refers to God. So really, Jesus was teaching us to say, “God, you are Holy.” Our reaction to thinking about God should be worship that comes from our hearts. If we have time, we might want to sing a song or hymn that speaks of how wonderful God is.

Next, Jesus says, ‘Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’ When we talk about God’s Kingdom, we mean anywhere that God is King, where His will is done. We can pray that God will help us to be obedient to Him in every area of our lives. We can pray to know and follow God’s will in our communities. We may pray for friends or neighbours to become Christians. These are all ways that God’s kingdom comes and His will is done.

Once we have focused on who God is, worshipped Him, and prayed that His Kingdom would expand, then it is time to pray for our needs. Jesus prays, ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ God cares about our physical needs, not just the spiritual part of our lives. This does not mean we should pray for selfish or worldly desires. Instead, Jesus invites us to pray for the things that we need, like food, shelter, and health. We can ask God to bless our efforts and make our fields yield all that we need. Praying for these things is a good reminder that we depend on Him to provide and that they are gifts from Him.

Next, Jesus prays, ‘Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.’ Jesus had no sin, but He was

giving us an example of confessing and of forgiving others. When we disobey God, we naturally feel farther away from Him. When we confess our sin, He heals the relationship between us and Him. We also must forgive others, just as God forgives us. When we find it difficult to forgive someone, we need to pray that God would help us to forgive. This is a good time to ask God if there is anything that you have done wrong so that you can pray for forgiveness. It is also a good time to think about whether we need to forgive anyone or ask anyone for forgiveness.

In the last section, Jesus prays, ‘Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.’ He is teaching us to ask God to help us not to sin. We need God to help us see evil for what it is so that we can avoid it. And we need God to give us strength to obey Him and glorify Him in every area of life, even when sinning seems easier.

Sometime this week as you pray, use the Lord’s Prayer as your model. Take time to slowly go through each of the parts rather than just reciting it. Make sure you complete each stage before you move to the next. Following the Lord’s Prayer can deepen how we pray, and help us grow closer to God.



Wholistic Ministry

Mrs. Lee’s Tips

Do you remember the story of Mrs. Lee? She wanted to show love to her neighbors, especially to those who were the poorest. But she didn’t give them things. Instead, she visited them, listened to their needs, and helped them to solve their own problems. She encouraged a family to use a small patch of land to grow flowers to sell. She asked farmers in the church

to teach another family how to grow sweet potatoes. Finally, she helped reconcile a man with his parents.

We can learn much from the way Mrs. Lee helped others:

1. **We can notice people’s challenges and find ways to help overcome them.** For example, when Mrs. Lee saw the broken relationship

between a son and his parents, she helped them to be reconciled.

2. **We can look for what skills and resources people have, and help them see how to use those resources.** For example, when Mrs. Lee saw the family's small patch of land, she suggested they use it to grow flowers to sell.
3. **We can help people by giving them new ideas, skills, and encouragement.** For example, Mrs. Lee asked farmers in the church to teach a poor, hard-working family how to grow sweet potatoes.



Mrs Lee understood that it pleases God when we show love to others. When we give support and skills, it gives people courage to try to change, instead of feeling hopeless. The families Mrs. Lee helped were completely changed, although she never gave them money, food, clothes, or any physical thing. As you find ways to love those in your community, try to follow the example of Mrs. Lee.

Questions to Discuss:

1. What are some needs that you see in your community?
2. What ideas or skills could you provide to help those in need do something for themselves?
3. How can you start to build a relationship with them?

Application: Ask God to show you how to help those in need in your community. Instead of food, money, or clothes, what skills and knowledge do you have to give?

Ask God to help you understand someone's need and also to see what He has already given them.

God's Intentions for Marriage and Family: Listening and Speaking to Children

As a parent, I am often busy and worried about many things. I must tend to my children if they are sick or injured. I must make sure they have enough to eat and clothes to wear. I must teach them to use the toilet and to wash. It is a lot to do! Yet God wants us not only to provide for our children's physical needs, but also to help them to grow spiritually, socially, and mentally.

In the Bible, Luke 2:52 tells us that "Jesus grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man." We can understand from this verse that all of us, like Jesus, are meant to grow mentally (wisdom), physically (stature), spiritually (favor with God), and socially (favor with man).

We can help our children grow mentally, spiritually, and socially by speaking with and listening to them. This is a good practice with children of all ages.

Even though they cannot understand you at first, talking to babies helps their brains to develop language skills. As they reach about one year and learn to interact with you, they also learn social skills, like



asking for what they need and listening to directions and following them.

By the time your child is two or three years, they ask a lot of questions! Instead of ignoring them or shooing them away, do your best to listen and answer. You can also explain situations instead of only giving directions. For example, if your child needs to swallow medicine, instead of just saying, "Take this medicine," you could explain, "You need to take this medicine because it will help your stomach feel better."

As children get older, we speak to them more, but it's often to give orders or to react in anger when they've done something wrong. We say things like, "Stop that!" or "Fetch the water." But if we take time to talk to children gently and with love, their hearts and minds flourish. We can say simple things like, "I love you" and "Thank you for helping me with the baby."

It's also important that we listen to our children. Even if we disagree with our child or need to correct them, we can listen and try to understand their viewpoint first. God has created each of them in His image with their own ideas, talents, and potential. Just as no two leaves are exactly the same, each child is different from their parents, siblings, and every other child. When we take time to listen to them and to ask about their thoughts and feelings, we help our children to become all that God wants them to be. We can ask questions like, "What do you like studying at school?", "What did you enjoy doing today?", and "You seem upset; can you tell me what you're feeling?"

God calls Himself our Father. He is our example of a perfect parent. Just as our heavenly Father is never too busy to listen to our prayers, we must strive to listen well to our children. And just as He speaks to us through the Bible and the Holy Spirit, we can speak words of love, encouragement, and guidance to our children. When we do, we will see them grow in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man.



Skills for Good Stewardship: Fuel Efficient Stoves

Fuel efficient stoves are one way families can spend less time gathering fuel or less money buying it. Fuel efficient stoves can help you be a good steward of the resources God has given you. Fuel efficient stoves burn fuel more slowly than an open fire, and also target the heat of the flame towards the cooking pot so there is less waste. There are many designs of fuel efficient stoves. The clay stove pictured here directs heat to the pot, resulting in faster cooking. Stoves can be made entirely with local resources and don't need to cost a lot to make.

Here is another way to use less fuel in cooking. Try this method for cooking rice and beans more quickly:

1. Line the inside of a basket with shredded banana leaves or straw.
2. Cook a pot of rice for five minutes or a pot of beans for 20 minutes on a clay stove.
3. Place the hot pot of rice or beans inside the basket. The banana leaves or straw will keep the heat from escaping and the rice or beans will continue to cook until they are done.

Try it and see if it works!

How to Build a Fuel Efficient Clay Stove

You will need:

1. Three medium sized stones or brick pieces
2. Your largest cooking pot
3. Five volumes (buckets) of clay (old termite mounds work well for this)
4. One volume of dry grass
5. Water

Prepare the clay mixture: Mix the clay and water and add the dry grass. Mix well until the clay can be rolled into a sausage or ball.

Construction



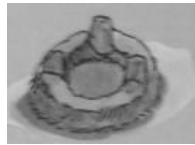
Step 1: Choose a place for the stove. Place the stones or bricks in a triangle, so that the pot fits between the stones and sits about 12-14 cm off the ground (this will allow for firewood and airflow under the pot once the stove is finished).



Step 2: Fix the stones in place with some clay mixture.



Step 3: Wrap coil after coil of the clay mixture in a circle, embedding the three stones. Make the lower part of the clay wall thicker than the upper part. This is the base of your stove.



Step 4: Wet the pot and place it on the base of the stove. Again, make sure it sits 12-14 cm off the ground with open space underneath it. Build the wall up around the pot to just under the rim. Keep a finger-sized gap between the pot and the wall to allow airflow.



Step 5: Remove the pot and smooth out the surface of the stove.



Step 6: Cut out an entrance to the stove about 10 cm wide.



Step 7: Allow the stove to dry in the sun for about 5 days. It will crack during this process. Simply keep filling in the cracks until it stops.

When the stove is dry, you can use it. Make sure not to put too much wood inside or block the entrance. The air needs to get to the fire. After cooking, put out the fire in order not to waste wood. Enjoy your stove and save firewood!

Article adapted from Tearfund – Footsteps 82. 'How To' adapted from 'Build a traditional fuel efficient stove', from the WESSA Eskom Energy and Sustainability Programme and UNHCR and WFP resources

Acts of Love Stories

Reconciling with Muslim Neighbors (Togo, West Africa)

One church in Togo was in a Muslim-majority village, and had a lot of tensions with their Muslim neighbors. During Ramadan, the Muslim community didn't want anyone to play loud music or make noise during the daytime. Of course, the church wanted to worship with

loud music anyway. Then, after sundown, the Muslims feasted and celebrated. The Christians complained about all the noise late at night. After studying Module 2, the church started to help the widows in the village, no matter their religion, with Acts of Love. The non-Christian people in the village were really surprised. They thought of the Christians as noisy complainers. They said, "We've never seen you do anything like this before. Why are you doing it now?" The church

explained that they want to show God’s love. Since the church started doing Acts of Love, the Muslim community gave them permission to play music and worship during Ramadan. The relationship is much more peaceful.

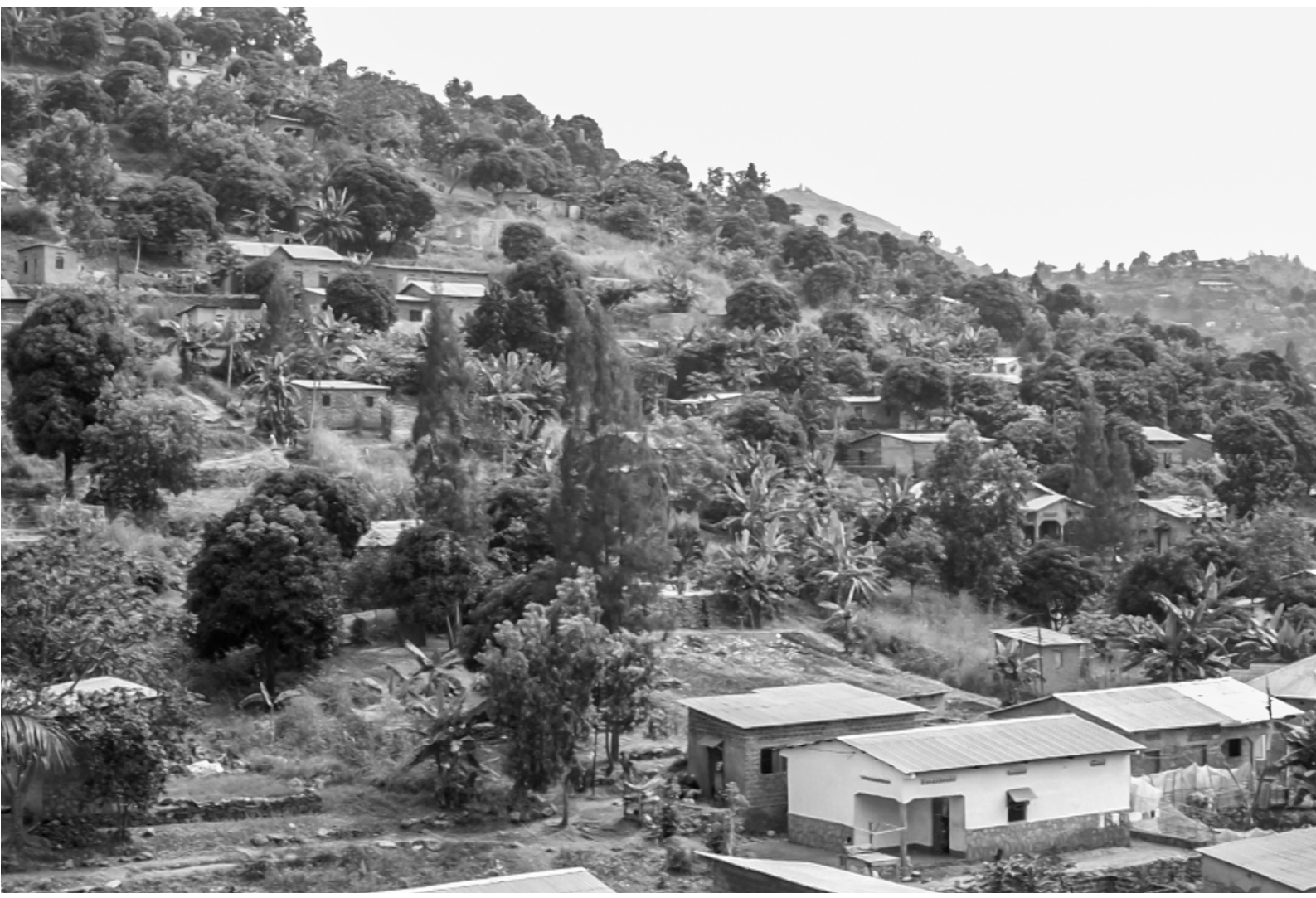
An Act of Love Shows God’s Power Over Witchcraft (DRC, Central Africa)

In one area of Democratic Republic of Congo, they had no electricity. The communities had gotten together to ask the government to provide electricity many times. But every time they tried to meet with the government, something would happen to prevent the meeting. This went on for many years. The communities, even the Christians, came to believe that the reason for this problem was that there were so many witches in the area. They thought, “As long as there is strong witchcraft in our area, we will never have electricity, because we cannot overcome it.”

After studying some modules of TCT, a church in that area decided to show love to their community by bringing electricity. They mobilized their own resources—about \$850 of wire, posts, and materials. It took them two months to plant all the posts and bring electricity to each family in the village. The community was overjoyed, and they saw that God is more powerful than witches. They said, “Now we understand that if we work together, depend on God, and listen to the leading of the church, we can have electricity!” The lie “we can’t do anything” was broken.

Acting in Love Toward a Gang (DRC, Central Africa)

In one area of Democratic Republic of Congo, they were having a real gang problem. Young people (13-18 years) in the gang would hand around a certain area, and people were afraid to even go by there because they were afraid of being robbed or harassed by the gang. The youth in the church identified this as a big problem in their community and asked, “What can we do to show love to our community?” They started a



football (soccer) team and invited the boys from the gang to join the team. They also held a movie night once a week, and invited the gang members to that as well. So instead of hanging around on the street throwing rocks and stealing from people, the gang members came to watch the movie. The first night, 50 people came. The second week, 80 people came. Now about 200 young people come to movie night and participate in the football club. The church also started a tutoring program for the gang members. The pastor went around to the families and encouraged them to get their sons back in school. The parents were very happy about the change in their children's behavior and their willingness to go to school. That area has no problem with gangs anymore, and some of the boys and their families became Christians.

Rebuilding a House Brings an Unbeliever to Testify that God is Good (Benin, West Africa)

In a village called Idioche in Benin, an elderly woman's house was destroyed during heavy rains. She was not able to fix it herself, and no one came to help her, so she continued in this condition for two months. After studying the first module of TCT training, the pastor of the Apostolic Church in Idioche mobilized the church to help this vulnerable woman in order to show God's love to her. So, the church worked to rebuild the mud wall of her home. The woman, who was not a Christian, was so grateful to God, joyful, and giving testimony everywhere she went about what the church had done for her. The people in the village were astonished to see that the church would do such a good thing for an unbeliever. "We didn't know you like this before!" they said to the Christians. Before this Act of Love, there had been disputes between the Christians and unbelievers every year, because the Christians did not want to participate in the traditional rites and ceremonies. But after the Act of Love, the traditional priest came to the pastor and told him that Christians would be free to worship God in the village. Praise God for using this Act of Love to strengthen the church's relationship with their community!



Caring for Orphans Brings Unexpected Blessings (India, South Asia)

Near one church, there was a family of four children whose mother and father had died. No relatives had come forward to care for them, so they were left alone. One of the children became very ill. Members of the church took him in the middle of the night to the Rural Medical Practitioner, who referred him to the district hospital, who recommended he go to the city hospital for care. The community members heard about this, and were sure the child would die. The city hospital realized that the child needed a blood transfusion. Again, no relatives came forward to help. When the church members learned that no one was willing to help, one person donated blood for him.

The child recovered and returned home healthy, to the community's surprise. Then the church began to think about how to take care of these four children. Some believers volunteered to support their education.

Some donated rice. The church helped with the eldest sister's marriage ceremony and enrolled the oldest brother in driving school so that he has a means of earning income. The pastor brought two of the children (ages 6 and 14) into his home to care for as his own, despite the risk that the youngest boy could get sick again and need expensive medical care.

When the community saw the generosity and care that the Christians showed to these children, they became more open to the church's teaching. Four families received Christ and joined the church! The Village Chief publicly appreciated the pastor and church for their care of the orphans, and he sanctioned the construction of a two-bedroom house for the pastor's family from the local government building project.

As believers sacrificially cared for a family of orphans, God was glorified and the church was blessed!

Fixing a Road Brings Freedom from Idol Worship (Nepal, South Asia)

There was a church in Nepal with a big problem—every year their village had an idol worshipping ceremony where each member of the community was required to contribute money. Even the Christians were forced to donate toward the idol worship each year.

After studying some modules of TCT, the church wanted to show God's love to their community. As they prayed about what Act of Love they should do, God impressed upon their hearts to fix the road that connected their village to the main road. The 500-meter dirt road was very muddy during rainy season and in terrible condition—even motorbikes had a hard time getting through. The local leaders saw the problem, but had different opinions about how to get it fixed, so no repairs were undertaken after four years of discussion.

The church wanted to obey God, so they made a decision to fix the road. The pastor had a tractor that he lent for two days. The church members contributed the money for the diesel fuel. About 22 believers

participated to clear the mud: they leveled the road, put the excess mud on the tractor, and carried it to another place. As they were doing this work, the pastor challenged others from the community to join. Later, 10 people joined in to help repair this road. The believers felt so good and excited to be a part of this community service. Some community members commented that they must have received foreign funding and were doing this work in order to convert people to Christianity. They were surprised to learn this was not the case. Some community members expressed appreciation to the church for doing this excellent work. Even the local political leaders appreciated the church for this work, and came to respect the church because of this Act of Love. The next time the idol worshipping ceremony came around, the local leader in charge convinced the community that the Christians should not have to contribute because they were already doing many good things for the village.

Praise God that He used this Act of Love to strengthen the church's relationship with their community and free His people from participating in the idol worship ceremony!

