



### Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



### Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



### HG55: The Lord's Prayer (2/8) *Privilege: Praying To Our Father*

**Matthew 6:5-13**

### Home Group Study Notes

18<sup>th</sup> September 2011 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION **BEFORE** THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.*



### Welcome/Ice Breaker (10 mins)

Think of either your father or mother. If someone was to ask you to list three ways in which you are like them and three ways in which you are unlike them, what would you say?



### Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...





## Looking Upwards (40 mins) *Bible Study*

Read through the text for this study, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, of your answers with your Home Group.

1: If God is our Father and we are his children then surely we ought to resemble him. How do you think others would see the family resemblance in you? Is acquiring a better resemblance to God a top priority for you?

2: What is your biggest fear? How does knowing that God is your Father help you face this?

3: How seriously do you take the privilege of having God as your Father? Does it affect: how you live ... how you praise ... how you pray? Does this truth encourage you?

Praying to our Father is a privilege but so often we assign it to the last 5 minutes of a meeting and it has become a long list of things that we want God to fix for us. We think that as God knows - why bother praying. We can excuse ourselves by thinking that the prayer meeting is for some but not for others because we prefer to be doing and to be where the action is, but Jesus tells us that the prayer closet is where the action is... being in the presence of God in prayer is where the action is and it is only through our prayers that God will release His power that will enable the church to conquer the world. Arthur Wallis said: "*When God intends a great mercy for his people the first thing He does is set them a praying ... whether it be awakenings in the US revivals in Wales or the Hebrides at the heart of every revival is a spirit of prayer*"

**The King's Children:** God doesn't just save individuals, he makes himself a holy people, in the Old Testament this was Israel. In the New Testament however through the work of Jesus, God's people become a universal family, not simply a nation. 1 Peter 2:9 says that we are: "*.. a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*" We are a royal people, we are children of the King, there is royalty in our blood. Not only that but we are a priestly people we are set apart and invited to go into the presence of God and to pray to our Father. In old testament times a priest acted as intermediately between the people and God but thanks to Jesus we now can come directly into God's presence for our own delight and benefit but with the responsibility of taking others to him also in prayer.

Jesus completed the act of reconciliation on the cross and the world is reconciled to God, (2 Cor 5 18-21) - it just doesn't know it. There are people in our community who are reconciled to God but they don't know it. He offers them salvation. He loves them. He wants to redeem and forgive them ...but they don't know it. Christ's message of reconciliation has been given to us, we are his ambassadors, He finished the work of salvation and reconciliation, now he needs our prayers to release His power into the lives of the lost so that they can see, understand and receive.

**This Is Our Time:** Being a child of God is a privilege and it carries a responsibility to pray because we are back in partnership with God, we are heirs with Christ and He chooses to work through us. When we choose not to pray and fail to see prayer as the powerful tool and weapon that it is... when we give up and fail to persevere in prayer...when we fail to see the consequences of not praying,....when we simply just don't do it enough..... when we don't see coming into God's presence as the privilege it is, bought by the greatest loving act of sacrifice of Jesus... then like the first Adam its as if once again, we are just giving away all the authority and privileges that God intended for us and that Jesus died in order to give back to us. We are giving away intimacy with Our Father, giving away opportunities to work with Our Father, we're giving up the fight, walking off the battleground and we're giving away the authority that he intends us to have.

This is our time. We have a Father in Heaven who asks us to step up to the mark, to rise to the occasion and accept His invitation to be co-labourers with Him. If that is not a privilege, then, what is?

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

*Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name,  
Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen.*

**The Privilege of Childhood:** What a privilege it is to have God as our heavenly Father and what a responsibility. We have a duty to be mindful of how we live knowing that we represent Him. We need to set out to live like Christ, to imitate Him, always remembering that we have the Holy Spirit in us providing His strength and power. We also have a responsibility to pray for others, and to enjoy the privilege of working with our Father in bringing in His Kingdom. Our prayers can have eternal effects on the lives of people who do not know him when we willingly respond to the call to pray, and as he is looking for our full co-operation he's not interested in dutiful, joyless prayers. God can do anything that He chooses to do, but He has chosen to work with and through us and if we don't pray then He will wait until He finds someone else who will.

**The Privilege of Praying to Our Father:** Not only is praying to our Father our greatest privilege it is also our greatest source of power. Our constant, planning, preparation, and activity is worthless unless we have first come before God in prayer. Prayer is the root and strength of everything we do. It is our highest calling and the holiest and most important work entrusted to us because it is fellowship with the Living Lord... and we need to do much more of it. In prayer God has given us the right and ability to take hold of Him and His power:

- In prayer all his promises will be fulfilled.
- It is through prayer that God's Kingdom will come and His glory to the world will be revealed.
- It is in prayer that the church will find and exert its highest power and it is only when God's people truly give themselves up to the holy work of intercession that we can expect to see the power of Christ manifest itself on our behalf.

Coming to our Father in prayer a privilege, its not a duty, ... but like all good things it requires some discipline. It is sometimes hard work, it can be dull and at times seemingly fruitless. It needs concentration, time and honesty, in other words it has all the things in common with a good relationship with someone because good relationships require honesty, effort and time. Dutch Sheets says: "*We don't wait well. We are into microwaving. God on the other hand is into marinating.*"

The price was high, the privilege breathtaking, so why do we not pray more...why is it that our minds often wander as soon as we sit down to pray, why is it all too easy to fall asleep when we pray last thing at night? Is it simply and truthfully...because we take Jesus for granted? We're in good company if that's the case because that night in the garden in Gethsemane Jesus asked his disciples to stay awake with him while he prayed but they also found it too difficult to stay awake, perhaps after 3 years with Jesus they had become too familiar with him, they were deaf to his pleas to pray for him, and they failed to see and appreciate just whose company they were in. God's fatherhood and our access to him is not a right or a gift that we have done anything to deserve but it is a privilege borne out of Jesus' humility and graciousness.

The psalmist urges us to: "*Be still and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations.*" Ps 46:10. We look around the world and we see very little sign of this happening, but if we want to see the tide turn in our world, we need to pray, because our enemy is not against flesh and blood. It is only in in prayer that we can believe the truth that things can change. Being still in prayer restores the intended order of things, it lets us accept our frailty and limitations and allows us to let God be God. Being still before Him reminds us just how small we are and of just how much we need him and it leads us to wonder at the privilege of being loved and wanted by such a glorious and incomprehensible God who we can know quite simply and wonderfully as ... Father.

4: God is *Our* Father, and we are eternal brothers and sister with those who belong to Him. Think of the people in church that you find it difficult to get on with, does seeing them as family help?

5: When you pray how much of your time is devoted to personal issues and how much is devoted to those issues that affect **only** other people.

6: What are the main barriers that hinder your prayer life?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## HG55: The Lord's Prayer (2/8) *Privilege: Praying To Our Father*

Matthew 6:5-13

### Home Group Sermon Notes

18<sup>th</sup> September 2011 - Pauline Woolnough

**Introduction:** *In the beginning* God created us in his image, placing his very essence in us. Ps 8: 5-6 says: “*You made him a little lower than God and crowned him with glory and honour. You made him ruler over the works of your hands, you put everything under his feet.*” The first man, Adam, was to be God’s manager, his representative on earth and it was his job to look after creation. God did not give away ownership of the earth, rather he put a manager in place and assigned responsibility of governing it to him. Our completely and utterly generous God made the whole of the earth’s abundance available to Adam and his descendants along with the joy of looking after a creation totally in harmony with His will. If that was not enough Adam was able to walk in God’s presence and enjoy spending evenings talking with him. That was God’s intention for us, until of course Adam gave the authority away when he and Eve sinned following advice they took from the serpent.

**The ‘Falling’ Out:** Because God was so generous and trusting he not only gave authority over the earth to Adam, he also gave him the right and ability to give that authority away to whoever he pleased. In Luke 4:6-7 we see Jesus being tempted in the wilderness when Satan reveals all the earths kingdoms and offers them to Jesus if he would only worship him, he says: “*I will give you all their authority and splendour for it has been given to me and I can give it to anyone I want to.*” Jesus refers to Satan’s authority 3 times in John (Jn 12:31, 14:30 and 16:11). He calls him the “*prince of the world.*” When Adam sinned, friendship with God was broken, the partnership was dissolved. Adam’s pursuit of independence and knowledge came with a price. All the authority that God had given to Adam was handed over to Satan, and all the privileges, that he had enjoyed ... were simply given away.

Man and God grew apart, and unbelievably, God missed us. He missed fellowship with us and he wanted the partnership restored. He had a plan, but it was costly. Nowhere is that cost more visible than in the garden of Gethsemane just before Jesus was arrested and where we see Him at his most vulnerable. We observe his distress and agony as he prayed and asked God to think up another plan. He knew the pain that was ahead of him and he asked his Father to find another way, because even for Jesus the cross was too much to bear and if there had been another way to enable us to make our peace with God then it would have been revealed there in that Garden. John Stott writes this: “*The agony of the garden opens a window into the greater agony of the cross. If to bear man’s sin and God’s wrath was so terrible in anticipation what must have the reality been like.*”

**Amazing Grace:** Christ’s death restored the relationship between us and God that sin had broken and we now have guaranteed access to God because through Jesus we are made righteous. *Now*, for those of us who believe in Christ, God is quite simply.... our Father. God, who is in Heaven ruling over everything, over every nation and kingdom, over every prime minister, president and king wants us to know Him as our father.

God, who sees everything and knows everything ... who rules over all time and all places, who has everything under his authority, who is sovereign and in charge and who is *the King*..... wants us to work with Him and to call Him, Father.

However, for some of us the notion that God is our Father and who loves us is not always an easy concept to accept because some of us have had poor experiences of fatherhood. Many of us don’t associate fatherhood with absolute and unconditional love and some of us don’t know what a relationship with a father is meant to look like. All human fathers fall short of God’s standards and it is inadequate human fathers who have devalued fatherhood. God is the ultimate father and throughout the bible it is love and faithfulness that describe his fatherhood. Jesus knew it was so important that we know God as Father because He uses the name Father 3 times in Matt 6:6-8. Jesus wants us to know and completely understand that we enjoy a Father child/relationship with God because it will affect how we talk to him and how much we trust him. He gave us back the privilege of being able to approach God without fear, enabling us to tell him about everything that bothers us, and now we get to call him Father, even to call him Abba, papa, daddy. When we pray we meet with our Father who waits for us and who is ready to embrace us with His infinite love and absolute acceptance of us.

**He is Our Father:** The first two words that Jesus tells us to use at the start of The Lord’s Prayer, “*Our Father*” are the key to the prayer and the key to all prayer. We enjoy a privilege that none of the saints in the Old Testament ever enjoyed because none of them went before God and called him Father. The Son came to make His Father, *our* Father. In these 2 words we declare that we have become children of God having been delivered from the curse of sin by Christ, and the mystery of redemption is revealed. In these two words we understand the work of the Holy Spirit in us as he gives us new life and we encounter the mystery of rebirth and restoration.

Knowing that the Father loves us is the ultimate joy and fulfilment and is so important and if that is a barrier to you then you must face it because you are being robbed of your inheritance. 1 John 3:1: “*See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are!*” Our Father is tender and patient, he is ready to hear us and to help but it takes a decision of our hearts to open ourselves up to accept our need and allow the Spirit to reveal the Father’s heart to us. Understanding God is our Father gives us a sense of worth because, what we are actually saying is: “***I am a child of God and I am loved, I am special and I am significant.***” Once we know that we are loved and accepted and wanted then the power of prayer will be found to take root and grow in us.

The Lord’s Prayer starts with *Our* Father, not *My* Father. The whole of the prayer deals with community, we are praying not simply for our own individual needs but for the needs of our community, for the church family, for everyone who knows Christ. When we say The Lord’s Prayer we are entering into something much bigger than ourselves and we are coming before God as part of a worldwide fellowship.

**He is in Heaven:** The third and fourth words that Jesus uses in the Lord’s Prayer “.... *in heaven,*” remind us of God’s greatness and glory. Our response to him should be one of praise and adoration, but not only that, we should come before him filled with hope because we come before the One who has the power to help us. These 4 words “*Our Father in Heaven*” tell us that God is willing to help us because he is our Father, and as he is “*in heaven*” he therefore has unlimited resources available to him and at his disposal to use for our good. “*For our own good*” of course means remembering that He has the ultimate knowledge of what is and what is not good for us, that’s not always the same things that we ask for.