

Day 1
February 24



Pray | For a right view of God and your standing before him

GOD DOESN'T NEED FLATTERY to hear and respond to your prayers.

In ancient times, people praying to pagan gods used flattery to 'butter up' the god before making their request. They believed their words had to be compelling enough to gain the favor and ear of their god. *What a relief it is to know that God isn't so fickle!* God chooses to hear our prayers, not because we say the right words, but because he loves us and desires a relationship with us. He doesn't need our prayers. In fact, he already knows what is on our hearts before we begin. While adoration and praise are an important part of prayer, they do not earn God's favor. Instead of preparing God to hear our prayer, adoration prepares *our* hearts. Recounting God's character and promises reminds us who we're talking to and clothes us in humility and reverence.



Read | *Matthew 6:7-9, Hebrews 4:14-16, Psalm 66:16-20*



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, believers can approach God's throne with confidence. Do you feel the need to use words to flatter or convince God that *you* are worthy before he hears your prayers? How does the Hebrews scripture help you come to God just as you are?

The first words of Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6 are adoration: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.' *Hallowed* is often translated as holy. Jesus addresses God as Father and names one of his perfect attributes. This example shows us adoration doesn't have to be wordy or complicated. What one attribute will you praise God for today?

Do you know Jesus as Lord and Savior? If so, you can join the psalmist and declare that God hears your prayers. Take a moment to pray through the verses in Psalm 66 offering the verses to God as your personal prayer.

Day 2

February 25



Pray | To see God as your perfect heavenly Father

It's hard not to bring our experiences with imperfect human fathers into our understanding of God as Father.

For many, the idea of approaching God as Father is hindered by their relationship with earthly fathers. Even the best father has failed to keep promises, listen well, and do what is best for their child. Like all people, fathers struggle with personal sin, selfishness and shortcomings. There are no perfect human fathers. This can make it extremely difficult to embrace God as our perfect heavenly Father. God *always* loves unconditionally and *always* does what is best for his children. To help us understand God as Father, we can look to his one and only Son, Jesus. The Bible records Jesus using the name *Father* for God more than any other name. Through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, believers have the privilege of approaching God as their Father, too.



Read | [Matthew 6:8-9](#), [Romans 8:14-15](#), [Romans 8:38-39](#)



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

In Matthew 6, Jesus tells us to pray to *our* Father in heaven, who already knows what we need. How has your experience with earthly fathers affected your view of God as Father? Where do you need God's help to trust him?

The name *Abba* means Father and suggests a personal and intimate relationship. Romans 8:14-15 tells us when we receive the Holy Spirit by grace through faith in Jesus, we can also call God 'Abba, Father.' Do you know God personally as Father? If not, will you investigate what this means?

As you read Romans 8:38-39, *just think!* God, the creator of heaven and earth, invites *you* to call him *Father*. Nothing on earth or in heaven can separate you from his great love. How does the truth of God's unchanging love make you feel? Do you have doubts? Respond to God honestly with how you feel and ask him to help you see him clearly.

Day 3
February 26



Pray | *To truly desire God's kingdom to come and his will be done*

YOUR KINGDOM COME, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

The American dream tells us we can be and can accomplish anything with hard work. Our country largely measures success by wealth, goals achieved, and popularity. When surrounded by these messages, it can be tempting to focus our time and efforts to build *our kingdoms* and follow *our dreams*. Unfortunately, experience shows that the pursuit of our own agenda leaves us feeling discontent and disconnected from God. Contrary to what our culture believes, the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness is not what God values or desires for his children. Instead, God invites believers to participate in his kingdom work here on earth in action and in prayer. As believers follow Jesus, they increasingly desire to do his will and live his way.



Read | *Matthew 6:10, Matthew 26:39, Romans 8:26-27*



Reflect | *Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:*

Our prayers can reveal whose kingdom we want to further and whose will we want to follow. Have you been asking God to bless *your* plans or to reveal *his* plans so you can join him? What plan is God asking you to hold loosely?

Jesus' prayer in Matthew 26 reveals his anguish in submitting to God's will that ultimately led to the cross. God's perfect plans may lead to places you'd rather not go and to situations you'd rather not face. Ask him for courage to obey and declare, "Yet not as I will, but as you will."

Are you seeking God's will in a specific area right now? Romans 8 says the Holy Spirit knows your heart and prays *according to the will of God* on your behalf. Even if you aren't sure where to start, ask God to show you the next right step—he will!

Day 4
February 27



Pray | To trust and depend on God's provision

GIVE US TODAY our daily bread.

Imagine if, instead of going to the grocery store or a restaurant for your meals today, you just went outside in the morning and picked it up from the ground? That's just what the Israelites did while wandering in the desert for 40 years. When the morning dew evaporated, a white substance called 'manna' covered the ground. The Bible describes manna as a white, flaky substance that tasted like wafers made with honey. Manna for breakfast. Manna for lunch. Manna for dinner. While many of us cringe at the idea of eating the same food for 40 years, manna was a miracle that symbolized God's daily and faithful provision and care for his people. Much like the Israelites had to trust God for their literal daily bread, we are called to trust God to provide for our daily needs—both physical and spiritual.



Read | Exodus 16:4,19-20, Matthew 6:11, Matthew 4:4



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

In Exodus, God told the people to gather only enough manna for one day as a test of faith. When they gathered more, it spoiled. Where do you struggle to trust God to provide for you? Where are you relying on yourself instead of God? How can you begin praying for God to help you depend on him instead?

No person, bank account, or job can provide for your needs better than God; and no one other than Jesus can provide for your salvation. If you aren't relying on God to provide for you, who or what are you counting on?

When Jesus was tempted in the desert after not eating for 40 days, his response in Matthew 4:4 tells us that man needs not only physical bread but also the words of God. Are you taking God's word in daily? We can't ever get enough of God's word—ask God to give you an insatiable hunger for more!

Day 5
February 28



Pray | To receive God's forgiveness and extend it to others

AND FORGIVE us our debts, *as we also have forgiven our debtors*. Jesus, more than any other person, knows the cost of forgiveness—he paid it.

Forgiveness is the act of releasing a person from any debt or obligation. Essentially, extending forgiveness is like saying, “You don’t owe me anything” no matter what offense has been committed and no matter how much is owed. Recently, a Minnesota couple read impact statements at a sentencing hearing for the man who tried to murder their child. Though his actions were shockingly evil and left their child fighting for life, they extended forgiveness. He didn’t deserve it; they forgave out of obedience and love for God. They also shared the gospel message of salvation by faith in Jesus and prayed the man would call on Jesus and be saved. It feels radical, doesn’t it? This is the type of forgiveness Jesus calls us to in Matthew 6.



Read | Matthew 6:12-15, Romans 6:23, 1 John 1:9



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Each of us must face the cost of our personal sin, which is death (Romans). 1 John 1:9 says God is faithful to forgive us when we confess our sin. Have you received God’s forgiveness for your sins by grace through faith in Jesus? If you have, do you practice daily confession to keep your heart pure before God? If not, try it today and consider how you could make it a habit.

When Jesus delivers the warning in Matthew 6:14-15, he isn’t minimizing how hard forgiveness can be; Jesus paid the price on the cross! Do you view forgiveness as an act of obedience and right response to God’s forgiveness of your sins? How does God’s forgiveness of *all* of your sins change the way you see sins committed against you by others?

What sin committed against you or a loved one do you struggle to or refuse to forgive? Does the warning given in Matthew 6:14-15 change the urgency of dealing with unforgiveness in your heart? Where is God asking you to take the first step of prayerfully asking for his help to forgive?

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