

**On the Go Prayer**  
**A Bible Study By**  
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## Introduction

I remember being intimidated by prayer and in some settings I still am. I would sit in church or in a prayer meeting and feel inadequate as I listened to the beautifully articulated prayers of others. I marveled at how easily they moved between various topics and how they seemed to touch the heart of God in ways I couldn't even fathom. I also remember being bored when prayers stretched longer than expected or needed. I remember tuning out when public prayers turned into mini-sermons aimed at us instead of God. I remember feeling that my prayers would be judged or corrected. One night in my late teens I was driving home from a Bible Study of college-aged peers. I was frustrated that my prayers did not rise to the level of others. My prayer that night was - "Lord, teach me to pray."

It's not that I didn't pray or know the basics. However, my informal and conversational style of personal prayer seemed miles apart from what I heard from others. The answer that I received from my prayer unfolded over many years. There are still times when group prayer is uncomfortable as I struggle to find the best words to express the prayer that is my heart. My mind still wanders when the prayers of others stretch beyond the need or become mini-sermons. The things I have learned along the way, however, has made my personal prayers vital, relevant, and effective. They are often on the go prayers, brief flashes of connecting with God in the joys, struggles, challenges, and needs of the moment.

I like to think of prayer as being like trail mix. That portable high energy food hikers use while they walk through the wilderness. It is often a combination of nuts, dried fruit, honey, and chocolate chunks; each handful similar but different. Other Bible studies have excellent plans for those moments when we can sit and pray. This series is not designed to teach you how to fill an hour of quiet time. Nor will it demonstrate how to craft beautiful public prayers. It won't teach you how to get anything you want from God. My hope and prayer is that this series will encourage heart prayers that meet the command in Scripture to pray without ceasing. That prayer would no longer be relegated to a few minutes in the morning and at the dinner table, or wait until the next prayer meeting, or only whispered in the moment of crisis. But that we would all partake and be energized with moment by moment connection with God as each day unfolds.

### Lesson One

A few years back myself, Betty, and our son Michael took a Motorcycle Safety Course. For a day and half about two dozen souls learned and practiced motorcycle safety. We learned the basics of operation, starting, using the clutch, braking. We were instructed on safe riding techniques. The final test was a kind of obstacle course that put all of the lessons together. The course was laid out using small orange cones which we were to avoid at all costs. One by one we wove our way through corners, the toughest challenge was the final turn which lured you in and then quickly became tight. The trick in navigating the turn was to look ahead, look at where you wanted to go instead of trying to avoid the cones. It's a basic mechanical law of motorcycling, look at where you want to go and not at the thing you are trying to avoid because the bike will go where you look. Prayer works the same way. We all survived the final test and passed the course.

This lesson about On the Go Prayers begins with the basics of who, where, and when. Jesus taught us, "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 'Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 'Give us this day our daily bread. 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'" (Matthew 6:9–13, NASB95) We begin with the first phrase - Our Father who is in heaven. Later articles will consider the various "what's" in the rest of the Jesus' model prayer.

## Who

It is easy to think of "our Father who is in heaven" as the address on an envelope or an email address. One time a grade school teacher had us write and post letters, I think it was 2nd grade. In my mind I addressed it properly - Grandma, Goodfield, Illinois. That was it. For those of you not from central Illinois, Goodfield is a small farming community which at that time boasted a population of 300. Instead of rejecting my letter the postmaster somehow figured out which grandma to deliver the letter to. How we address our prayers, where we are looking, is important. But even prayers clumsily labeled like my letter to grandma will be heard.

Our prayers however are more like a conversation than a letter or an email. How we address someone when face to face declares something about our relationship. Are we close? What is our relationship? Do we respect, honor, and trust them? Are we unsure or distant? Our address can even relay our feelings towards them at the moment. Every child instinctively knows that if mom or dad invokes their middle name they are in trouble. It's not just the words that matter, our tone of voice and body language also declare our feelings and intent. Over the years I've heard a variety of ways to begin our prayers; some were formal, some religious, and some familiar. They all work, they all connect us to God and focus our thoughts towards Him.

Jesus invited us to pray to our "Father in Heaven". He could have used any number of God's names or titles but he chose one that breaths relationship. We are not invited before the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16) as a slave to a master, or a subject to a king, or sheep to shepherd but as sons and daughters. There is a famous picture of President Kennedy sitting in the Oval Office while his children played beneath the massive desk. There are other pictures as well also taken in the Oval Office of Kennedy and his children. I ran across one that shows Kennedy sitting at his desk while he converses with his daughter sitting in a chair reserved for guests. Powerful men and women could only enter the Oval Office and sit in that chair through an appointment. While there those men and women would address Kennedy as Mr. President. I'm sure that the Kennedy children simply called him dad.

When we pray it is not wrong to use formal language but Jesus invites us to relate to God as father. I think that it brings us closer and gives us the freedom to open our hearts; pouring out both our joys and our sorrows. While I believe we can pray informally, like a son conversing with his dad, we must also avoid flippancy and reversal of roles. Our heavenly father should not be treated like our latest BFF but honored and respected; familiarity does not create equality. Also to be avoided is the desire to lord over God, to tell instead of ask, to command instead of obey. While we relate to God as our father He still remains our master, lord, shepherd, and creator. For instance, while I relate to God as Father I typically begin my personal prayers with "Lord". The point is not to have a correct formula but to have a connected heart.

## Where

Name one place where you can't pray. I'm not talking man-made restrictions or social agreements where public prayer is supposedly forbidden. Is there any place that you could find yourself that God would not hear your prayers? The psalmist observes, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night," Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You." (Psalm 139:7-12, NASB95) No matter where we are at physically, spiritually, or emotionally we can pray. We can pray driving down the highway (just keep your eyes open), while shopping, at work, at play, in moments of stress, in times of depression, and even when our souls are weighed down with sin God's presence can be found. If one day astronauts travel to the far reaches of the universe, even there they could pray. I have a confession to make - I pray in school. No I don't get on the PA system or stand before an assembly but as I walk the halls, as I observe moments of stress, as I learn about the personal struggles of staff and students I pray. Even in the places where man-made laws have tried to stifle prayer we can pray. Some today would limit prayer to our homes and churches citing Jesus own words as proof, "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:6, NASB95) Jesus' point however was to avoid showiness, the prayer of the hypocrite which brings more attention to themselves instead of to God. No matter where we are at physically we can be and should be before the throne of God.

Where should we pray? Everywhere.

When

It is probably no great surprise that when is like where, since we can and should pray anywhere we can and should also pray at any time. It is good to have a set time, even if it is just a few minutes, to spend time with God. One Morning Prayer that I've read goes something like this - Dear Lord, So far I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, and haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish, or overindulgent. I'm really glad about that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed. And from then on, I'm going to need a lot more help. Remember that prayer is about relationship. We don't set aside a few moments so our day goes better, prayer is not a good luck charm. We pray in the morning to set our focus, to remember who the day really belongs to, to know that whatever trouble comes our way Jesus is there with us.

On the Go Prayer doesn't leave God at home or in church. Our daily journey unfolds moment by moment, joy by joy, challenge by challenge, so should our prayers. Each moment is an opportunity to connect with God. It can be as short as "Lord, Help!", as pointed as "Keep them safe Father" as a car speeds by, as joyful as "thank you Lord for that rainbow." I think that some of the most important prayers on the go are those that bring God into our daily decisions and choices. Asking for God's wisdom, guidance, and will for whatever is in front of us and pausing to listen for that answer.

The challenge and encouragement is simple - Our heavenly father has an open door policy. He hears our prayers no matter where we are or what time of day it is. So pray. Nothing is too small, nothing is too trivial. God is never too busy to hear from you.

Study Questions:

Describe your current prayer life. How often. For what reasons or occasions. And how regular.

Rate your prayer life:

Prayer Wimp 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Prayer Warrior

Rarely Answered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Always Answered

Only when in crisis 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 With Every Step

Self-Centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Others-Centered

What questions do you have about prayer that you hope this study will address?

This lesson considered "Our Father who is in heaven" and the who, where, and when of prayer.

Who are we addressing with our prayers?

Where can we pray?

When can we pray?

## **Lesson Two**

In my office there is a shadow box dedicated to my grandfather. My mom made it years ago and gave it to grandpa as a present. Protected under its glass cover are small remembrances of Grandpa Joe's life: A receipt, sticker, and key ring from his business; several items from his days as Scoutmaster; a ribbon and pin from his days in the army; a photo; and a few mementos from his dad. These items have been set apart, hallowed if you will, in remembrance and celebration of Grandpa's life and accomplishments.

In our previous lesson we covered the prayer basics of who, where, and when. This lesson is the first of several that will cover the "what" of On the Go Prayers. The major emphasis of this series is to encourage praying as we go; constantly connecting with God through the joys, sorrows, and struggles we encounter as each day unfolds. Our next topic, the first "what" found in Jesus' model prayer is "Hallowed be your name" (Matt 6:9).

Hallowed - even though we don't use that word much anymore its effects remain. It can be seen in the hush and reverence when visiting a cemetery. The awe and sadness one feels when standing at the stone wall at Gettysburg that withstood Pickett's charge. The sense of honor and debt that overwhelms when standing before names etched into the Vietnam War Memorial. The sense sacred reverence that can still be felt in churches around the world. Those places mentioned have been hallowed, set apart; in a sense made holy. John recounts in Revelation his vision of the most holy place - "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come." And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever..." (Revelation 4:8-9, NASB95) In this scene from the most hallowed of places the worship of God is continuous and the declaration of His holiness is thunderous.

"Hallowed be Your name", those simple words explode into a never ending cascade of worship as Jesus invites us to join the angels who ceaselessly worship at the throne of God. Worship is much more than the time of singing, grander even than our Sunday gatherings. It is our occupation, our never ending task of praising God for who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do. Worship is expressed in whispered thanks, exuberant praise, reverential surrender, humble action, joyful song, quiet tears, sacrificial giving, and peaceful contentment among many other things. John used three words to characterize the worship of the angels - glory, honor, and thanks.

Briefly summarized. Glory is the reflecting back of God's goodness and attributes. Recognizing and declaring His love, grace, mercy, justice, compassion, and faithfulness. Honor is reflecting the awe due to Him through our actions, our choices, and our obedience to God's will. Thanksgiving is simply

recognizing and thanking God for what He has done, is doing, and will yet do in our lives and in the world around us. For the purposes of On the Go Prayers we want to concentrate on thanksgiving which will encompass glory and honor.

One of the constant expressions in the writings of the Apostle Paul is thankfulness to God. Over and over again he wrote things like - "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed," (Romans 6:17, NASB95) Or - "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you," (Colossians 1:3, NASB95) And - "For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;" (Ephesians 1:15-16, NASB95) By adding thanksgiving to our prayers on the go we open up our hearts to what God is doing. But more than that, thanksgiving is an act of obedience and recognition that God is in control and not us.

Thanksgiving is a vital part of praying on the go and perhaps the easiest habit to acquire. Whispering simple thank you prayers to God as your day unfolds makes a huge difference. They remind us of God's love and goodness. They allow us to enter into His compassion for the brokenness around us. They anchor our peace by recognizing that God is in control. All too often we approach God with grumblings and complaints on our lips instead of praise and thanksgiving. The Psalmist wrote however to, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name." (Psalm 100:4, NASB95) Saturating our prayers with thanksgiving sets our hearts in the right place, acknowledges our need and reliance on God, and looks ahead in faith. Even if we can't find a way to thank God for our circumstance, we can thank Him for what He's going to do and how it is shaping our love and faith. We can also thank God for the beauty of creation, the food on our table, and the love shared. We can thank Him for the answers received and those yet unseen. When we thank God for the blessings and challenges of each day we join the worship of the angels by declaring in practical terms His holiness, His hallowedness. In a way the thankful prayers of our day becomes like a shadow box filled with the grace and majesty of God.

Study Questions:

What does the word "hallowed" mean to you?

How can you worship God?

Of all of those, what is your favorite? Which is the hardest?

What attitude are we to have when we enter God's presence? (Psalm 100:4)

What things in your life can you thank God for right now?

Why is it important to thank God as our day unfolds?

### **Lesson Three**

In October of 1492 Christopher Columbus and a small group of men set foot on an island somewhere in the Bahamas. They carried the banners of the Kingdoms of Spain and in words lost to history claimed the land in the name of the king and queen, renaming it San Salvador. That scene was played out multiple times as other explorers from Europe sought to spread their influence over the New World. Our map, languages, and the names of cities, states, and provinces are still influenced by those long ago planted seeds.

The second "what" that we find in the Lord's prayer is "Your Kingdom Come". Jesus invites us to ask God to advance His kingdom and His sovereignty into our world. Call it intercession or standing in the gap. Essentially the On the Go Prayer of "Your kingdom come" is a response to the brokenness and dysfunction we see in the world, in our communities, in our families, in our homes, and in ourselves.

#### **Kingdom**

Jesus began many parables by saying something along the lines of "The Kingdom of God is like..." Two parables describe the Kingdom as being like a seed or a small bit of yeast which grow and expand (Matthew 13:31-33) Another set of parables likens the kingdom to a hidden treasure and a costly pearl which are joyfully acquired at great cost (Matthew 13:44-46). A third set of parables describe the final judgement of God's kingdom as the wheat is separated from the tares and the bad fish from the good (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50). Each parable gives us a glimpse of God's kingdom and how to pray for His kingdom to come.

A prayer is a small thing with huge potential. It is easy to wonder how God could use a few muttered words to bring about fantastic change. In many ways our prayers, especially those asking for God's kingdom to manifest, are like seeds. We place something into the soil of faith, hope, and love trusting that God will provide the growth. Even one seed, one prayer, can make a huge difference.

Although small and easily given kingdom prayer costs something. The men who discovered the hidden treasure and the costly pearl had one thing in common. They sold all they had to gain the treasure. I'm not advocating that we take a vow of poverty but that we lay aside our rights and entitlements. Our right to be offended, our entitlement of being better than others because of our faith, our entitlement of self and the right to our feelings. We can only pray for God's kingdom to come if we are willing to lay aside those things that hinder in order to get on our knees and sift through the dirt.

The third set of Kingdom parables reminds us that judgement belongs to God. In both parables judgement was delayed until God was ready. In both parables the agent of judgment was His Angels, not His sons and daughters. Jesus told another parable which relates, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:10–14, NASB95) It is impossible to pray for the Kingdom of God to come into someone's life if we hold a spirit of judgement. Their lives, dress, words, and actions may shout rebellious mockery but God loves them and desires them to enter into the joy of the kingdom.

### Praying for the World

We live in a marvelous age. This morning I emailed a fellow in Kenya and a few moments later received a reply. That would have been impossible fifty years ago. Our news is not limited to our local areas but includes live scenes from across the globe. Imagine living a hundred years ago. A war raged across all of Europe which for the first time impacted the whole world. But news was slow, letters even slower. By the time readers learned about a battle it was already over.

We have a marvelous opportunity to pray beyond the limits of everyone that has gone before us. The brokenness and dysfunction around the world is constantly spilled out from our TV's, computers, and smartphones. But all of this "information" can cause a dullness and a hopelessness to creep in. Praying as our day unfolds includes lifting up those we encounter throughout the world. Instead of shrugging in apathy or shaking our heads in hopelessness we can pray. It doesn't need to be long. Father, I pray that your kingdom would touch that situation, that crisis, that person.

### Praying for Our Communities

Prayer for our communities extends beyond the borders of our cities, towns, villages, and neighborhoods. Communities also include the other groups that make up our daily lives. Our work community. The community of parents that gather to watch a baseball game. Our church community. Our extended families, Our hobbies. Our social media interactions. And yes our cities, towns, villages, and neighborhoods.

Every day contains untold opportunities to pray for God's kingdom to touch a person, crisis, or situation as we encounter community. We don't even need to wait until we know, see, or hear something - although those are great prompts. We can pray for the grumpy gas station clerk, the driver of the car with the "coexist" bumper sticker, the co-worker that just seems a little off today. And of course we should offer kingdom prayers for those instances of brokenness and dysfunction that are fully visible and uncomfortably intrude into our day.

#### Praying for Our Homes

Praying for God's kingdom to touch our homes lifts up those we are closest to. Not only those who live under our roof but also to those whom our lives are or should be vitally connected with. These are our closest relationships. We know when they're having a good or bad day, when nothing is going right, the challenges, the sin, the habits. Yet, each home is different. Some are striving to serve God's kingdom, some wear a Sunday mask, some hide secret sin, some only dorm together, some are caught in the web of addiction and denial, some are mixed in faith, some are cloaked in self-righteousness. And often our perception is not the same as God's reality, what we see as "normal" is far from God's desire and intent.

Praying for God's kingdom to touch our homes opens the door to enter into His reality. Growing a habit of praying for God's kingdom to enter into every situation changes our focus from what is wrong to what God is doing. It opens the door to value the Godly treasure of each other. Praying for God's kingdom keeps us from idolizing each other and encourages a sense of walking alongside one another through life.

#### Praying for Ourselves

Lastly, we can pray for God's kingdom to come for ourselves. Most of us think that we are pretty all-right with God no matter where we are at. We believe that all of our judgements are just. That our feelings are spot-on. That our sins are trivial in comparison to others. That our habits are under control. Yeah, right (sarcasm alert). I've got plenty of habits that need God's rule and reign. I still have sin that requires God's forgiveness and cleansing. I'm not any better, or any worse, in God's eyes than those around me. My feelings mislead me all the time. My judgements are often not based on God's righteousness but what seems good, feels good, or makes me look good. I know that my reality is far from God's desire which is why I pray for God's kingdom; for His rule and reign to increase in my life. Especially when I see that my feelings, thoughts, and actions have replaced God with King Me.

One warning - Praying for God's kingdom to rule our lives is not for wimps. You never know where or how God will lead you. It may cost you everything you hold dear, including all of the "self"s such as self-worth, self-image, and self-righteousness. But the result will be a treasure that cannot be counted.

And Finally....

Your Kingdom Come. Wow, three words that carry so much meaning, purpose, and hope. One easy to whisper prayer that grows in more ways than we can imagine. Small seeds with the potential to become priceless treasures. Lord Jesus I ask this day that your Kingdom would be planted and grow in the lives of all who have read this encouragement.

Study Questions:

If you were to paint a picture of God's kingdom what would that look like?

What is the cost of praying "Your kingdom come"?

What circumstances can in you pray for God's kingdom to come in...

The World

Your Communities

Your Family

Yourself

## Lesson Four

Somewhere in a dusty filing cabinet is a document, prepared by a lawyer and signed by me and Betty, declaring our desires in the event of our deaths. It is a simple document setting out our will for the worldly goods left behind and who will see those desires through. In formal terms it is our "Last Will and Testament" And how will those desires come to light? Someone will ask to see the will.

Our third "what" to pray as we go about our day is all about asking and listening. Jesus connects "your kingdom come" (which we covered in the previous lesson) with "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10 Much of what we examined about praying for God's kingdom also applies to praying for God's will. So instead of rehashing the same ideas let's look at a related promise concerning God's will, prayer, and receiving answers to our prayers.

The Apostle John wrote in the first of his letters, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." (1 John 5:14-15, NASB95) The key phrase "If we ask anything according to His will" brings us to a huge question - what is God's will? If we know God's desires we can confidently pray according to those desires knowing that God will answer.

Let's all be honest for a few moments. Most of the time our prayers are more about our desires than God's. We have physical, emotional, and spiritual needs that are very real. We want God to fix those things in our lives that are broken. Say for example that we have a co-worker that is a real pain in the neck. So we pray for them, that God would fix them, that they would learn to love or at least learn to be considerate. In reality our prayers are for ourselves. Instead of a heart of compassion we simply want our lives to be peaceful. So even though it looks like we are praying God's will we are often motivated by our own desires. The trap that we easily fall into is praying for the answers we want. Prayers like that seek to control God and are closer to witchcraft than following the way of Christ. God's desire is that our will would become aligned with His will and not the other way around. Therefore, in order to pray according to His will we need to know His will.

The first place we discover God's will is in the Bible. For instance, we know that God desires everyone to accept the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9, NASB95) Therefore we can always pray accordingly. That is just one example among many.

The second place we discover God's will is through prayer. One thing I've learned to avoid is praying my desire and then tacking on a "if it be your will" for good measure. When confronted with a need or a request to pray I try to always ask God for His will first and take a moment to listen. In other words I pray so that I can pray according to God's will. "Lord, what's your will here?" "What does this person really need from you?" "How do you want me to pray for...?" Jesus invites us to ask, seek and knock -

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” (Matthew 7:7–8, NASB95) And promises “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;” (John 10:27, NASB95) I’ve also learned that God reveals His will to folks in many ways; promptings of the heart, impressions on the mind, verses that seem to pop up from nowhere, mental images like those of the ancient prophets are just a few examples. But not everything that pops into our head is from God. Like a lamb learning the voice of the shepherd it takes time and practice to discern the “voices” we hear.

After we’ve prayed for God’s will and paused to listen sometimes the way still seems cloudy and we can’t see through the fog of our own issues. In those times we can still pray according to God’s will by simply lifting up the need and trusting that God will answer as a father. Right after Jesus’ invitation to ask, seek and knock He observes, “Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? “Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” (Matthew 7:9–11, NASB95) Basically, when the way is clouded lift up the need trusting God to answer in the way that is best instead of trying to get the answer from God that we desire.

Praying On the Go as our day unfolds, thrives on our asking and listening conversation with God. All of the different types of prayers are important but in my opinion this is the most important. As Paul said, “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” (Ephesians 5:15–17, NASB95) By asking to hear God’s will we are declaring His lordship over our hearts and circumstances. Instead of trying to get something from God we are seeking to join what He is already doing. As we knock and listen we are asking to be allowed in instead of using a battering ram to get our own way.

Study Questions:

Take an honest assessment. How often do you...

Tell God what to do instead of asking Him what to do?

Pray for someone out of your discomfort with them instead of real compassion for their condition?

What is the promise of scripture if we pray according to God’s will?

What are the ways we can learn or discover God's will?

Even if God's will seems foggy to us how can we pray?

### **Lesson Five**

One day a farmer plows his field, breaking up the hard crust of topsoil. On another day he plants the field, sowing seeds into the softened soil. Months later, after the seeds have sprouted and grown, after days of brilliant sunlight, after the rains and storms, the green field turns golden. The harvest is ready. Whether by hand or by machine the farmer cuts the stalks, thrashes the kernels, and retrieves the grain. At some point the grain is crushed and ground into flour. One day some of that flour is mixed with other ingredients to form a dough which is baked into bread. One day a mother takes two slices of that bread, smears some peanut butter and jelly on them, and hands it to her son for lunch. He has no thought or knowledge of the planning and work that went into his PB&J, all he knows is that for the moment his belly, his need, is satisfied.

Our next On the Go Prayer as we go through each day is Jesus' invitation to pray for our needs - "Give us this day our daily bread." (Matthew 6:11, NASB95) Each moment of every day confronts us with various needs. There are physical needs such as the need for food. There are also emotional and spiritual needs which also become evident as the day unfolds. God knows our needs before we experience them and has already made provision for them (Matthew 6:8).

Before we explore praying for our needs we must recognize something about ourselves - we don't always know what we need. We do need daily bread, nourishing food to empower our day. We don't need a chocolate bar no matter how badly we want it. The core truth is that we must trust God to help us separate our wants from our needs. In other words, God knows best what we need, we may be lifting up a want, but God will always respond with what is best for us. James warns us, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." (James 4:3, NASB95) We may pray for a chocolate bar with all our heart, but God knows our need. Usually we need

bread but sometimes we do need a chocolate bar. The point is that we can trust God with our wants and needs even if we can't tell them apart.

Physical needs are perhaps the easiest to understand. We feel hunger, we need food. We feel thirsty, we need water. We feel tired, we need rest. We feel pain, we need healing. The first thing to understand is that whether our daily bread comes from the work of our hands or the charity of others it is God's provision. While Jesus invited us to pray "give us" there is the expectation that part of God's provision is the ability to work. Paul advised, "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good." (2 Thessalonians 3:10–13, NASB95) But there is also provision for those who can't work or have no family to care for them. James asked, "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" (James 2:15–16, NASB95)

Let's move beyond our physical needs and consider the emotional and spiritual needs of our day. Each day has its own troubles and challenges. Some of those challenges are known, many come as a surprise. In the same way that we can trust God's provision for our physical needs we can trust him for our emotional and spiritual needs as well. Whether it is peace in the midst of conflict, wisdom when confronted with choice, joy in the face of hardship, hope when all seems lost, faith when the way seems impossible, love when all around seems unlovable, forgiveness in the swamp of offense, patience when nothing seems to change, contentment when jealousy strikes, perseverance to oppose apathy, comfort in the darkness of grief and loss, knowledge to combat ignorance, or kindness for the undeserving; in all these God will provide if we would only ask. By quickly lifting up our need in those moments we are pulling from God's deep well instead of relying on the puddle of our experience. His provision for our emotional and spiritual needs is just as real, just as satisfying, as a wonderfully golden loaf of bread fresh from the oven.

Praying on the go recognizes the need of the moment in all the realms of life and lifts them before God. Not in a demanding way or as a complaint but in simple recognition of our needs and God's ability and desire to fulfill what we need. We know that God sees our present need and prepared to meet it a long time ago. Whether the need is food for our table or peace in our hearts we can trust Him to provide.

There's an old western with a scene that goes something like this. The family is gathered around the table as the father gives thanks for the meal. "Lord, I thank you for the food that we hunted, the vegetables we grew and harvested, what we have cooked and set on the table." The implication being that God didn't have anything to do with the meal before them. The father in the scene failed to recognize God's hand in providing the skill, the weather, the seed, and the abilities needed to put that food on the table. So whether God chooses to miraculously provide like Jesus did when He fed the five thousand or whether he chooses to provide us with skill, ability, and opportunity it is still God's provision for today.

Study Questions:

How do you think is the best way to tell the difference between a want and a need?

What are the things you need everyday?

What are the various ways that God can supply your needs?

Is there anything we cannot trust God to supply?

How can you incorporate the prayer of “give us this day our daily bread” into your day?

## **Lesson Six**

In his classic work “The Pilgrim’s Progress” John Bunyan begins “I dreamed, and behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back.” The great burden was the pilgrim’s sin. The story portrays the journey, pitfalls, and missteps of Christian as he seeks to rid himself of his terrible burden. In a powerful moment the pilgrim approaches the Cross of Christ, “So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulcher, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.” What Christian could not do for himself, what no one else was able to accomplish, Jesus did with the forgiveness found only through Him. That however is not the end of Christian’s journey as Bunyan continues to follow him on His journey to the “Celestial City”.

Our next “prayer on the go” is “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matthew 6:12, NASB95) Forgiveness is the only part of the Lord’s Prayer that Jesus explained further, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not

forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (Matthew 6:14–15, NASB95)

While we can be freely forgiven through the blood of Jesus we are also responsible to forgive others in the same way that we’ve been forgiven. For the purposes of this series of articles we are going to look at each kind of forgiveness in turn. This article will explore God’s forgiveness while the next will explore our need to forgive others.

In a very real sense forgiveness must begin with agreement. There can be no forgiveness while we maintain our innocence or lack of responsibility. Often we agree that what we did may appear wrong but that we were justified. We may freely confess that we’ve hurt someone but turn to “I didn’t mean it” or “I was only joking” instead of owning our guilt. Sometimes we are simply blind to our sin. There has been more than one occasion when God has reminded me of an incident months or years later. At the time I didn’t see my sin. But with the separation of time and some growth in knowing Christ I could clearly see the sin I was blinded to at the time. Confession can be a scary word but it is nothing more than agreeing with God, without reservation or evasion, that we sinned; that we are responsible for our actions or inactions, and that we are in need of His forgiveness.

The good news is that, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9, NASB95) God’s promises are sure. When we agree with Him about our sin and commit to turning away from it (repentance) God is faithful and grants forgiveness.

The “forgive us” portion praying on the go as our day unfolds is knowing that whenever we realize our sin we can instantly bring it before God. It doesn’t matter if the sin just happened or whether the Holy Spirit is revealing something from years long past, confess it and receive forgiveness. Satan also likes to recall our sins to remind us of how unworthy and inadequate we are to carry God’s good news. Instead of getting down on myself I’ll agree with his accusation and confess it before the throne of God. Jesus said, “For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.” (Luke 12:58–59, NASB95) There are some who say that asking a second or third time for forgiveness is a lack of faith - I call it being thorough. There are others who say that we don’t need to confess our sins since we’ve been fully forgiven at the cross – then why did Jesus include the “forgive us” line in His model prayer? All the forgiveness we need has been provided for at the cross. But, we do not receive our forgiveness until we agree with God, turn from our sin, and ask for His forgiveness. I look at it this way. The big burden of sin was miraculously removed at the cross and our bent towards sin was removed. However, we still accumulate the dirt and dung of the world, the flesh, and the devil as we journey on towards Christ. That filth is removed, is cleansed, as we continue to confess our sin, turn towards Christ, and receive His wonderfully complete forgiveness. Isaiah compared it to snow and clean wool - ““Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.” (Isaiah 1:18, NASB95) I don’t know about you, but every time I humble myself before God and confess without reservation or justification the sins that are weighing on my heart there is an instant and noticeable feeling of release.

Sin is failure but the greater failure is never asking Jesus to wash them away.

Study Questions:

Define in your own words:

Sin

Confession

Repentance

Forgiveness

There are several well-loved verses on forgiveness, which one means the most to you?

If we confess and turn from our sin what does God promise?

Describe a time when you've been forgiven and the feelings that followed.

### **Lesson Seven**

The joke's on us. When we refuse to forgive others because of the hurt they have caused us, when we throw them into a virtual prison, when we can recount every offense and sin they have committed against us – the joke is on us. We are the ones who are really in jail; dressed in the prison garb of hate,

shackled by unforgiveness, and locked behind impenetrable walls of bitterness. Irony of ironies, we hold the key that removes the shackles and unlocks the door.

In the Lord's Prayer and in the brief explanation that follows Jesus emphasizes the need to not only receive God's forgiveness but forgive others as well. Jesus instructed us to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Matthew 6:12, NASB95) And He taught, "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions." (Matthew 6:14–15, NASB95) Jesus demonstrated this prayer in concrete terms from the Cross when He prayed for those torturing and murdering Him, "But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34a, NASB95) "Father, forgive them" is also one of our on the go prayers as our day unfolds.

A few days ago the forgiveness of others made headline news. During a courtroom procedure the family members of the nine folks murdered at the Emmanuel AME church in Charleston declared to the young man charged with the crime their love and forgiveness for him. The young man desired to start a race war, to trigger a riot in the likes of other recent events (Fergusson and Baltimore). He got the exact opposite – all because some grievously wounded souls chose to forgive in the same way that they had been forgiven by God. I suspect that somewhere in the days between tragedy and declaration they prayed "Father, forgive him."

Our days are filled with opportunities to pray those three words. We are affected by the sin, ignorance, or foolishness of others wherever we are: at home, on the road, at work or school, in the marketplace, enjoying a time of relaxation, reading or watching the news, at church, keeping up through email and other social media. In those moments we can choose to lock them (and ourselves as well) in the dark dungeon of unforgiveness or we can walk in the light of love. Instead of trying to collect the debt of their offense God expects us to forgive them in the same way that Jesus has forgiven us. Jesus radically revealed this truth in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, Matthew 18:21-35.

So, instead of grumbling and complaining or letting anger get a foothold. Rather than thinking "revenge is a dish best served cold" or keeping a record of wrongs. In place of condemnation, belittling, or ignoring someone. Pray! Father, forgive them. I know that it is hard at times. It seems unfair, perhaps even unwise to seemingly let someone off the hook. It costs us something to forgive the debts and wounds caused by others. But think about your own life and what it cost Jesus to forgive you of your sins. Think about how Jesus' love has changed your life, your habits and desires, how Jesus continues to mold and shape who you are – all because of love demonstrated through forgiveness. Love is God's chosen tool to effect change; not punishment, not revenge, not anger, not hatred, not the power of debt or guilt, but love expressed in a multitude of ways, one of which is forgiveness. When those moments of life happen, when our souls are offended and damaged, when someone does something foolish, begin with "Father, forgive them" and let love lead you the rest of the way.

Study questions:

Read Matthew 18:21-35. What is the moral of Jesus' parable?

What are the consequences when we choose to not forgive someone?

What are the promises and benefits when we choose to forgive?

Is there anyone that you need to forgive right now? What are you waiting for?

### **Lesson Eight**

Let's face one basic fact, our days are filled with opportunities to sin. The world around us is constantly placing enticements in our path. The devil is quick to whisper in our ear that we deserve it. Our body and soul scream to be satisfied. The list of possibilities is long but can be boiled down to one reality, all temptation seeks to satisfy self rather than God. In other words, all temptation holds out the promise being like God and ends with us worshipping a god of our own making instead of the one true God.

We may feel that God is like the mom who gave their toddler a chocolate chip cookie before supper and then punished them for not finishing their peas and carrots. Or that God enjoys playing the gotcha game with us, dangling things in front of our noses only to punish us when we take the bait. A surface reading of Jesus' prayer, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13, NASB95) may seem to confirm those views. But James tell us, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." (James 1:13-14, NASB95) God doesn't need to tempt us to sin, we do pretty well on our own.

We also may think that the Devil's got it in for us. That he takes special delight in making us fall and plans unique temptations just for us. Paul notes instead, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13, NASB95) The temptations you face are nothing new or unique. The good news is that there are limits to what God allows us to encounter and that He always provides the way out or strength to endure.

Dealing with temptation is also one of our on the go conversations with God as our day unfolds. Anytime the world, the flesh and the devil come knocking at our door we should pray first and ask questions later. There are three essential On the Go Prayers in dealing with temptations. The first is simply a thank you that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability along with expressing a desire that God would open our eyes to the danger but close our eyes to the enticement. The second prayer is one for strength and wisdom when temptation is right in front of us. The third prayer is that we would see the

way of escape when we've allowed things to go too far. In a way Adam and Eve made three mistakes when they first chose sin. They didn't take the serpent's claims to God. They thought they could handle the decision and the ramifications on their own. They tried to hide the truth from God and blamed others instead of facing the truth of their choices. Notice the "I" theme in their choices? We don't defeat sin through the power of our own will but by running to God. James says, "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:6-7, NASB95) And Proverbs reminds us that "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10, NASB95)

So the next time that sin knocks on your door, when the world entices, Satan whispers, when body and soul cries out to be satisfied – PRAY!

Study Questions:

From what areas do temptations come?

What is God's provision for dealing with temptations?

All temptations have one central theme, what is it?

What is James recipe in James 4:6-7 to conquer temptation?

When faced with temptation what is the first thing we should do?

This Concludes our study on On the Go Prayers. Our prayer is that you have found these lessons to be helpful for you journey with Jesus. Thank you for taking the time out of your day to read and think about these lessons.