

**SECTION 3**

# Participant Pages

*Readings for Huddle Participants*



**SouthBrook**  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## SECTION 3: P.R.A.Y.

*Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."  
—Luke 11:1*

Watching Jesus in Solitude stirred a desire in one of His disciples. He wanted to converse with God like Jesus did.

Jesus prayed all the time. The Scriptures record instances of him praying in the wee hours of the morning, in the afternoon, and even of him pulling a prayer all-nighter. He sometimes made people go away so he could be alone with His Father.

*But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. —Luke 5:16*

Prayer was as natural as breathing to Jesus. As such, the window was always open for Him to receive Heaven's grace and marching orders. He modeled for us the ever-dependent, fully transparent, grace-saturated, conversational relationship with the Father that the Father desires also with us.

Prayer is our WiFi Connection to Heaven's network. Through prayer, our Father offers us access to Himself and Heaven's resources. Like a cell phone with no bars, when we're out of His network we become greatly limited in our experience of God and His kingdom. God, our Father, wants us to be connected. Jesus even prayed that we would be one with the Father, just like He is.<sup>1</sup>

As a culture, we struggle with this, don't we? Most of us spend more time brushing our teeth than we do talking with our Heavenly Father. We run through our list of 7 things we usually ask for, like a parent ordering for her family at a drive through window, and...now what? What do we say?

How do we get beyond the polite conversation we would have with a coffee shop barista to the rich, intimate conversation we would have with the friend we're meeting there?

How do we get past praying prayers that feel like they don't make it past the ceiling to praying in a way that moves heaven?

Jesus thankfully did not just leave us to guess. He gave us His blueprint for powerful, intimate conversation with God, our Father. As Matthew records, Jesus says plainly,

*9 "This, then, is how you should pray:  
"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,*

*10 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]' —Matthew 6:9-13*

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<sup>1</sup>John 17:11

Notice that Jesus did not say, “this is *what* you should pray, as though we just repeat these same exact words every time.

It would be hard to form a meaningful two-way relationship with a would-be friend if you just repeated the same few sentences to them over and over again. It would be like Groundhog Day (the movie with Bill Murray).

No, Jesus said, “This is *how* you should pray. In other words, let these simple phrases of what many people call “the Lord’s Prayer” be a pattern for healthy and effective communication with God. And we have a simple tool to help us remember this blueprint and unpack the power of these phrases. It’s the simple acronym P.R.A.Y.

## *P = PRAISE*

*“Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name.”*

Praying Jesus’ way starts with bringing the One who “fills the heavens” into focus.

Aaron Niequist writes,

Where is God? He is here. Always. Everywhere.

Many scholars believe that a much better translation of “Our Father, who art in Heaven” is actually “*Our Father, in the Heavens.*” Or in other words, “Our Father, who fills every molecule from the farthest solar system to the inside of my lungs.” Our Father, who already floods this place and fills the atmosphere. Or in John Ortberg’s beautiful phrase, “Our Father, who is closer than the air we breathe.”<sup>2</sup>

God fills the heavens, and the space around us. He is everywhere. We’re like goldfish in the ocean.

To this God who fills the Heavens we say, “Hallowed be your name,” or in other words, “May Your name be treated as *holy.*”

Holy means “set apart.”

Most often, we think of holy meaning “set apart” from sin. And that’s true. No sin is found in God. He is completely pure and clean.

But there is another way “holy” is applied to God. It means that He is completely set apart, high above, more awesome than anything created.

Think of a list of the top three most beautiful things you’ve ever seen.

- A sunset you remember.
- A woman or man with striking features.
- A waterfall in the jungle.
- A picture of deep space.

God’s beauty isn’t even near that list. He is so far more beautiful; He is in a class by Himself. His beauty is *set apart. Holy.*

**P**RAISE  
**R**EPENT  
**A**SK  
**Y**IELD

<sup>2</sup> Niequist, Aaron. <http://www.practicetribes.com/message-our-father-in-heaven/>, January 14, 2015

Now imagine 3 of the most powerful things in creation.

- A nuclear explosion.
- A massive earthquake.
- A supernova.
- A black hole, with gravity so powerful light can't escape.

God makes tents from the heavens. He speaks, and universes begin. His power is on a list all by itself. He is **Holy** in His power.

And the same is true of His love. His kindness. His creativity. His justice. His knowledge.

From space, everything on earth looks like it's about at the same level. That's how it is with God's greatness, as compared with anything and everything else in creation. He is beautiful. He is terrifying.

And how are we instructed to address this Holy God?

Father.

And that means something. It means He calls us his children, his family. It means He loves and provides for us. He gives us life. He is here for us. And He is here now.

**The P of Praise** is about us choosing to become aware of the One who is here, our present Father, who fills the space around us, and acknowledging His character and works through praise and thanks.

We can do this through our own words of thanksgiving and praise.

Thank you for giving me life. Thank you for dying for me and rising again Jesus.

- Thank you for my family, my house, my car, my job.
- Thank you for providing for that well our church helped install in Swaziland.
- Thank you that you are here, right now.
- You are awesome and powerful. I worship you.
- You made those trees, and they are amazing.
- You are all around. No one is beyond your concern or reach, including the guy on that bench.
- Your love is everlasting, and you fill me up. I love you.

We can do this through reading and speaking the truths of scripture out loud to God, like the Psalms.

*The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?*

—Psalm 27:1

We can do this through music, like we sing at our weekend gatherings.

- Here now. All I know is I know that You are here now.
- Still my heart, let your voice be all I hear now.
- Spirit breathe like the wind come have Your way.
- 'Cause I know You're in this place.

As we enter the presence of a Holy God, praising and thanking Him for all He is and does for us, we are transformed. We are changed by His grace. And our hearts become prepared to move forward with our conversation.

# R = REPENT

*Your Kingdom Come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Having entered our Father's presence, we now turn to look upon the broken places in ourselves and the world with new perspective. God helps us see the world's brokenness not through our own fallen human eyes, but through His wise, forever eyes.

And into that brokenness, God wants us to ask Him for something that, when I think about it, seems incredible, impossible, unfathomable. Yet it's clear from this phrase of the prayer that this is what Jesus was instructing.

**God wants us to call forth Heaven to invade Earth.**

**God wants us to grab hold of His kingdom with both hands and pull His reality into ours.**

**God wants us to ask that He would have His way with things down here, just like He does up there.**

And the amazing thing is, when we do, the Designer of Galaxies responds.

Because of man's fall into sin, people and places all around are not experiencing the fullness of life under God's rule.

God, the King of the Universe, has delegated to us the awesome task of praying His rule into the brokenness and incompleteness we see around us, so things will be "on earth as they are in heaven."

So what's the will of God? How do we know what Heaven coming to earth looks like? How do we know for what God wants us to pray?

By looking at Jesus.

Jesus was the perfect expression of Heaven coming to Earth. Wherever He went, Jesus moved to replace broken, earthly reality with Heavenly reality.

- There is no sin in heaven. So Jesus offered His life to kill sin and its effects, for all who come to Him.
- There is no anxiety in heaven. So Jesus offered peace through His name.
- There is no hoarding in heaven. So where Jesus saw a man ruled by his worldly wealth, he offered the way to a life of heavenly wealth through giving.
- There is no sickness, pain or disease in heaven. So Jesus healed all who came to Him for help.
- Satan has no dominion in heaven. So when Jesus saw evil spirits oppressing his children, He sent them fleeing.

And where God's kingdom is, there is no oppression, death, lostness, loneliness, shame, lies, hatred, racism, depression, or bitterness. In their place, God offers freedom, resurrection, salvation, family, grace, truth, love, oneness, joy and forgiveness. These realities are the realities of God's kingdom, now made available to us through faith in Jesus.

## **And Jesus is asking us to pray these realities into our broken world.**

Here are a few scenarios that show how this can look:

Alicia, a young lady you know, is convinced she's not pretty enough to be worth much.

*Lord, please replace the tapes of lies playing in Alicia's head that say her worth depends on her physical appearance with the truth that she is your workmanship, your masterpiece, that she is fearfully and wonderfully made.*

On the news, you see the report of a white police officer shooting a black suspect and rioting, violence and looting have broken out.

*"Father, in your kingdom, there is no division or discrimination because of race, but rather oneness. So please tear down the race barriers and fill the hearts of those involved in this event with your truth, love and forgiveness.*

The 3-year old of a family you know is diagnosed with Leukemia.

*Father, thank you that there is no Leukemia in heaven. I ask for your healing, in Jesus' name.*

You notice a mean streak in yourself. You keep snapping at your family members and co-workers.

*Father, there is no meanness in heaven, but rather your kindness. Please fill me with the kindness and compassion of Jesus for others.*

It's college football season, and you watch as Michigan takes an early lead against Ohio State. *Jesus, there is no way Michigan beating Ohio State can be a reality in Heaven. Please send your angels to fight against the dark power at work, and strengthen Ohio State's defense.*

Okay, that last one may be a bit of a stretch, but you get the idea.

So why the word *repent*?

Well, repent means to change ones mind. It means doing a 180, turning to align oneself with God's priorities and perspective rather than the worlds.

We most often use this word "repent" when we're talking about turning from our sin, which is certainly repentance, and actually, Jesus' prayer addresses sin and forgiveness more specifically a couple lines later. We'll get to it when we talk about the "A" of P.R.A.Y.

We believe though, that the word "repent" can be applied in a broader way than simply turning from our personal sin.

To repent also means to turn from seeing life through our fallen human eyes, and choosing instead to see things from God's perspective, through His eyes. It means turning away from our own opinions and solutions for the world's brokenness, and crying out to God for Him to send forth His kingdom solutions.

When we pray "Your kingdom come," we are repenting of our ways of dealing with the world's brokenness, and asking God to do it His way.

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:29

<sup>7</sup> Stephanie Marche, 2012, The Atlantic.com, May 2012

# A = ASK

Jesus next instructs us to ask God for 2 things: His **provision** and His *forgiveness*.

## PROVISION

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

God is a good Father, and wants to provide for His children. Consider these words of Jesus about our heavenly Father:

*“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” —Matthew 7:9-11*

This is the part where we get to ask our good Father to provide us with what we need. Jesus told us *‘to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all the other stuff you need will be given to you as well.’*

As we seek to honor God in and above all things, God provides what we need for our journey with Him. Stories of God providing for His children who seek Him abound, and are so encouraging to hear. Do you know any? I’ll share just this one:

*Recently, a guy I know well—we’ll call him Craig—felt that God was leading him to renovate his house so his family was better able to host large, regular gatherings at his home, as part of His service to the King.*

*Craig said to God, “Father, you know I don’t have the money to knock down these walls and put in these doors, so I need you to provide \$10,000 to make it happen.”*

*A few weeks later, Craig’s grandfather gave to each one of his grandchildren a rather large check for Christmas. The amount?*

*\$10,000. Exactly \$10,000. The exact amount he asked for.*

How fun is that?

As Craig seeks God first, He sees the Father provide for his family, and for the work to which God has called him.

Now notice, Craig wasn’t just asking for 20,000 square feet so his wife and kids could each have their own private wing. He was asking for what he and his family needed as they lived out their Service to God.

Sometimes giving us what we ask for is not the best thing for us. My son began asking me for a dagger when he was about 5. Sometimes we are the 5-year old asking for a dagger. We just don’t know it. God is wise enough to know what provisions will be best.

So what do you need? Money? A job? A house? A new computer? A spouse? Ask your good Father to provide what you need, and He will respond according to His love.

# FORGIVENESS

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*

When we sin, we incur relational debt.

If I lie to my wife, I have robbed her of something. At the very least, I have robbed her of the truth. If I don't fess up and she finds out another way, I will also have robbed her of trust in me, maybe even others. Now there is "relational debt" that exists between me and my wife.

This relational debt also exists with God. In fact, when we sin, it is always first against God. As King David wrote to God, *Against you, you only, have I sinned.* —Psalm 51:4

The debt we owe to our perfect God to "make things even," is death and separation from Him. Jesus paid off our debt with His death. For all who have received Him as Lord and Savior, our debt with God has been wiped out forever! Sin and shame no longer have power over us.

Even though the debt has been paid, un-confessed sin we allow to lurk in our lives can hinder our intimacy with our Father. Un-confessed sin is like food left in the dark at the back of the refrigerator. If left unattended, it starts to stink and grow unhealthy things that make us sick. We need to bring it into the light, and get rid of it!

Naming our sin as sin, and confessing it before God and others allows healing, restoration and intimacy with God to continue to flow. As the apostle John wrote, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* —1 John 1:9

And don't miss the second part of the forgiveness phrase! *"...As we forgive our debtors."* Jesus has set an example for us by canceling our debt to the King. Now he says, *"As I have canceled your debt, so I want you to cancel the sin debts people owe you."*

This past fall, I watched the lawn company that was working at removing the leaves from the apartment complex behind my house blow a whole hillside of leaves into my lawn and leave them there. I'm serious.

It took me a few minutes to actually believe what I had just seen. Did that just happen? Surely they were coming back to get them. Nope.

I called the Apartments' office to let them know, and asked if they could kindly ask the lawn company to pick up the leaves. They never came. The last scheduled city leaf pickup was scheduled for the next day and it was already late. I had to pick them up myself and get them out to the street.

If you're like me, there are a lot of things you could justify doing in those moments, right? You could leave a nasty voice mail. You could demand free service from the company. You could leave a scathing review on their website. They had robbed me of time I could have used for something else.

That day, I simply chose to forgive. "Lord," I said, "I forgive the lawn company, and cancel the relational debt they owe me." And I let it go.

Now, I'm not suggesting that extending forgiveness means we do nothing else. The lawn company broke my trust in them. I probably won't be hiring them any time

soon.

Forgiveness is given. Trust is earned. Sometimes we need to end a relationship, or call the police, or fire someone, or talk to a manager. It wouldn't be loving or healthy if we didn't.

But whatever we do when someone sins against us needs to include forgiveness.<sup>3</sup>

Un-forgiveness gives life to bitterness. Someone said holding onto our bitterness toward others is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die. Bitterness will take root in us with devastating effects<sup>4</sup>, producing negativity, anger, depression, and joylessness—and it spreads to others as well.

Forgiving those who sin against us cuts off bitterness at the root, and makes room for God's joy.

As you forgive and receive forgiveness, be specific. Tell God the areas in your life where you have strayed, and thank Him for His forgiveness. Name the people who have hurt you and how, and then choose to say before God, "I forgive them."

## Y = YIELD

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

I love the yield sign in my neighborhood, mostly because unlike a stop sign, I don't have to fully stop.

But it does mean that I surrender the way to oncoming traffic, letting them go before me.

That's what yielding to God means: Surrendering our way to God, and asking Him to go before us.

In the "yield" part of the prayer, we ask for 2 things: Guidance, and Protection.

## GUIDANCE

*And lead us not into temptation...*

It seems like most men I know were born with this inherent knack for directions. My father-in-law has never needed a GPS; he just knows how to get there. I did not inherit that gene.

I frequently take wrong turns even when my GPS is telling me exactly where to go. Once I was driving back to Dayton, Ohio from Pittsburg and took an accidental detour through Akron. That's quite a bit out of the way.

I struggle a lot less though when caravanning with someone who already knows the way. I just let them take the lead and I keep them in front of me.

God is a wise leader. He knows the way through life. In fact Jesus said, *"I am the way."<sup>5</sup>*

Our Father sees every angle of everything; every pothole, curve, obstacle and sign

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<sup>3</sup>See Matthew 18:21-35

<sup>4</sup>Hebrews 12:15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

in the road ahead. That's what makes saying, "God, I surrender; go before me and lead me" such a wise thing to say. We desperately need his guidance and wisdom as we traverse this life.

Where do you need wisdom? Where do you need guidance? Where do you need help with a decision?

In the words of James, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."* —James 1:5

Do you need clarity on whether or not to take a new job?

Do you need guidance for how to avoid another verbal explosion with your daughter?

Do you need wisdom in how to approach a friend who has developed some destructive life patterns?

Ask your Father.

## PROTECTION

*...but deliver us from the evil one.*

I ran track for Miami University my first year there. For training, our team would often run on trails that went through the woods around Oxford. The trails were rather narrow, with trees pressing in on both sides.

And the narrow trails were a perfect place for spiders, across which they could stretch their webs.

No one wanted to go first on trail runs. Your face became a ball of cotton candy as you slammed through web after web. It was really disappointing when someone shorter than you was in front. The relief you hoped for was not there.

In our road through life we have an enemy, the king of all bugs, Satan. He sends his forces to enslave us, hurt us, rob us. As Jesus said, *"The thief comes to steal, and kill and destroy."* —John 10:10

The enemy of our souls will throw anything he can at us to trip us up, get us feeling separated from God, make us ineffective in our service to Him. But God is able to protect us from the bugs getting through. He is our shield. Our lives are now *"hidden with Christ in God."*<sup>6</sup> Yielding means having the right to say,

"Father, please go before us and be our Bug Catcher."

There are lots of ways to pray for protection and deliverance. Here are a few:

- We can pray the "armor of God" over ourselves and families (see Ephesians 6:10-18).
- We can pray the phrases King David prayed. The Psalms are filled with them.

*"Deliver me from my enemies, O God; be my fortress against those who are attacking me."* —Psalm 59:1

*"Contend, Lord, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me. Take up shield and armor; arise and come to my aid."*

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<sup>6</sup>John 14:6

<sup>6</sup>Colossians 3:3

**- I often pray 4 things over my family:**

Lord, hide them in the shadow of your wing.  
Protect them by the power of Your name.  
Be a shield around them.  
Thank you that they are covered by the blood of Jesus.

God is our Guide and Protector. Yield the right of way to Him.

## **PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

As we seek to integrate Jesus' talking points for great, transformational conversation with God, here are a couple ways to apply this prayer:

**1. Pray the prayer generally. Spend time in each phrase of the Lord's Prayer, as you consider your life.**

**Praise** and thank God for a variety of things, enjoying His presence as you focus on Him.

**Repent**, turning your eyes, mind and heart to His kingdom solutions, and asking Him move in the areas of need you see around you.

**Ask** for what you need, and for forgiveness where you need it, as you forgive others.

**Yield** your life to God, asking Him to go before you to guide and protect you.

There's no need to rush. Balance your talking with listening. Perhaps the Holy Spirit, God living in you, will lead you to spend more time in one area than another, or impress upon you a specific need for which to pray. He may speak to you, giving guidance, wisdom or truth. He may bless you with a supernatural awareness of His presence.

**2. Pray for a specific issue, passing it through each phrase of the Lord's Prayer.**

During my time serving at my first church as a youth pastor, we would take about a hundred high school and middle school students to an island in the middle of Dale Hollow Lake in Tennessee for a week, of growth and "fun". There was no running water, so we had a special system set up to wash dishes so as to not grow germs on our plates and get sick.

After scraping off the chunks into the trash, we had four tubs of liquid into which we would plunge our mealtime hardware to get it clean. The first was a sterilizing rinse. The second was soapy water in which you would scrub your plate. The third was water to get the soap off. The fourth was water again, since tub number three would start getting soapy.

We can treat one particular issue like a dirty plate, dunking it in each part of the Lord's Prayer.

Here's an example. Let's say the company downsizes and you lose your job. It was completely out of the blue, so you have no prospects. You're angry and worried. You take it to the Lord in prayer.

**(Praise)** Father I'm worried and angry. I don't know how I'm going to support myself or my family—but I thank you that you are here with me right now. Thank you for how you will use this in my life. Thank you that you love us and are fully capable of taking care of us. **(Repent)** God I pray for all the other people who have lost their jobs here. Use this circumstance to make them aware that they need you, and draw them into a relationship with you. Save their souls God. Replace their fear with trust and hope in You. **(Ask)** Father, please provide for my family's needs while I don't have a job. I ask that you would provide a new job. Forgive me for struggling to trust you right now. I forgive my company for choosing to let me go, and not giving me a heads up sooner. **(Yield)** Father, I surrender to you. Please go before me and my family to guide us in what to do next, and who to talk to about a job. Protect us from the enemy. You are a shield around us. I reject Satan's lie that you are out to get me. I choose to hide in the truth that you are good.

Praying this way bathes your requests in the realities of God's kingdom. As we pray in faith, in the way Jesus taught us, we will experience kingdom breakthrough, and reach new depth with God.