

Week 1: Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name.

Introduction

Welcome. We're so delighted you're joining this journey with us during Lent. This week is all about getting to know God, beginning to discover how we might come close to God and recognise God's activity in our lives and the world around us.


Each week, we're going to be exploring one or two lines from the Lord's Prayer. This is a prayer that was given to us by Jesus when people asked him 'how do I pray?'

Getting started

Think about or chat together about these questions while out for a walk or together at the dinner table:

- *"Have you ever prayed?"*
- *"Have you prayed the Lord's Prayer before? Where and when?"*
- *"Have you said a prayer or grace before a meal?"*
- *"Where do you find it possible to come close to or connect with God, a sense peace or wonder?"*

Jesus' prayer is an everyday prayer. It contains all that is needed each day and it's all in the right order. It begins and ends with God. People are in their right place in the middle; surrounded and secured by God's concern for our physical needs, our relational needs and our well-being and spiritual needs.

 Try and say Jesus's prayer together each day this week.

Where and when is the best time for you? A mealtime, after school, as part of the morning or bedtime routine?

If it helps to print or write the words out, please do that and pin it up somewhere handy.

Household activity

This guide is designed to help you encounter God anytime, in any way, and anywhere. Being in a particular place or space can sometimes feel especially awesome, peaceful and holy.

In the Bible story this week we'll encounter the time that Moses met God in the bush that was on fire but didn't burn. Moses felt the place to be so holy that he took off his sandals and bowed down.

Your Household activity this week is to make a sacred space in your room, home or garden where any member of your household can go to be with God.

Could you make a den, put up a tent or designate a space somewhere? What would you all like to have in the space? Think about a special item or picture, a Bible or book, writing or drawing things or maybe nothing at all.

Agree together that this special place will be a phone and device-free zone.

DEVICE FREE



ZONE

Stilling and Noticing

"Let's start at the very beginning" is the opening line of the song 'Do-re-mi' from *The Sound of Music*. Have you ever seen a theatre show or musical film? Did it have a big opening musical number, or did one person come onto the stage? Is the opening line of the Lord's Prayer like that? Do you feel it's a grand opening or a surprisingly low-key start?

As we start at the very beginning of this journey, let's take a few moments to be still together. The invitation is to sit or lie down, you can do this inside or outside. Sitting or lying down isn't essential, you can be still as you walk along.

Stilling (an exercise to bring calm and focus)

Sit, lie down, get comfy. Take some **deep breaths** and continue to breathe deeply. Smile. Close eyes if it helps.

One person (child or adult) says slowly:

'Our Father in Heaven (PAUSE) Hallowed be your name' (PAUSE)

'Our Father in Heaven (PAUSE) Hallowed be your name' (PAUSE)

'Our Father in Heaven (PAUSE) Hallowed be your name' (PAUSE)

Open your eyes, smile, and gently invite the others in your group to do the same. Gently lead into a time of Noticing, below, with a wondering question.

Noticing (drawing attention to where God is at work in us, in others, and in life)

You should encourage and take turns with anyone present to 'lead' this part, especially children. 'Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be your name' is a short sentence so this noticing may not take very long at all. That's fine.

Allow conversation to flow where it does or allow silences for personal reflection. Tell those present that they don't have to speak out loud if they so choose. When something is shared, receive the contribution with thanks and a smile. Don't leap to correct a comment you feel is 'wrong' but do follow

up with a further question like 'I hadn't thought of it like that, tell me more' or 'I wonder if we can find out more about that'.

- *"I wonder what you notice about this. Does a word or phrase catch your attention? Do you have a question?"*
- *"How do you feel?"*
- *"Does this part of the prayer remind you of another story, song, poem or prayer?"*

(It doesn't have to be a Bible story or church hymn or song - just notice the connections and sing, say, read or watch it together now or later).

Wonderer's welcome

Psalms in the Bible are prayers, songs or poems that people wrote to try to express their feelings and wonderings about God. Read together these verses from Psalm 8

*Our Lord and Ruler,
your name is wonderful everywhere on
earth!
You let your glory be seen in the heavens
above.*

*I often think of the heavens your hands have
made,
and of the moon and stars you put in place.
Then I ask, "Why do you care about us
humans?
Why are you concerned for us weaklings?"*

*Our Lord and Ruler,
your name is wonderful everywhere on
earth!*



If you'd like to spend some time wondering about the heavens, the universe, the stars and planets – do that now! Play a game, make a picture, look at a book, look at the sky. Come back to the dwelling story at another time.

Dwelling

If you've had a break it may help to do the Stilling exercise before Dwelling

I wonder if you've heard of Moses. Going back thousands of years, he was around at the time when God's people (the Israelites) had moved to Egypt because there wasn't enough food in their own land. They stayed there, flourished and grew their families but eventually the Egyptian rulers became so worried the Israelites would take over Egypt they made them slaves and set harsh and cruel rules to limit them. God's people prayed a lot about their situation and so we come to this story, which can be found near the front of the Bible in Exodus Chapter 3 beginning at verse 1. If you are using a storybook bible, you might find it is called 'Moses and the burning bush'.

Leader's notes

When we have wondered about this part of the prayer, we noticed that on one hand God is very present and close by 'Our Father' and also majestically massive 'in heaven'. We wondered if heaven was a place and where it is. We noticed the collective sense of 'Our' which belongs to US, rather than 'my'. There is a lot about God which is 'Ours' in contrast to our culture which focusses on 'my'.

We also noticed that 'Hallowed' is a funny word! Another translation is 'Our Father in Heaven, May your name be kept Holy'. These are big wonderings and humans have been wondering them for many generations, so we join our ancestors through all time in connecting with these big questions.

God Speaks to Moses

One day, Moses was taking care of the sheep and goats of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, and Moses decided to lead them across the desert to Sinai, the holy mountain. There an angel of the Lord appeared to him from a burning bush. Moses saw that the bush was on fire, but it was not burning up. "This is strange!" he said to himself. "I'll go over and see why the bush isn't burning up."

When the Lord saw Moses coming near the bush, he called him by name, and Moses answered, "Here I am."

God replied, "Don't come any closer. Take off your sandals—the ground where you are standing is holy. I am the God who was worshiped by your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Moses was afraid to look at God, and so he hid his face.

The Lord said:

I have seen how my people are suffering as slaves in Egypt, and I have heard them beg for my help because of the way they are

being mistreated. I feel sorry for them, and I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians.

I will bring my people out of Egypt into a country where there is good land, rich with milk and honey. I will give them the land where the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites now live. My people have begged for my help, and I have seen how cruel the Egyptians are to them. Now go to the king! I am sending you to lead my people out of his country.


But Moses said, "Who am I to go to the king and lead your people out of Egypt?"

God replied, "I will be with you. And you will know that I am the one who sent you, when you worship me on this mountain after you have led my people out of Egypt."

Moses answered, "I will tell the people of Israel that the God their ancestors worshiped has sent me to them. But what should I say, if they ask me your name?"

God said to Moses:

I am the eternal God. So tell them that the Lord, whose name is "I Am," has sent you.

 Notice where your attention was drawn to a word or phrase or part of the story.

- "I wonder which part you liked best?"
- "I wonder which part feels most important?"
- "What connections do you make between this story and the opening of the Lord's Prayer?"
- "Does this story add to or help your wonderings? Was anything confusing or distracting?"
- "Were you reminded of any other story, song, psalm or prayer?"
- "Does it remind you of a situation in the world today?"

Mending

God has been with us so far in all our wondering and questions and exploring. I wonder if you've noticed a sense of peace, joy or thankfulness. Have you noticed kindness around you? These are all ways God is active in the world and in our lives.

As we become more aware of the good things of God, we can see things in and around us that are not so good. Try this 'Thank You, Sorry, Please' way of praying to bring these good, not so good and needed things to God:

Begin by simply saying (out loud or inside) 'Thank you' for the things each person is thankful for! 'Thank you God...'

Take a moment to think about the things that you know have brought sadness, difficulty or pain to others (including things you have directly or indirectly done or added to). Again, inside or out loud say 'God, I'm sorry...'

'Please prayers' are not like a big list of wishes to Santa, they are prayers for help in bringing more of God's goodness, love, kindness and care in ourselves and the world around us. You can pray specifically for people or situations that need God's goodness and blessing into them, for example,

'God, please bless our government as they lead the country in difficult times. Give them courage to make right decisions and please give hope, justice and peace to those that especially need it now'.

You can use your own words, pictures or thoughts.

Blessing

How might we allow what we've noticed, wondered and learnt to influence our life as we grow as followers of Jesus. Here are three things to try this week:

1. Be curious about God (and unusual flames in bushes that aren't really fire!) Keep wondering!
2. God called Moses by name and Moses responded, 'Here I am'. Sometimes people recognise God talking with them directly but sometimes people 'hear' God's voice in other ways for example through the actions of or conversation with others, through creativity, when out walking or running. God knows you and your name. Can you sense or hear God speak your name? How do you respond?
3. God and Moses talked together about the Israelites and their life in Egypt. What situation in your life and/or the world will you talk with God about? What does God say to you about it? What action can you take?



Remember to jot some thoughts, wonderings or questions. Draw some pictures or take a photograph to include in your family scrapbook or journal if you are keeping one.

