



God is Trustworthy

Summary and Goal

False Narrative: God is distant and doesn't care.

True Narrative: God is near to all who call upon His name.

Bottom Line: God is present and powerful because He longs to protect, provide, and pardon.

Main Passages

Matthew 6:9-13

Session Outline

1. His Nearness (Matt. 6:9a,11)
2. His Holiness (Matt. 6:9b,12)
3. His Authority (Matt. 6:10,13)

Theological Theme

God is both transcendent and immanent. These two related Christian doctrines describe God's relationship to His creation. Both of these characteristics are evidenced in the Lord's Prayer.

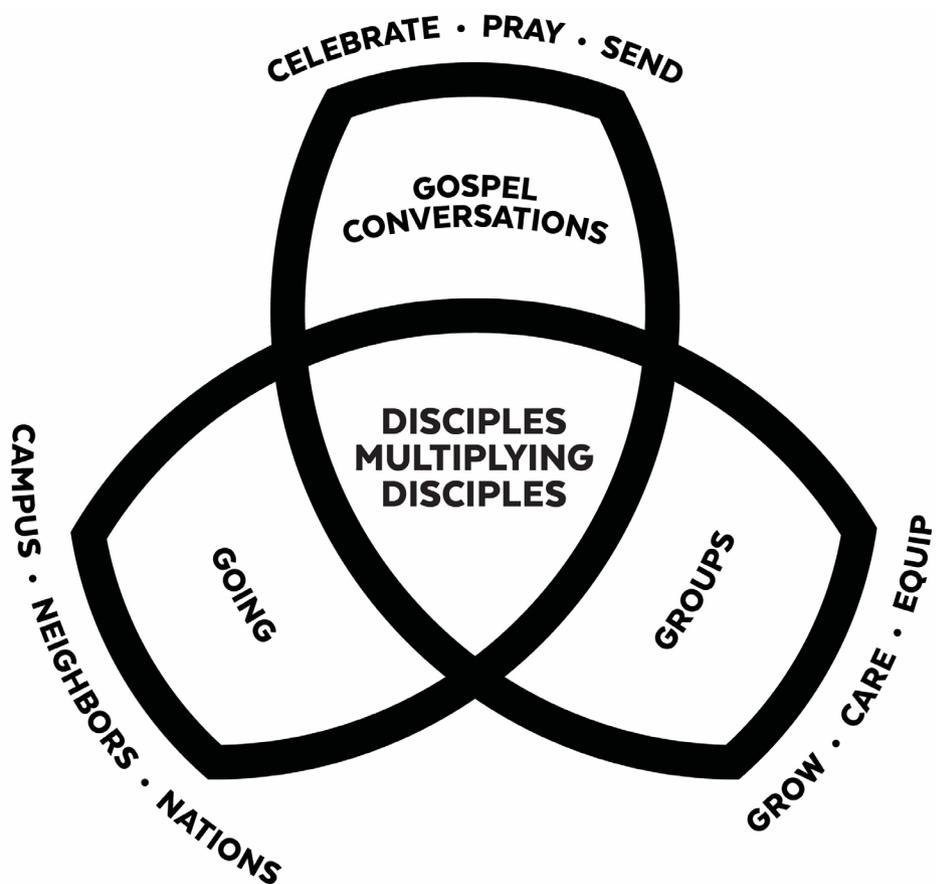
Christ Connection

Through Jesus atoning sacrifice on the cross, God's people are made righteous and clean, thus becoming acceptable in His sight. In this way God can interact with His people intimately without going against His own holiness.

Missional Application

All people will know and experience God's terrible holiness, but only those who are in Christ will rejoice in His fatherly kindness. Christians are to be heralds of this truth and to call the lost to faith and repentance in Jesus Christ.

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Next Step

Use the Lord's Prayer as a prompt and model. Who are you praying for that is lost and searching? Who needs your help to carry the load they are dealing with?

3

Session Plan

God is Trustworthy

Introduction

- ❓ Have you kept a planned event secret from your child in order to avoid the many questions and petitions that it would produce? What was it? What happened?
- ❓ What is something you long for or anticipate?

God is both high and lifted up, and near to those who seek His face. This reality is seen in the model prayer. Jesus taught His disciples to address God as Father, but with reverence, hallowing His name. He then instructed them to ask for the coming of His kingdom. His coming kingdom is sure, but Christians are to ask for it because God's children should be excited and anticipatory in regards the advancement of their Sovereign's rule.

1. His Nearness (Matt. 6:9a,11)

Jesus gave His disciples this prayer as a model by which they could pray in their own words. There are two dangers Christians must avoid when they use it. First, they ought not think there is some sort of special power released when they repeat this prayer, as though the chanting of it will force God's hand. The second error is to disregard it as antiquated and unhelpful. Jesus gave us this prayer as a guide or model for us that serves to shape our priorities and posture in prayer.

- ❓ How do the first few words of this prayer describe God? How might these verses show God both as exalted and near to His people?
- ❓ How do these verses show God's care as our Father?
- ❓ Application: What has shaped your ability to look to God as your Father? How might you grow in a desire to see God as a perfect Father?

2. His Holiness (Matt. 6:9b,12)

When something is honored as holy it means that it is treated with the highest honor and set apart. When the Bible refers to God's name, it doesn't mean to honor His name in the sense that the name is detached from the person. Rather, it is a way of referring to the whole of the person of God.

- ① What does it mean to be "honored as holy"? What exactly are we praying for in this regard?
- ② How do Christians honor God's name as holy? How should this petition shape our own prayers?
- ③ Application: How do your prayers and daily life give evidence of shows fear and reverence of God? How is God's name honored as holy in your life?

3. His Authority (Matt. 6:10,13)

Jesus set the example for us to approach God with a unique intimacy and profound reverence as we relate to Him both as our Father to be loved and as a holy God to be revered. Next, we turn to a petition to see God's kingdom come. Not only is God a good Father as well as a holy Sovereign, but He also has authority over all of His creation. Christians pray for God's kingdom to come, because He is the true King of all the earth.

- ① What is the means by which God brings about His kingdom in the world? What is our part in this?
- ② Why ought we pray for something that God is certainly going to do?
- ③ Application: Do you live your life under the authority of God or do you make decisions based on your own desires and feelings? What needs to change for you to live as one under God's authority?

Conclusion

- ① Are your times of prayer more often about you and what you want or about God and His glory? How are you challenged by today's study in this regard?
- ② How do you allow the promises of God found in Scripture to excite your prayers and petitions? How much desire do you have for the coming of God's kingdom? How might we stir one another up in this desire?
- ③ How should our praying for God's kingdom to come motivate us to share the truth of the gospel with others?



Expanded Session Content

God is Trustworthy

Introduction

- ❓ Have you kept a planned event secret from your child in order to avoid the many questions and petitions that it would produce? What was it? What happened?
- ❓ What is something you long for or anticipate?

Every parent knows that sometimes it is in the best interest of everyone in the household to withhold the news that the family will be traveling to grandparents' house on Friday evening until Friday morning. If the news is made known to them on Monday the inquiries and excited impatience would immediately begin. Human parents grow weary and impatient with this sort of excitement. God the Father does not. For those who are in Christ, they have a heavenly Father who listens tenderly and lovingly to their petitions. Further, they have a heavenly Father who is holy and sovereign over the universe.

In our text today, we see that Jesus told His disciples to pray for the coming of God's kingdom. At first this may seem surprising because the dawning and advancement of God's kingdom is surer than the dawning and advancement of the sun today. Yet, we are to pray for it. Why? Because the surety that God is bringing about His kingdom is a good and glorious thing. He wants His children to know it, rejoice in it, and rest in it. God wants His children to ask about it, long for it, and eagerly anticipate it.

Christians don't pray, "May your kingdom come" with somber tones and a disinterested affect. They pray it with a heart that is bursting with joy and anticipation. They pray it with yearning and confidence. They rejoice in it because the kingdom of God is at hand.

Session Summary

God is both high and lifted up, and near to those who seek His face. This reality is seen in the model prayer. Jesus taught His disciples to address God as Father, but with reverence, hallowing His name. He then instructed them to ask for the coming of His kingdom. His coming kingdom is sure, but Christians are to ask for it because God's children should be excited and anticipatory in regards the advancement of their Sovereign's rule.

1. His Nearness (Matt. 6:9a,11)

Jesus gave His disciples this prayer as a model by which they could pray in their own words. There are two dangers Christians must avoid when they use it. First, they ought not think there is some sort of special power released when they repeat this prayer, as though the chanting of it will force God's hand. The second error is to disregard it as antiquated and unhelpful. Jesus gave us this prayer as a guide or model for us that serves to shape our priorities and posture in prayer.



How do the first few words of this prayer describe God? How might these verses show God both as exalted and near to His people?

Jesus told His disciples to address God as their Father. Likewise, Christians today look to God as children resting in His tenderness, nearness, and authority. It is good and right to recognize this power and exalted state, for this is true about the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is robed in light and holy, holy, holy. (See Rev. 4:8.) Those facts, however, do not diminish His qualities as a compassionate and loving Father.

God the Father is the supreme and perfect example of what a Father is meant to be. Everyone on earth has his or her own impressions about what a father is or should be. Some fathers are excellent examples of the perfect Father. Other fathers are terrible examples. For some people, thinking of God as a father is a hindrance because their own father abandoned, abused, or neglected them. God the Father is different than that. He is excellent in all His ways and His goodness knows no bounds. He is altogether lovely and desirable in His person and work. God the Father is always working for the good of His people and never acts in a sinful way toward them. God is always faithful, ever patient, and wholly attentive to His children.



How do these verses show God's care as our Father?

Pray Like This

By commanding his disciples to *pray like this* rather than simply "pray this," Jesus demonstrated that this prayer was offered as a model rather than a mantra to be recited. The first person plural pronoun *Our* implies that Jesus intended this prayer to be a model for corporate prayer, i.e., a prayer for when disciples gather as a group. This confirms that Mt 6:5 was not intended to prohibit disciples from praying together publicly in the synagogue or other gatherings but instead prohibited prayers that were motivated by religious showmanship.

In verse 11 we read the petition, “Give us today our daily bread.” What could be more childlike and vulnerable than asking for food to eat today? It is noteworthy that Jesus taught His disciples to ask God the Father to pray for their daily bread. People aren’t often keen on feeling dependent on others for the food they will eat that day. It makes them feel insecure, worried, and ill prepared. It’s important to note that Jesus wasn’t instructing His disciples—or us—to not plan for the future. He was teaching His disciples that they should walk in humble, childlike dependence before the Lord, recognizing that the very bread they would eat that day would come from the hand of their heavenly Father.

Those who are in Christ ought to strive to have humble, childlike hearts turned toward their heavenly Father. God has already shown Himself to be a faithful, loving Father to His people and it is to their detriment to live as if this were not so. God perfectly provides, protects, and leads His people. He is a good Father.

 Application: What has shaped your ability to look to God as your Father? How might you grow in a desire to see God as a perfect Father?

2. His Holiness (Matt. 6:9b,12)

After instructing His disciples to address God as their Father, Jesus told them to pray that God’s name would be honored as holy.

 What does it mean to be “honored as holy”? What exactly are we praying for in this regard?

When something is honored as holy it means that it is treated with the highest honor and set apart. When the Bible refers to God’s name, it doesn’t mean to honor His name in the sense that the name is detached from the person. Rather, it is a way of referring to the whole of the person of God.

Jesus taught that His disciples should address God with intimacy, as Father. We ought to follow this example of understanding God as a close, intimate heavenly Father to His children. However, this does not in any way detract from His otherness and holiness. We both cling to God as a child does a father as well as bow low before God as a subject does before a great and mighty King. “Our Father” is balanced with “your name be honored as holy” giving the tension in which Christians are to live as His redeemed ones.

 How do Christians honor God’s name as holy? How should this petition shape our own prayers?

This petition echoes the heart of the third commandment, “Do not misuse the name of the Lord your God, because the Lord will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name” (Ex. 20:7). To honor God’s name as holy means Christians live in such a way (speech, thought, action) that reveals a profound reverence and respect for Him—an appropriate fear of Him. To carelessly use God’s name is to figuratively trample underfoot the dignity and respect due to God.

Christians honor God’s name as holy by not taking it in vain. We take God’s name in vain when we claim to be one of His children but live as a child of the devil. We take God’s name in vain when we claim to believe that He is God but rarely give Him a thought or thanks throughout our day. We take God’s name in vain when we profess to know Christ and benefit from His atoning sacrifice yet live as though we are still lost in sin.

When we pray for God’s name to be hallowed, we are seeking God’s glory. This is good and fitting. We ought to begin our times of prayer with direct worship of God our Father, Creator, and Redeemer. By doing this we not only give God the honor He is due, but we set the priority in our prayers. Our first desire under which all petitions are subordinate is the glory and fame of God in our own hearts and across the earth. When we pray that God be glorified, we know that this petition is right, good, and God’s will. There is no doubt. When we pray for God’s name to be glorified we do so with a clenched jaw, unshaking confidence, and full commitment.

In light of God’s holiness, Christians also pray with repentance. In verse 12, we see that Jesus instructed His disciples to pray, “And forgive us.” How can an unholy creature rightly relate to a holy God? For those who are in Christ, they come to God in the name of Christ, trusting in His finished work on the cross on their behalf. They also come to Him with repentance, recognizing their ongoing need of a Savior. No true Christian saunters or swaggers into God’s presence. No, they come with humble, thankful hearts knowing only grace has saved them.



Application: How do your prayers and daily life give evidence of shows fear and reverence of God? How is God’s name honored as holy in your life?

3. His Authority (Matt. 6:10,13)

So far we’ve seen that Jesus set the example for us to approach God with a unique intimacy and profound reverence as we relate to Him both as our Father to be loved and as a holy God to be revered. Next, we turn to a petition to see God’s kingdom come. Not only is God a good Father as well as a holy Sovereign, but He also has authority over all of His creation.

Christians pray for God's kingdom to come, because He is the true King of all the earth.



What is the means by which God brings about His kingdom in the world? What is our part in this?

God, working through the local church, brings about His kingdom. Christians are called to plead and labor for the expansion of God's kingdom across the nations. It is a supernatural work only God can bring about, and it is accomplished by the day in and day out mundane and faithful work of Christians. It is the pastor who faithfully preaches the Scriptures week by week and ministers the Word to people in their homes, hospitals, and the public square. It is the missionary who spends hour after hour in the village market passing out tracts and talking with people about the gospel. It is the open-air preacher who reads aloud sections of Scripture where those who might have spiritual interest can stop and listen. It is the homeschool mom who patiently and consistently guides her children to the truths of Scripture day in and day out. It is the worker who spreads the fragrance of Christ in an office building or factory floor by reflecting Christ's character with his actions and taking every opportunity to speak of God's Word. God is bringing about His kingdom through His people in a myriad of ways. This is what we both pray for and participate in.



Why ought we pray for something that God is certainly going to do?

When we encounter God's promises in Scripture our prayers for that end should be energized and even more fervent. Why? Because we desire what God desires. We rejoice in the fact that God is working and we long to see His purposes fulfilled. Matthew Henry wrote: "What God has promised we must pray for; for promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer; and when the accomplishment of a promise is near and at the door, when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, we should then pray for it the more earnestly."¹

The advancement of God's kingdom is as big as the earth and as personal as our own hearts. In verse 13, the disciples were taught to pray, "And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Christians pray for the coming of the Kingdom in their own hearts. They long to be under the rule of their glorious King and ask His help to expel the old tyrant from their hearts. When God's kingdom is dawning in a person's heart through Christ, that person increasingly does God's will. In other words, that person comes increasingly under the lordship of God and His commandments.

- ❓ Application: Do you live your life under the authority of God or do you make decisions based on your own desires and feelings? What needs to change for you to live as one under God's authority?

Conclusion

God is both immanent and transcendent. He is glorious and mighty, the Ruler of the universe; and He is tender and compassionate to His creation. Further, there is a special love and care that God demonstrates toward those who are in Christ.

- ❓ Are your times of prayer more often about you and what you want or about God and His glory? How are you challenged by today's study in this regard?
- ❓ How do you allow the promises of God found in Scripture to excite your prayers and petitions? How much desire do you have for the coming of God's kingdom? How might we stir one another up in this desire?
- ❓ How should our praying for God's kingdom to come motivate us to share the truth of the gospel with others?

Prayer of Response

Let the Lord's model prayer shape how you pray now. Pray for God's name to be hallowed in your own life. Repent of any sin that the Lord has revealed to you. Pray for God's kingdom to come across the earth, but first and foremost in your own heart and our local church. Pray with joy and confident anticipation. Finally, pray for God's will as revealed in the Scriptures to be done in your own life. That you would obey God's Word with faith and God will accomplish His purposes in your own life even if it means your own will being left undone.

Additional Resources

- *Praying the Lord's Prayer* by J.I. Packer
- *A Layman Looks at the Lord's Prayer* by W. Phillip Keller
- *Loved: The Lord's Prayer* by Sally Lloyd-Jones

For Next Week

Session Title

- God is Redeemer

Main Passages

- Isaiah 44:21-24

Session Outline

1. Formed by God (Isa. 44:21)
2. Redeemed by God (Isa. 44:22)
3. For His Glory (Isa. 44:23-24)

Memorize

⁹ *“Therefore, you should pray like this:*

*Our Father in heaven,
your name be honored as holy.*

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 do not bring us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.*

- Matthew 6:9-13

Daily Readings

- Monday - Matthew 6:9-13
- Tuesday - Proverbs 3:9
- Wednesday - Psalm 9:10
- Thursday - Jeremiah 29:11
- Friday - Psalm 112:7
- Saturday - Hebrews 13:8

Historical Context of Matthew

Purpose

Matthew probably wrote his Gospel in order to preserve written eyewitness testimony about the ministry of Jesus. Matthew's Gospel emphasizes certain theological truths. First, Jesus is the Messiah, the long-awaited King of God's people. Second, Jesus is the new Abraham, the founder of a new spiritual Israel consisting of all people who choose to follow him. This new Israel will consist of both Jews and Gentiles. Third, Jesus is the new Moses, the deliverer and instructor of God's people. Fourth, Jesus is the Immanuel, the virgin-born Son of God who fulfills the promises of the OT.

Author

The author did not identify himself in the text. However, the title that ascribes this Gospel to Matthew appears in the earliest manuscripts and is possibly original. Titles became necessary to distinguish one Gospel from another when the four Gospels began to circulate as a single collection. Many early church fathers (Papias, Irenaeus, Pantaenus, and Origen) acknowledged Matthew as the author. Papias also contended that Matthew first wrote in Hebrew, implying that this Gospel was later translated into Greek.

Setting

The date of composition for Mark is best inferred from the date of Luke and Acts. The abrupt ending of Acts which left Paul under house arrest in Rome implies that Acts was written before Paul's release. Since one of the major themes of Acts is the legality of Christianity in the Roman Empire, one would have expected Luke to mention Paul's release by the emperor if it had already occurred. This evidence dates Acts to the early 60s. Luke and Acts were two volumes of a single work, as the prologues to these books demonstrate. Luke was written before Acts. Given the amount of research that Luke invested in the book and the travel that eyewitness interviews probably required, a date in the late 50s is reasonable. If Luke used Mark in writing his own Gospel, as seems likely, by implication Mark was written some time before the late 50s, perhaps the early to mid-50s. Thus, despite Matthew's dependence on Mark, Matthew may have been written any time beginning in the mid-50s once Mark was completed. The earliest historical evidence is consistent with this opinion, since Irenaeus (ca AD 180) claimed that Matthew wrote his Gospel while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome (early AD 60s).

Special Features

This Gospel was written from a strong Jewish perspective to show that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

Extended Commentary

Matthew 6:9-13

6:9–15. An important point to be made about the “Lord’s Prayer” is that Jesus intended it to be a pattern for the servant of his kingdom, just as he intended much of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not a magical formula. The specific words he used are not any more sacred than requests we might make expressing the same kinds of desires to the Father. We should seek to learn how to pray like Jesus prayed, not merely what Jesus prayed. That was his point when he said, This, then, is how you should pray (6:9). The pattern of meaningful prayer is to begin by majoring on the person and nature of God and his kingdom interests, coming to personal requests and needs only secondarily.

You in Jesus’ introduction (6:9a) is grammatically unnecessary, and is therefore emphatic. It is also placed at the end of the sentence for emphasis. His implication is, “You, on the other hand (in contrast to both the pompous hypocrites and the thoughtless, superstitious Gentiles), are to pray simply and meaningfully, as follows.”

Our Father in heaven. The plural pronoun our indicates that prayer should be an expression of corporate desires to God, and should often be prayed in fellowship with other believers. The words Father and heaven together demonstrate the loving closeness and awesome transcendence of God to his child.

Hallowed be your name. The verb hallowed means “to sanctify, make holy.” Because the grammatic form here is unknown in English, we tend to take this line in Jesus’ prayer as a statement of fact, when, in fact, it is a request. Jesus was teaching us to make the request, “Lord, may your name be sanctified.” Why should we pray to God that he would sanctify his own name? Probably as a reminder to ourselves to live a life that advertises a holy God. Also, this kind of greeting was a form of blessing on the one addressed.

In both Old and New Testament thinking, a person’s name was equivalent to his or her very person (thus the careful choice in those days of children’s names for their meaning, not just their sound). For this reason, it is not important to know what name of God Jesus may have meant. To say that the word by which God is called is to be holy falls far short of Jesus’ meaning. Jesus was asking that God himself be set apart as holy, and so Jesus also modeled the attitude we should have toward God during prayer.

Hallowed has to do with something or someone being different or set apart. We must come before God with an attitude of reverence for God’s perfection (in contrast to our imperfection), his wisdom (in contrast to our foolishness), his power (in contrast to our impotence), and his love (in contrast to our selfishness). God’s holiness is everything that sets him apart from us and all the rest of his creation. Addressing such a being should never be done casually or flippantly.

Your kingdom come. The kingdom servant sees God’s kingdom as not yet completely fulfilled on earth. This prayer is not only for the future coming of Christ (although this can be included),

but it is also for the spreading of God’s kingdom around the world through his kingdom servants. Therefore, it is a prayer that we, his servants, would be faithfully obedient and effective in living his kingdom principles in our own lives and then spreading the kingdom through our actions and words.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This request assumes that God’s will is done in heaven, but not yet on earth (in the same full way). Sin and rebellion are absent in heaven, but hindrances are present on earth. This is another request for the spreading of God’s kingdom rule on earth, primarily through the church as the agent of the kingdom. Our prayers are to be continual reminders to ourselves to “get with” the kingdom program. Sadly, too many believers live for the weekends and not for Christ’s kingdom.

Give us today our daily bread. This petition is probably best taken at face value—as a request for the food needed daily, and that it be provided when it is needed. Most of the people in Jesus’ day lived hand-to-mouth. This was true particularly among the lower classes to whom Jesus’ message appealed most. This request acknowledges God as the provider of every physical need, but it also reminds the petitioner to trust God to provide as the needs arise, and not necessarily in advance. Compare this with the lesson Israel had to learn during forty years of daily manna; any excess spoiled by the second day. They were always just one day away from starvation, and yet they ate well during all those decades.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. The Greek word for debts in the New Testament appears only here and Romans 4:4. It is clear that Jesus and Matthew intended the word to mean “sins” here (Luke 11:4). The choice of this word reflects the fact that all sins place us in debt to God. In a more extended treatment and parable on this same concept in 18:21–35, Jesus used the idea of debt to teach about sin and forgiveness.

This is the only petition that seems to have a condition prerequisite to its fulfillment and two full verses of explanation following (6:14–15). The context is the relationship of a child to a father. This is “family forgiveness,” not forensic or judicial forgiveness. Jesus is not saying that our forgiving is a necessary means to earning God’s forgiveness. The Bible makes it clear that there is nothing we can do to merit God’s judicial forgiveness, but that it is given freely (e.g., Rom. 5:6–8; Eph. 2:8–9).

One does not gain forgiveness by forgiving. But a person evidences his or her own forgiveness by forgiving others. Since this is family forgiveness, our sense of forgiveness is denied us when we deny forgiveness to others. As God’s children, we are commanded to be forgiving. When we fail to forgive, we reap the consequences of spiritual and moral defeat.²

References

1. Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Matthew to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1900).
2. Stuart K. Weber and Max E. Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary: Matthew* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000).

Author Bio

Matthew Henry (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Matthew to John)

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) has been known and loved for three centuries for his devotional commentary on the Bible. It has not been generally known that he was also a distinguished preacher. He began preaching at twenty-four years old and held pastorates until his death. The greatness of his sermons consists in their scriptural content, lucid presentation, practical application, and Christ-centeredness.

Stuart K. Weber (Holman New Testament Commentary: Matthew)

Stu Weber is senior pastor of Good Shepherd Community Church near Gresham, Oregon. He is a much-in-demand international speaker and the author of the popular *Four Pillars of a Man's Heart*, *Tender Warrior*, *All the King's Men*, and *Along the Road to Manhood*. He and his wife, Linda, have three children: Kent, Blake, and Ryan.

Max Anders (Holman New Testament Commentary: Matthew)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume *Holman Bible Commentary* series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at www.maxanders.com to help people grow spiritually.

J.I. Packer (Praying the Lord's Prayer)

J. I. Packer is Board of Governors Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia. He serves as contributing editor to *Christianity Today*, and his many books include *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* and *Praying*.

W. Phillip Keller (A Layman Looks at the Lord's Prayer)

Weldon Phillip Keller (1920-1997) wrote more than thirty-five books on Christian subjects, including his most popular book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. The son of missionary parents in Kenya, Keller grew up in Africa before becoming a world citizen as a photographer, agronomist, and author. His books have over two million copies in print.

Sally Lloyd-Jones (Loved: The Lord's Prayer)

Sally Lloyd-Jones is a *New York Times* bestselling author whose books include: *Thoughts To Make Your Heart Sing*, a children's devotional which won the ECPA Christian Book of The Year award in adult inspiration, and *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, now available in a format for adults with a new design and title, *The Story of God's Love for You*. Sally also has a new picture book coming this spring, *Baby Wren and the Great Gift*.