

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

### The Only Prayer You'll Ever Need

A guide for seven conversations in small groups, book clubs, or families

#### Introduction

Precisely because the Lord's Prayer begins with an address to "**Our** Father," it puts us into a conversation addressed to God, but one that also includes other people. It invites us to understand that a relationship with God presumes our understanding of our connection to others. Life together is a spiritual imperative. The "Our" is found through the entire prayer and pushes us to think of others as well as ourselves.

The questions that follow are intended as a help for small groups in discussing the petitions of the prayer. They are written with the expectation that God will be present.

There are more questions here than you will need for good conversations. The conversations themselves will enrich the experience of reflecting on the prayer.

\*\*\*

#### Session 1 A Conversation on Perspective (Chapter 3 in *The Only Prayer You'll Ever Need*)

##### *"Our Father Who Art in Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name"*

An astronaut's view of the earth is different from how the rest of us see it. When astronauts look at the earth from space, they invariably describe an experience that touches them deeply. The earth is strikingly beautiful, rich with colors against the darkness of space, and it is singular, one planet that contains people together with their stories, wants and dreams. It is a special vantage point on the place where we live.

The first petition is on *perspective*. Perspective matters. If we expect that life will be easy, it will often disappoint us. If we expect it to be challenging, we will often find that we have greater perseverance and resilience. But life is not simply easy or challenging. It is also a gift to each of us.

\*\*\*

**Open the time together with prayer**, inviting God to be present. Conclude the prayer with the words of the first petition, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy Name."

#### Opening questions

Who taught you the Lord's Prayer?

How did you learn to pray?

What did you believe might happen when you prayed?

Have you ever felt that you were in a hallowed space or time?

#### Our experience

How has your perspective changed through your life (narrower? broader? more hopeful? more cynical? more cautious?)?

What stories or experiences have particularly shaped your perspective?

How has your perspective changed through life? Is there something you felt was unimportant that you would value differently today?

Have you felt a sense of awe or wonder at times in your life? Where were you?

### **The prayer**

How does thinking about prayer as a conversation strike you?

Why do you think Jesus taught to begin with perspective?

How do you imagine our Father's heavenly perspective? How does it differ from ours?

What does the Lord's Prayer invite to our perspective?

How does this petition of the prayer connect us to others?

### **Our aspirations**

Where in your life do you think you could benefit from a better perspective?

Is there a person whom you admire who might serve as a model of an elevated perspective for you?

What might be benefits of praying for better perspective?

Is there someone in your life whom you need to understand and hear better? How does seeing each person as a child of God change your perspective?

What could you do every day to make space for a better perspective in your life?

If the prayer were a letter that begins with the salutation "Our Father," how would it close?

Close with a prayer praying for greater perspective in your life and for each other.

\*\*\*

*"Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? and look to the heavens:  
Who created all these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name"*

*(Isaiah 40:26)*