



All Praying Together Scripture Readings – Michael King

Michael King is presently a Methodist lay worker and local Preacher working with villages in the Banbury area. He previously studied in Ghana, taught in Sierra Leone and was Team Leader of the World Church Relationships team for the Methodist Church from 2000 to 2011. For 2012/13 he is Vice-President of the British Methodist Conference.

Matthew 6: 1-18

Both the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games are, for me, truly inspiring occasions. No, not the light and sound show, but all those different nationalities and competitors in the games that sandwich the ceremonies, being together; and in those moments enjoying each other's company and achievements. Is it an example of a better world, or am I being hopelessly naïve?

When I pray, I also feel a need to retain a 'freshness' of approach. I need to see the world as God sees it, the bigger picture, a vision that puts the smile on the face of the Creator. And for that to happen, I believe in a God who not only wants the best for all his creation but also needs his key players to 'do the business' on his behalf, day in and day out. There is a better way to live, God keeps giving us the blueprint to success and we need both to listen to the advice and put it into practice.

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 is used in different ways. It is often said or sung as an almost compulsory part of an act of worship but it is also a trusted guideline for private prayer. It starts where heaven and earth meet, with the understanding that ordinary people can make a difference and if enough people have the same vision as God, then the world can and will be transformed into the Kingdom that tops and tails this most wonderful prayer. It is always fresh, ever powerful.

The prayer starts with an acknowledgement about the nature of God and God's relationship with us. Just ponder this: the Creator who is holy, wants us to know him as Father! No matter how many records have been broken at this year's Olympics and Paralympics, they will be nothing in comparison with the 'wow' factor of knowing that Almighty God loves us enough to call us his children. Whether it is in a Brazilian favela, dalits in an Indian village, a youth camp in Sierra Leone, or seeing people's initial awareness in rural Britain – the first time that individuals know they are loved by God is for them, immense. We need no other motivation to 'gossip the gospel.'

Of course, knowing that God loves us involves responsibilities and the Lord's Prayer sets them out: living according to God's rules, being grateful that we are given all that we need (not necessarily what we want) and learning to forgive others as lovingly as God himself has enabled our relationship with him to be restored.

In all these things, we have Christ to thank for his example. Jesus gives us the strength to try and do better in the future, praying that we might be strong when our inclinations may selfishly lead us into trouble.

So the Prayer is both a daily framework for Christian living and a springboard for mission. It starts with an individual relationship but recognises that the whole world, a better world, belongs to God. Bigger than the Olympics; yours, Father, is the kingdom, power and glory. Wow!