

UNDERSTANDING FAITH

How can we Pray
"The Lord's Prayer"
and mean it?

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HOW CAN WE PRAY “THE LORD’S PRAYER” AND MEAN IT?

Introduction

Jesus’ disciples had been watching John the Baptist and his disciples praying. It seems John must have had a system! They asked Lord to “teach us to pray” and Jesus taught these words which echo down the ages.

Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”

So He said to them, “When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins,

For we also forgive everyone who sins against you.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.”

(KJV) Luke 11 v1-4 (see also Matthew 6 v9-13)

The prayer has become something we say in every liturgical church service as a simple spoken prayer. *(The advantage of this is that even today most people know the words - although it has become quite hard recently with all the various revisions to the text!)*

I don’t think it really is a prayer to learn by rote but instead a pattern of prayer for us to follow.

If we pray it through slowly and think about each part of it, these 9 phrases will help and inspire our prayers and send us into whole new areas of life with God. **Michael**

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN

We pray within a Relationship ~

When the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him, “Teach us to pray.” The reply they heard was a life changing experience. The opening prayer words Jesus gave were revolutionary.

“Abun d’bashmoyo” (in Aramaic - the language Jesus spoke):

which we translate as “Our Father in heaven.” This phrase is the foundation of the Lord’s Prayer. We no longer approach God through sacrifice and ritual but from a relationship of a beloved child to a parent.

Father in heaven, teach us to begin here: not with technique, but with relationship.

Your prayer is an invitation into intimacy ~ children speaking to a loving Father. You delight to meet us with love, close enough to be known. So we come as sons and daughters ~ trusting your heart, not fearing your face.

Forgive us, Lord, when we imagine you as harsh and far away. Reveal the Father’s true face and may we find Your mercy and love which is wider than we can measure.

Give us your best gift- Holy Spiri ~ fill us, lead us, and teach us to pray.

So, in the quiet, we remember:

I am a child of God the Father,

I am loved;

I belong to God.

Out of that relationship

“Abun d’bashmoyo” - “Our Father in heaven.”

let our words for ourselves and the world rise.

In that closeness we ask: give us today what we need, forgive our sins, and lead us away from trial.

Amen.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

We pray to Honour and Worship God ~

Here, in the prayer, we turn our focus from ourselves and place God at the centre of our prayers. We begin by naming who **God is: our loving Father (see above), yet holy (hallowed) and beyond us.** Prayer therefore begins not with requests and with **worship.**

God is holy—set apart and worthy of honour—so we pray with reverence. Reverence does not push us away; it draws us into worship. It makes us smaller and God greater.

Look at these verses which remind us that God is hallowed.

“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendour of holiness.”

Psalm 29 v2

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”

Isaiah 6 v3

We pray that

- God would be honoured in our hearts.
- That His name would be respected in our lives.
- That His glory would be seen in all the world.

We worship and praise Him.

THY KINGDOM COME

We pray for God to be known ~

The prayer “Thy Kingdom Come” is first a Prayer of submission, a prayer of loyalty. We are pledging our loyalty to the King. I find a helpful way to picture God’s kingdom is this:-

“God’s people, in God’s place, under God’s Kingly rule.”

Too often we build our own kingdom ~ grasping for the crown and insisting on control above God so we need to start by submitting to the King.

**Lord, I confess my disloyalty and turn from it.
Give me a heart that loves your good rule. Make
me long for your kingdom to come ~
Make me long to seek your will in me and in this
world. Amen.**

It is also an evangelistic prayer. “Thy kingdom come” is a plea that God would draw unbelievers nearer to Christ. He often answers as we share the good news that Jesus saves ~ so may his reign take root in the hearts of those who seem far away.

It is a prayer for justice that Jesus’ lordship is to be seen in every part of this present age.

If Jesus’ kingdom is to come on earth, we cannot stay detached from justice. Justice asks: Why do things happen as they do? Do our society’s values match Christ’s? If not, what must change ~ and how can we act? How do our choices treat the stranger and those on the margins? Do they help us love our neighbour across divides? Do they strengthen families and communities, shape education well, and care for God’s creation?

We name and challenge the places where God’s kingdom is not yet evident. It is a prayer to work in this world for justice.

It is a prayer for the Second Coming of Jesus

“We wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

Titus 2:13:

It is also a prayer to the Father that the end will come and Jesus will return.

When Jesus comes the Kingdom will come in all finality and He will:

- complete his saving work;
- bring everything into the light;
- defeat evil ~ ending suffering, tears, and mourning;
- gather his people, and raise the dead so we will meet again;
- renew creation: building a new heaven and a new earth, set free from decay;
- bring us to be with Him forever.

**Maranatha ~ come, Lord Jesus ~ Thy Kingdom
Come. Make all things new. Amen.**

THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

We pray to be attuned to God's will ~

I imagine you praying the Lord's prayer in a quiet room on earth—perhaps looking out over a garden, a field, a street of flats, or a small shopfront. You will certainly be praying in the world God has placed us in.

Our prayers rise to God ~ our Father in heaven ~ from earth.

Jesus taught us to pray that, just as God's will is done in heaven ~ perfectly, completely, and without resistance ~ so His will would be welcomed and obeyed here on earth. Heaven is the place where God's desires are fulfilled fully; there is no conflict, no delay, no hesitation.

In contrast, the earth is marked by struggle, brokenness, and longing.

To pray these words is to acknowledge that gap and to ask God to begin bridging it through us.

This raises a question how do we learn what God's will is?

We learn to listen through

- Scripture, which reveals God's heart and purposes;
- prayer, where we quiet ourselves before Him;
- and through the gentle, faithful leading of the Holy Spirit.

We ask not only for direction, but for insight, wisdom, and understanding, trusting that God is eager to guide those who seek Him sincerely. Over time, His will becomes clearer, shaping our values, our choices, and our love for others.

Scripture gives us concrete examples of what God's will looks like in action. For example we are called to heal the sick, to set captives free, and to bring good news to the poor. We are called to embody compassion, justice, mercy, and forgiveness. Having received this calling, we are no longer passive observers ~ we become participants. We are entrusted with the responsibility of putting His will into action in our own lives and communities, however small or hidden those acts of obedience may seem. Where God's will is lived out, life is released. Restoration begins. Freedom takes root. These are the signs of His kingdom breaking into the present world ~ sometimes dramatically, often quietly, but always powerfully. Every act of love, every step of obedience, and every prayer offered in faith becomes a point where heaven touches earth.

And still, we look forward with hope. We long for the day when God's desires will be fulfilled perfectly and completely, when all that is broken will be healed, when justice and peace.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

We Pray for our needs ~

“Give us this day our daily bread” is one of the best-loved lines of the Lord’s Prayer ~ and one of the most honest. It brings us back to God as our loving Father, and to us as His children talking to Him about our needs.

“Bread” stands for the everyday needs of life ~ food, shelter, clothing, and all that sustains us. We ask our Father for what we need today, and we leave tomorrow in His hands knowing He cares for us.

This is a daily prayer of trust. The Greek word translated “daily” (*epiousios*) appears only here in all ancient Greek literature. I think it carries the sense of asking for bread “for the coming day” or “enough for today.” Jesus teaches us to come to God for what we need now ~ not hoarding out of fear of an uncertain future, but learning day by day dependence on God.

Praying this also has a deeper meaning and “daily bread” is not only physical. It also points to spiritual nourishment ~ God’s Word and the presence of Christ Himself.

Jesus says,

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst”

John 6:35

As bread strengthens the body, so Christ strengthens the soul. When we pray for daily bread, we confess our need for daily renewal with Him.

In every sense, “Give us this day our daily bread” is a simple, daily act of trust: without God we lack, and with Him we have what we truly need. I hope that praying this also forms gratitude in us. Each meal, each breath, each morning is gift ~ received, not earned.

Finally, notice too that Jesus teaches us to pray “Give us ...” not “Give me.” We belong in community and much of the Lord’s Prayer is written in the



plural so our prayer widens to include those who lack. The early church lived this out, sharing so that

“there were no needy persons among them”

Acts 4:34

This prayer also asks us all to be part of God’s answer ~ meeting need with generosity and compassion.

AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES

We prayer to be forgiven ~

I don't need to tell you that we all fail and need forgiveness – we know it all too well. Forgiveness is freely given through Jesus Christ.

Here is a well-known prayer we can say to seek God's forgiveness.

A prayer of Confession from the Book of Common Prayer

ALMIGHTY God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, Judge of all men:

We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us.

We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.

Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life, to the honour and glory of thy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After praying that prayer be reminded about how complete forgiveness is. Here are some beautiful pictures of God's forgiveness from the Bible

Forgiveness is like new snow

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson.”

Isaiah 1 verse 18

Forgiveness means our sins are trampled and cast away into the deepest depths

You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

Micah 7 verse 19

Forgiveness means our sins are totally removed from us

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he set our sins from us.

Psalms 103:12

Forgiveness means there is no accusation against us - I am innocent

There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8 v1

In Christ I am Forgiven and declared innocent of all the charges that were stacked against me. So by the authority of the Lord Jesus I command any accusing and condemning thoughts in my mind to go now. I receive again the power of the cross.

WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US

We pray to forgive ~

All of us get hurt by other people ~ by words, by choices, and by broken trust.

Sometimes it goes even deeper when the harm touches not just us but our family, our friends, or our home.

Especially when the wound is still tender, forgiveness can feel impossible.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus calls us to forgive those who sin against us ~ not to pretend it didn't matter, but to keep the hurt from taking root in us and damaging us further.

Desmond Tutu said: *"We don't forgive to help the other person. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves. Forgiveness, in other words, is the best form of self-interest."*

Forgiveness is part of God's healing for our hearts.

When we choose to forgive:

- we stop carrying what was done to us as a daily weight;
- Forgiveness is part of our walk with God: we bring him the pain, and we ask for grace to let it go. We have placed the matter into God's hands, even if our feelings take time to catch up.
- we take a step towards freedom, whether the other person ever apologises or not.

Our Forgiveness does not excuse the wrong, but it releases us from the grip it has on us.

But this is so hard!

Holding on to resentment can feel like strength, but it often keeps the wound open. Forgiveness is choosing to stop reopening it. Remaining bitter is like drinking poison and hoping it will harm someone else.

Sometimes we cannot speak to the person at all (*they may be dead or we don't even see them*). Even then, we can forgive them in Jesus' name and ask Him to heal what they broke.

Forgiveness is to set the captive free—and then to realise the captive was you. God calls us to forgive because he loves us. He wants us free, not chained to yesterday.



LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

A prayer in the daily battle we face ~

Every day as, Christian people, we will face the challenge of sin the world and the devil trying to drag us away from the way of Jesus and his path.

Before looking at this part of the Lord's prayer, I want to dispel a few myths about temptation.

- Temptation itself is NOT a sin.
- God is NOT disappointed and displeased when we are tempted.
- To be strongly tempted does NOT mean we are as guilty of anything.
- When I am spiritually mature, I will NOT be harassed by temptation.

These are all false.

Praying Lead us not into temptation could mean:

Praying to Know Yourself

I don't know how you cope with temptations in your own lives, but I expect you can resist taking a sawn of shotgun out and robbing Barclays' bank.

I bet it is with little subtle, simple things that you are more tempted and tested by.

I reckon when we pray not into temptation, we consider our lives we need to know and acknowledge our weaknesses. By doing this we can know where our weaknesses are and we can be on our guard. If my temptation is gluttony a plate of biscuits on a coffee morning may need handing to the next person!

Praying to Know the Power of God

Look to Jesus for the power we need to gain victory over the world the flesh and the devil.

He knows exactly what it was like to be tempted so the promise of scripture is ...

“Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted”

Hebrews 2 v18

Jesus' mind and soul and heart remained wholly upon his Father's purpose for his life despite great temptation to deviate from that path. When He goes to the Cross, He forfeits the desires of the flesh, He forfeits the easy way out.

He dies the sinless man, to the pay the price for the hundreds of times we have all given into temptation so we might be a forgiven people.

Next time you are tempted pray for the fire of Jesus to burn in your heart afresh ~ He knows what we are going through.

Praying to Know Grace

So often part of our human lot is that we do give in to temptation and we feel guilty about it. Too often we think “I've blown it, I'm never going to get this right I can resist everything except temptation”.

The great truth of Christianity is that God never gives up on us. No mistake we ever make is so drastic that God cannot forgive and correct it, if we let him.

Have you fallen then get up, get back to God and start again. I promise he will honour your guts and determination. That is not saying we should not pray lead us not into temptation and that it doesn't matter when we fail. It is saying God is a God of second starts, and third starts and of forgiveness 70 times 7.

God is looking for us always in humility to admit we are wrong, to pick ourselves up and turn again for Jesus.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

We pray against the reality of an enemy ~

The Lord's prayer in our liturgies ends with "For thine is the Kingdom the power and the glory." but this is not what Jesus taught in the Bible. In Matthew's Gospel (*chapter 6*) He ends with the phrase "Deliver us from evil" which follows straight on from "Lead us not into temptation." The word we translate "temptation" can also mean a time of testing. Jesus is teaching us to recognise that the world is not spiritually neutral, and that the Christian life includes real, daily battles.

St Paul reminds us that our struggle is deeper than what we can often see:

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Ephesians 6 v 12

Sometimes we speak of this evil personally—as Satan, the devil—because Scripture does. But we also mean all the forces that oppose God and wound His world. And we ask the Lord, simply and confidently, to deliver us and not bring us to hard testing.

We cannot resist the devil in our own strength. The prayer that God would deliver us from evil has a counterpart in the command and promise of the book of James.

"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

James 4 v7

This is prefaced by "*submit yourselves to God.*" If we were to face the devil in our own power, we would be overwhelmed. We can only resist temptation, avoid sin, and defeat the devil by a conscious reliance upon God's power. In Ephesians Paul teaches a specific prayer for this battle

which we call putting on "*the full armour of God*" *Ephesians 6* to fend off the spiritual strategies of evil. This practical, daily pursuit confirms that deliverance includes both God's provision and our conscious stand against wrongdoing.

What is vital is that we pray this from strength. The strength we have is the birth, life, death, resurrection and heavenly Ascension of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are praying to the one who has TRUE sovereignty over ALL creation,

We are praying to the one who has defeated the devil's schemes on the Cross

We are praying to the one who destroyed the works of the devil on the cross

We are praying to the victorious, resurrected Son.

Thanks be to God who gives us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ . Amen.

