

Living Our Lord's Prayer

A Devotional Guide

By Bill Moore



**Compliments of:
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About the author

William Thomas “Bill” Moore was born in Greenville, South Carolina. He held a bachelor’s degree from the University of South Carolina and bachelor of divinity and master of theology degrees from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Pastor of churches in South Carolina and Tennessee, he also directed the North Tulsa Baptist Center, served as director of interracial work for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan and was a liaison with the African-American Baptist Convention. He was also a founder of Habitat for Humanity in Owensboro, Kentucky, where he had retired with his wife, Jean, in 1986.

Reverend Moore authored numerous articles, as well as two books on race relations. He served as missions volunteer in Jamaica, Botswana, the Czech Republic, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Liberia. He also served in Florida and Kentucky through the Kentucky Disaster Relief Team. He enjoyed gardening, running and jogging.

He died October 4, 2005, just prior to the release of this publication. His wife, two sons, a daughter, three granddaughters and two sisters survive him.

Foreword

I have not met a more courageous Christian than Bill Moore. He loved Jesus and was radically committed to the Kingdom. It is not often that a person gets to pastor a prophet. There is no shortage of pastors but there is a definite shortage of prophets. I had the privilege to pastor a prophet. I hope you find meaning in this devotional guide on the Lord’s Prayer.

James K. Byrd, pastor
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Preface

The Lord's Prayer is one of the greatest expressions of the will of Jesus. With his inaugural address at Nazareth (Lk 4:17-18) and the rest of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), the Matthew 6 record of this prayer sums up Jesus' teachings and ministry. In less than 60 words it set out his agenda. A well-known prayer the Pharisees prayed three times a day was ten times as long. While each request in Jesus' prayer is a plea for help, each also challenges the one who prays to act, reminding us how God often works through us instead of always simply doing things for us.

This prayer also sets forth principles of prayer: brevity, simplicity, inclusiveness, dedication and humility. One writer called it a school of prayer. If so, it is both a kindergarten and a university. It protests the vain repetitions of those who try to impress their gods with their volume of speech, yet we are often guilty of repeating it with little thought to its meaning.

Because the Lord's Prayer—particularly the King James Version of Matthew 6:9-13—is so familiar to us, most of us have not taken time to study or understand it. Churches use it for ritual and liturgy, but it does not mention church, doctrine, ministry or the sacraments, though the Latin Vulgate (the dominant translation for hundreds of years) turned the petition for bread into a prayer for the “supersubstantial bread of the sacrament.”

Individuals also use it for personal devotions, but it is far more than personal. We realize its full significance only when we dedicate ourselves to the more vast purposes of God's kingdom.

“Lord's Prayer” is something of a misnomer. Jesus' prayer in John 17 is more truly a prayer of his personal desire, while the prayer in Matthew 6, with a shorter version in Luke 11, can more accurately be called the Model Prayer, or the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. Popular usage prevails, however, and this prayer is widely known as the Lord's Prayer.

My greatest blessing from the Lord's Prayer has come from writing a paraphrase of it, which I have done more than once, using a different word for each of the major words. You may also find this exercise helpful.

The ethical content of this prayer is pronounced, so the following lessons give particular emphasis here. The one petition, “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” could revolutionize Christianity, not to mention the world, if Christians were to take it seriously.

May we take these words of Jesus to heart and then put them into action.

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew's Version, King James Translation

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen (Matt 6:9-13 KJV).

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew's Version, New Revised Standard Translation

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one (Matt 6:9-13, NRSV).

The Lord's Prayer

Luke's Version, King James Translation

*And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil”
(Lk 11:2-4, KJV).*

The Lord's Prayer

Luke's Version, New Revised Standard Translation

*He said to them “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial”
(Lk 11:2-4, NRSV).*

Pray Then in This Way

“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven,” (Matt 6:9).

Our Father

What a difference this pronoun makes! While scribes and Pharisees sought to exclude, Jesus sought to include. While other terms used to describe God have their purpose—almighty, heavenly, divine, Lord—“our Father” has a greater purpose: to break all bounds of provincialism, nationalism, racism, gender, class, caste or any other division. When Jews said “Father” in reference to God, they meant the father of the Hebrews, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The listing of three generations made certain they meant one ethnic group.

If Jesus’ prayer were all the evidence we had, we could reason that he meant the God of the Hebrews when he said “Our Father.” But scripture records numerous other instances that point to Jesus’ inclusiveness when he used that phrase. His illustrations in Luke 4 of Naaman the Syrian and the Syro-Phoenician woman, his actions toward the woman of Samaria, his healing of the Roman Centurion’s son and his use of terms such as “all the world” and “all creation” point to his desire to break barriers and build bridges.

Jesus’ use of a simple pronoun teaches us a great deal about our relationship to God and to each other. He taught us that our relationship to God involves community. Much of modern Christianity has emphasized individual relationship almost to the exclusion of community. Though we stress the concept of church, in reality our churches often fall short of being communities and sharing fellowships.

In order to be the kind of community Jesus intended, most churches form small groups when their membership reaches a certain number. Tragically, probably half or more of all members do not participate in the small groups, therefore losing any sense of community.

“Our” binds us not only to our local Christian community but also to the world. When we pray “our,” we include those of all religions, all races, all nationalities. We include the worst of sinners and the greatest of saints. We include our dearest friends and our worst enemies. Walter Rauschenbusch said, “Jesus requires us to join in spirit with all humanity and to go to God together. Before God we do not stand alone. We are joined to all others in our needs and our plenty. To pray the Lord’s Prayer truthfully we must recognize that oneness.”

“Our” linked with “Father” denotes not only kinship with the entire world but also responsibility for the entire world. To pray “our Father” acknowledges that we are all children of God, every human being on earth, and that God loves us all. “Our” reminds us that we cannot exclude others when we pray.

Father

At least two problems arise with the use of *Father* as a title for God. Before I had much awareness of the gender problem, I heard a pastoral counselor say that he could not refer to God as “Father” with some of his clients. Their only concept of a father was a cruel and abusive person. I have heard others say the same thing about juvenile offenders and about those with little biblical background. To many of them, “father” represents fear and even hatred.

The gender problem is the same, yet different. Father denotes patriarchy to many people, the absolute authority of the male parent. This idea has been used through the centuries to declare the inferiority of and force the submission of women and children. From allowing female babies to die to the still-practiced custom of female circumcision, to the burkha dress and lack of education in some Islamic cultures, this patriarchy has done its evil upon women. The western world is gradually, painfully overcoming this, but we have a long way to go.

While some people use the term *Sophia* to refer to God, others contend that Sophia is a false or pagan goddess. The basic word, however, means *wisdom*, and Old Testament literature widely references that idea. Numerous other biblical references to God are feminine.

Our problem comes with having one term that is inclusive. *Father/Mother* is awkward. *Sophia* excludes males as much as *Father* excludes females. Creator, parent and several other terms seem to lack the personal touch. Jesus referred to God as his “Father” and to his followers as his brothers and sisters, so while God is neither male nor female, many people are comfortable referring to God as “Father.” Most realize the need, however, to use this designation for God along with more inclusive terms and understand that it is generic or inclusive when applied to God.

Jesus referred to God as “Father” to overcome a different problem, however: the perceived remoteness of God. Hebrew scripture seldom uses “Father” to refer to God. Jesus not only taught us to say “Father” but also used the family term “abba,” similar to “daddy” or “papa.” Clarence Jordan in his *Cotton Patch Gospel* translates it “daddy.” If Jesus was in the flesh today, he might give us still another term that would clearly communicate God’s nearness to us.

These language difficulties should not cause us to lose sight of the tremendous truth that we are children of God by creation and, if Christians, we are children a second time by adoption.

In Heaven

Is this phrase an attempt to locate God, or is it a statement of worship? Many people believe that God is omnipresent, that God is everywhere. Does omnipresence contradict “in heaven”?

One definition of heaven makes it everywhere in the air; another makes it anywhere that God is. In his poem “Pippa Passes,” Robert Browning wrote, “God’s in His heaven—all’s right with the world.” Is God in heaven, or is heaven where God is?

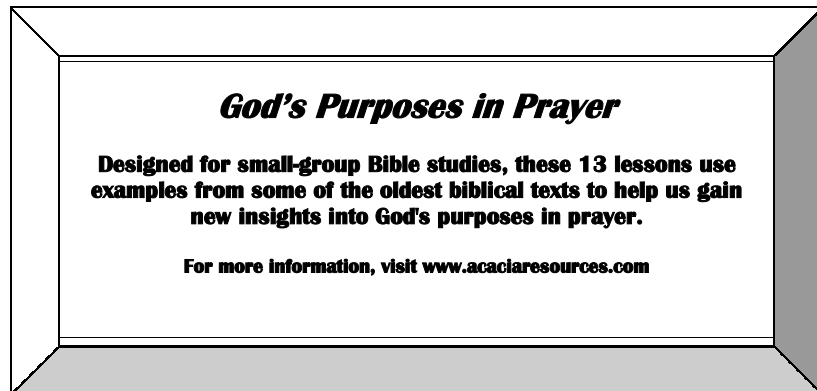
People who lived in biblical times believed in a three-story universe. The secular meaning of heaven is sky, so heaven was above, a flat earth in the center and the abode of Satan, Hades or Sheol, was below. Unfortunately, we have partially retained this in our thinking, especially that heaven is above. A better thinking seems to be that heaven is wherever God is. Then when we say “Immanuel, God with us” we are saying heaven is with us.

Other concepts of heaven as a place can also mislead and sidetrack us. We’ve perpetuated the idea from earlier writings that heaven is physically lined with golden streets and that on one of these streets we will find our “mansion.” The King James Version translates Jesus as saying, “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (Jn

14:2). A better translation for “mansions” here is “abiding places” or “dwelling places.” In each of these glimpses of heaven, the writers were describing the most wonderful place they could imagine, not necessarily offering a specific physical description of a place.

As an act of worship, what can the words “in heaven” mean to us? Certainly the biblical writers were right in wanting to describe heaven as a wonderful place, but we actually know so little about it. Perhaps the best biblical description is found in Revelation 21:4: “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

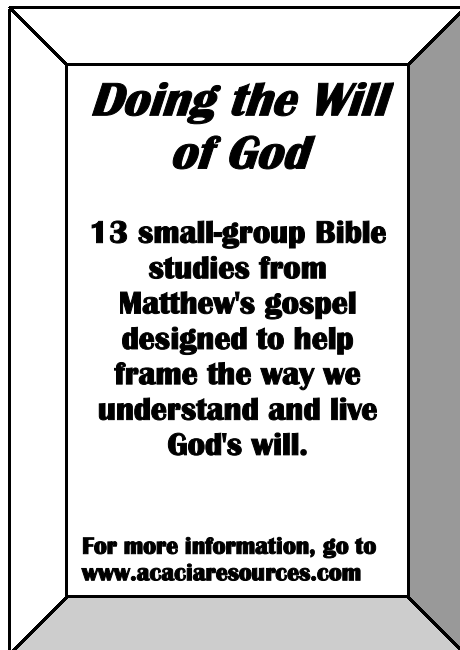
The lyricist who wrote “heaven came down” was at least partially correct. More important than a place, Jesus’ prayer tells us that heaven is where God is. When we feel most clearly the presence of God, we can accurately call that a taste of heaven. In times of sorrow or trial when God’s presence is especially close, we can recall the verse that says God wipes away all tears.



Questions for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion

- When you pray “Our Father,” who does “Our” include?
- If “Our” implies community, what is your Christian community? How do you define “community”?
- How can your Christian community improve its inclusiveness, both locally and globally?
- Is your church one community or several communities?
- Do you agree that addressing God as Father is problematic? Why or why not?
- What images or names for God most help you relate to God?
- Jesus used “Father” to counter the problem of remoteness from God. Is that a problem for most people today, or do you think that we have become too familiar and therefore irreverent toward God?
- By teaching us to address God as a parent, Jesus indicated a close, familial relationship. In what ways do you see God’s likeness in yourself?
- Should we vary our terms for God, especially in public prayer?
- Does the phrase “in heaven” indicate God’s location, or is it a phrase of worship?

- If God is in heaven, can God also be on earth? Where is God?
- What do you think of the statement, “Heaven is wherever God is”?
- Where and when have you most felt the presence of God? What does that say to you about heaven?



Hallowed Be Your Name

“Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:9b-10).

Hallowed

Holy, revered, honored, set-apart, respected, celebrated—all of these terms are gathered up in the word *hallowed*. Old Testament Jews so hallowed the name of God (*Yahweh*) that they would not speak it and wrote it without the vowels for fear of speaking it accidentally, a practice many Jews still follow. Scribes cleaned their pens before writing it. Instead of speaking “Yahweh,” they said, “Adonai,” which means “Lord.”

In Hebrew thought a name represents more than simply what someone is called. A person’s name denotes the nature of the person or being. So this petition asks that we give to God the unique place that God’s nature deserves. With Roman Catholics, the sign of the cross is a way of honoring the name of God. Muslims say, “blessed be His name” after saying “Allah,” which is the Arabic word for God. Christian Arabs pray to Allah. Other Old Testament names for God include El, Elohim and El Shaddai.

To hallow or reverence demands an awareness of the presence of God. It may also imply praise. Different people feel comfortable with different expressions of praise, and culture often influences these expressions. While some people are quite comfortable with very open and physical expressions of praise, others show their praise through quiet reflection and deep reverence.

When we hallow God's name, God's holiness is reflected in us. First Peter 1:16 quotes Leviticus, "Be holy because I am holy."

Your Kingdom

The idea of the kingdom of God includes not only God's ultimate rule but also submission to God's will on earth. The kingdom of heaven is both present and future, though we quite often think of it in future terms exclusively. Revelation 11:15 carries the theme of a future meaning: "The power to rule over the world belongs now to our Lord and His Messiah and He will rule forever and ever."

Americans are over 200 years removed from personal experiences of kings and kingdoms. To say that the kingdom of God (or heaven) means the rule of God helps a bit, but many of us struggle to grasp the meaning of the Lordship of God in our lives. "Jesus is Lord" as the universal confession of faith helps, but again the experience of a lord over servants, serfs, slaves and even family is far distant from us.

In New Testament culture, some people exercised almost dictatorial rule over others, so people understood the concepts of lordship and kingdom quite well. Clarence Jordan tried to give clearer meaning in his *Cotton Patch Gospel* translation, making the kingdom of God the "God Movement," but this, too, is cloudy. Some have suggested the "God community."

Modern Christians tend to ignore the clear word of Jesus in Matthew 4:17 that God's kingdom is now and think only of a future happening or condition. To make this petition a prayer for the second-coming of Christ would have been

absolutely meaningless to Jesus' followers, who were still trying to understand the incarnation and had not an inkling of his leaving and coming again until they received the teachings recorded in John 14:3, Luke 21:27 and Acts 1:11. These passages tell of a second coming, though individuals likely did not fully understand them at the time.

Your Will

People have written volumes about the will of God, but perhaps no clearer explanation exists apart from Jesus' next words: "on earth as it is in heaven."

God's kingdom comes whenever people obey God's will. Could it be that the final victory of the kingdom waits not on actions by political and nationalistic forces, as most end times predictors theorize, but instead on the Christian world community to get serious about doing God's will on earth now?

What is God's will? Calvinistic doctrine holds that everything that happens is God's will. This petition rebukes that belief. Nowhere does the New Testament speak of God's will as something that happens to us. Instead, it is something we are to do. It is not resignation; it is response.

Jesus taught his followers to work to bring heaven on earth in even the smallest of things: "So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost" (Matt 18:14). Would Jesus have linked "Your will be done" with "on earth as it is in heaven" if everything is predetermined? Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work" (John 4:34). As Jesus' followers, Christians need to have a diet of doing the will of God. Jesus told a parable of two sons instructed to do a

task. One said OK but did nothing. The other said, “I won’t,” but did the work anyway. When we pray “Thy will be done,” are we in danger of being the first son?

On Earth as in Heaven

What would it look like if we did God’s will on earth? I do not believe it would look like perfection, as that seems reserved for Christ’s coming. It could mean progress toward that state. Many people debate whether the world is getting better or worse. Reality says that there are ups and downs and that some things are better while others are worse. Most biblical scholars do not believe that the Bible teaches that things must get worse until Christ comes. This petition certainly teaches us to pray that things will get better.

Doing God’s will on earth includes caring for the earth. Genesis records how God observed creation and found that it was good. As such, it is worth our care and preservation. Environmental conditions point to the reality that if human life is to continue, we must do a better job with the environment. Global warming, pollution and other factors remind us that we have neglected the earth to our peril. Psalm 24:1 says, “The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.” Note that earth is mentioned ahead of people.

This petition opposes the “this world is not my home” sentiment. Certainly the earth is not our permanent home, but those who are “so heavenly minded they are no earthly good” are not praying this petition.

This petition also includes compassion, concern and aid for every human being. It seeks to involve the total Christian community in a massive, all out relief effort to end hunger,

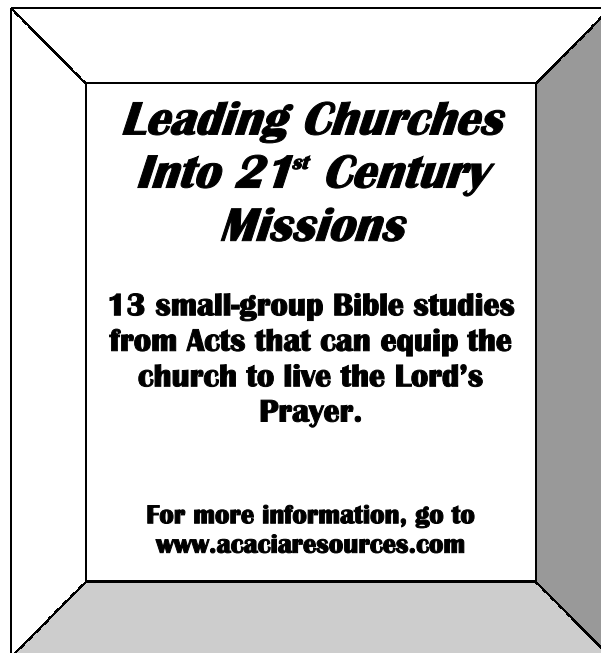
disease and illiteracy throughout the world. Both scientists and human rights activists say that we have the capacity to end world hunger; what we lack is the political will to do so. Medical research has led to the eradication of many diseases, yet millions of people around the world are susceptible to these diseases because they lack access to the vaccines and other medications that prevent and cure them.

Ruth de Barros, an Anglican missionary in Brazil, says, “In this petition we are asking for strength to transform our communities and as we do, we ourselves are transformed.” Jesus seems to teach us to pray in a way that politics and bread will become spiritual matters.

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” seeks to involve everyone who prays it in peace activism, determined opposition to war. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Why? Because the people did not recognize the things that made for peace (Lk 19:42). Neither do we. We act as if the Beatitude says, “Blessed are the peaceful.” It actually says, “Blessed are the *peacemakers*.” Jesus was prophesied as the Prince of Peace, his birth hailed by angels with a message of peace. He lived and taught non-violence in a terribly violent world that thought little of crucifying 2000 men at a time or killing all the babies in a village.

Much of the apathy within the Christian community about world problems like war, hunger, poverty, disease and the environment seem to come from the feeling that these problems are so big that one person or even one church can do nothing about them. Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed people can change the world: indeed it’s the only thing that ever has!”

What about making disciples? What about the Great Commission? If Christians sincerely and regularly prayed this petition—"thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"—we would make far more disciples than confrontational evangelism or condemnation preaching.



Questions for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion

- What was the significance of a name in Hebrew thinking?
- Do the several names of Jesus (Christ, Messiah, Master, Lord, Rabboni) also give new meanings to our relationship with him?
- Jesus taught both that we have a familial relationship with God and that God is holy, different from us. Does this represent a contradiction for you? Why or why not?
- Can we truly reverence God's name and not practice God's presence?
- How do we honor and praise God?
- How should reverence for God influence our daily actions?
- Does the mystery of God or about God disturb you, challenge you or help you?
- Why would Jesus' disciples have been puzzled by the term "second coming"?
- Can you think of a term more meaningful in modern language than "kingdom"? If so, what, and why?
- How would you describe your understanding of God's will for the world? How closely do you think the present reality comes to God's will?

- How does God’s will for the world differ from God’s will for your individual life? How does your obedience to God’s will for your life affect the realization of God’s will on earth?
- Think about each of the following and describe ways individuals and faith communities can bring this part of God’s kingdom closer to what God desires for it:
 - ~the environment
 - ~global poverty and hunger
 - ~disease
 - ~illiteracy
 - ~peacemaking, nonviolence
- How does Jesus’ life illustrate God’s will being done on earth?

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

“Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one” (Matt 6:11-13).

Our Daily Bread

For the more than 800 million people in the world who go hungry, this phrase is a life-and-death prayer. But what does it mean for those of us who have more than we need?

The word for “daily” is unclear. Bread for the coming day may be a better translation, but whether today or tomorrow makes little difference. Those who try to make tomorrow mean “the final consummation” have little foundation.

“Our” appears here again and is just as meaningful as in the opening of the prayer. Go back and read what Jesus said there. We ask together for our bread. Jesus calls us to feel the shame of taking more than one’s share while others go hungry. This lesson recalls the lessons of the manna in the wilderness, teaching us to live life daily, one day at a time.

Glen Stassen and David Gushee say in *Kingdom Ethics*: “Those among us who have pantries and refrigerators stuffed with food can hardly imagine having to pray for just enough bread for the coming day.” Every time we pray that petition let it remind us that from a third to half the world’s people are in precisely that condition.

Both God and people are involved in the creation of bread. Even in Jesus’ day, many people did not bake their own

bread. There were community or village ovens. “Our” implies even more than cooperation with God and others in production. It also implies concern that others receive their share. In the global village of the 21st century, to pray this prayer is to pray that no one on earth is hungry.

Jesus never forgot the physical needs of life. However, he stuck to needs and not luxuries. God wants our physical needs to be met and Jesus demonstrated this repeatedly in words and actions.

As we pray for daily bread, we should remember the words of Jesus during His temptation in the wilderness, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” We also need spiritual food for our sustenance.

Forgive

Before dealing with the major topic of forgiveness, let’s talk about whether to say *trespasses*, *debts*, *wrongs* or *sins*. Luke’s shorter version of the prayer says *sins*. The Beck translation of the Bible uses *sins* and TEV uses *wrongs*.

I live in an area where much of the land is used for hunting. Lots of “No Trespassing” signs exist. Trespassing today means venturing onto someone else’s property, but that is not what Jesus was talking about. To most of us, debts involve money, but that is not what Jesus meant. The New Testament uses five different words for sin. The word Jesus uses here can be translated *debts*, and while we might naturally think *dollars*, it originally meant *duty*, things we ought to do. So, while *debts* may be the most literal translation, *sin* or *wrong* seem much more meaningful in modern language.

As to forgiveness, Jesus’ words are so plain yet so challenging that we stumble over them. This is the only petition on which Jesus comments after the prayer. “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt 6:14-15). As we forgive, Jesus said, so shall we be forgiven! We quibble over what sins are forgivable, who can be forgiven and how often, but this petition dismisses those arguments.

It is not that God is unwilling to forgive the unforgiving; instead, the unforgiving person is incapable of receiving God’s forgiveness. A closed door is closed on both sides. What blocks the flow of mercy blocks it both ways. To be right with God requires being right with others. Rauschenbusch says, “Jesus will not suffer us to be pious toward God and merciless toward our fellow man.” Forgiveness includes forgiving self. Understanding is key to forgiving self and others.

The Time of Trial

The petition “do not bring us to the time of trial” does not mean that God tempts us. James 1:13 reminds us that God tempts no one. The New English Bible translates this phrase, “Do not bring us to the test.”

Jesus voices our fears of hard testing. He was aware, as the Christian community should be, that society creates such tests and these are hard to avoid. The Christian community should be a support group to hold up each other in the face of hard testing and trials.

As with every petition of this prayer, we must do our part in the answer. This is particularly true in “rescue us from the

evil one.” Evils never cancel each other. We are not to fight evil with evil but pray and strive to be delivered from evil. Romans 12:21 tells us not to let evil overcome us but to overcome evil with good. That is, we are not to idly wait for evil to attack us but to let our good aggressively seek to overcome the evil in the world.

The admonition in Matthew 5:39 “Do not resist an evildoer” is poorly translated and often misunderstood. The word translated *resist* usually meant armed or military resistance. *Today’s English Version* more accurately translates this as, “Do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you.” The idea is that we are not to resist in the same way or return violence with violence.

Jesus resisted the Romans just as much as the violent zealots, but with different methods. Consider his three examples in Matthew 5:39-41 which, rather than advocate submission, illustrate ways of non-violent resistance:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well, and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you” (Matt 5:39-41).

Most of us have difficulty understanding Jesus’ three examples. Walter Wink’s explanations and examples in writings such as *Jesus and Non Violence* are helpful at this point.

Why the right cheek? To hit with the left hand was forbidden. To hit the right cheek after the left cheek had been hit required a back handed slap, which was only used for inferiors; women, children, servants or slaves. To turn the other cheek invited an open handed slap but that would indicate equality. The fine for hitting an equal person back-handed was 100 times the fine for hitting with the fist or open hand. Clearly, the backhanded slap indicated inferiority, the palm strike indicated equality.

Jesus’ second example is even harder for our culture to understand. Clothing of that era usually consisted of an outer garment or robe and an inner garment. Deuteronomy 24:10-13 provides the background of the taking of garments for debts. To give up both garments left one naked. Nakedness in biblical culture, and in some African cultures today, was not a shame to the one naked but to the one causing the nakedness. So again, giving up the inner garment was a form of resistance, embarrassing and rebuking the one taking the outer garment. Both Wink and this author know of instances where nakedness as resistance has been successfully used in modern Africa.

Roman law allowed occupation troops to force any Jew to carry their packs one mile. Roman roads were marked with milestones, some of which survive. Army discipline had harsh penalties for making someone carry a pack for two miles. Again the resistance embarrasses the superior power. “No, you can’t carry my pack another mile. You are trying to get me in trouble.”

The petition “do not bring us to the time of trial” does not wait on God alone, but implies our partnership with God in answering the prayer.

Many biblical manuscripts, the Matthew text included, omit the familiar phrase “for thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory.” Those that include it have variations. These words remind us of God’s ownership. Even though we are partners with God in establishing the Kingdom, it belongs to God. Our share as partners is to enjoy its benefits.

The power or strength of the community of God comes from God. Though the power of evil in the world is great, we need always to remember that the power of God is greater. The glory of the community, as it celebrates the greatness of God, also belongs to God.

Unlike many Christmas and Easter celebrations where the honoree being celebrated is absent or forgotten, this declaration reminds us of God’s presence. Some Christians forget to celebrate the glory of God. Others become so caught up in celebration they forget to reverence God. Both groups more often are so centered in praise or reverence they forget to serve God. The Lord’s Prayer emphasizes all three.

Questions for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion

- What did Jesus mean when he taught us to pray for “*our* daily bread”?
- How does Jesus’ admonition “Do not worry about tomorrow” from Matthew 6:34 relate to the petition “Give us this day our daily bread”?
- How does the petition for daily bread relate to starving people around the world?
- What is the relationship between the petition for daily bread and Jesus words, “Man shall not live by bread alone”?
- If you have more than you need each day, what do you think God expects from you? Do you think that what you have belongs to you exclusively? Why or why not?
- What differences exist among need, desire and greed?
- How do you define or describe forgiveness?
- Why do you think Jesus commented on this petition for forgiveness after the prayer?
- Why is it so hard for us to forgive?
- What specific things does forgiveness involve?

- What was the most difficult thing for which you have had to forgive someone? How did you do it?
- What was the most difficult thing or which you have had to ask forgiveness?
- What words, attitudes and actions most exemplify God’s idea of forgiveness for you? What do you need to do in order to embody these?
- To what degree do you think “do not bring us to the time of trial” or “lead us not into temptation” is a plea for God to rescue us from ourselves and our self-centeredness?
- In what ways has your faith been tested? To what degree was this due to choices you made?
- When faced with choices, how easy or difficult is it for you to turn away from your personal desires and instead choose what you believe God wants of you?
- What does the account of Jesus’ temptation (Matt 4:1-11) teach you about temptation? How can it help you when you face temptation?
- When have you seen the power of God overcoming evil in our world?
- How do you celebrate the glory of God?

Let It Be

Some scripture translations of Matthew 6:9-13 end with “Amen,” the Hebrew word for “so be it” or “let it be.” It is no small thing, then, to end our prayers, and especially the Lord’s Prayer, with “Amen.”

When we do, we declare more than an expectation that God will make all these things happen. We also make a commitment that we will work with God to do the will of God. Praying the Lord’s Prayer and saying “Amen” marks not an ending but a beginning, a journey in partnership with God to create an inclusive faith community, reflect God’s character, do God’s will and extend God’s presence and purpose in the world.

What does this mean, in specific and practical terms? How do we move from praying the Lord’s Prayer to living the Lord’s Prayer? Consider the following ideas.

A New Identity

Our sense of personal identity—who we think we are—affects everything else about our lives: what we believe, what we say and do, what we value, our choices and decisions. Many people spend their entire lives moving from one thing to another in a futile search for meaning and purpose, a sense of who they are and how they fit into the grand scheme of things. Every such search dead-ends in disappointment save those that look to life’s author and creator.

Jesus’ public ministry began with his baptism and a proclamation from God: “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt 3:17). With that, Jesus received his

identity and then set out to do God's will. Jesus knew who and whose he was.

Directly on the heels of this high moment, Jesus faced temptations designed to destroy his identity. Secure and strong in his personal identity at God's son, Jesus refused to allow these temptations to get the upper hand in his life.

Jesus' instructions that we relate to God as a parent connect us to God and to Jesus in a most intimate way. Through this relationship we find our personal identity. As a result of this relationship, God develops in us qualities that reflect God's nature and the strength we need to face life's challenges and temptations and do the will of God.

A New Direction

Repentance is a critical first step toward living the Lord's Prayer. Asking for and receiving God's forgiveness involves more than telling God we're sorry for one thing or another. Too often when we say we're sorry, we actually mean we're sorry we got caught.

Repentance means we commit to changing directions, turning from the wrong path and onto the right path to do God's will. For some people, this is a very radical and noticeable lifestyle re-direction. For others, it is a deliberate choice to stay on the course initially marked for them by Christian families and nurturing churches.

For all, repentance means a new direction of nonconformity to the world that follows Jesus exclusively, places people and their needs ahead of rules and cultural expectations, serves others selflessly and faithfully, gives generously, acquires and consumes thoughtfully, loves God without reservation and worships God solely and faithfully.

A New Freedom

We often think of forgiveness only on personal terms. After all, we experience God's forgiveness individually and personally. Yet in order to receive forgiveness, we must also extend it to others. An unwillingness both to repent and to forgive others blocks our ability to understand and participate in the divine plan. We cannot pray and live the Lord's Prayer if we are unwilling to forgive.

Forgiveness opens the doors for restoration and healing and provides us with the freedom to move forward and carry out the gospel mandate to offer freedom to others.

In a world that largely seeks retaliation and retribution, the Jesus model of forgiveness offers a surprising, welcomed and necessary alternative for those who want to participate in the divine plan.

A New Family

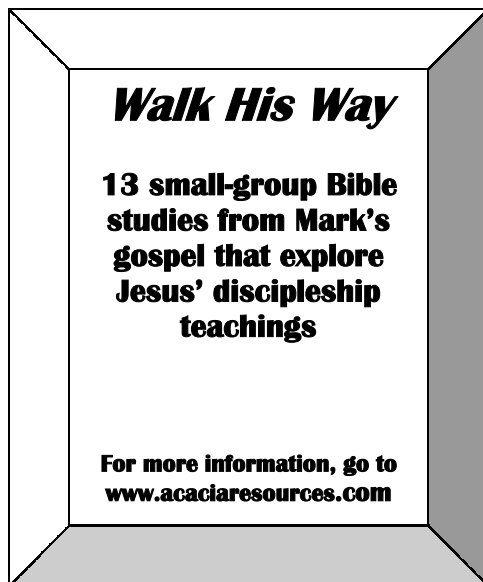
In one of scripture's most interesting exchanges, some members of Jesus' biological family approached a house where he was teaching inside and asked to speak to him. When someone told Jesus, he said, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt 12:48-50).

With this statement, Jesus challenged traditions, shattered expectations and redefined family, insisting that a shared relationship with God, not biology, determined his family.

Living the Lord's Prayer changes how we experience and express family and community. In Jesus' family—the

church—everyone has value, even those society or culture excludes or throws away.

Those who follow Jesus in doing God's will are related not only to Jesus but also to each other. With that relationship come both the desire and the responsibility to see and embrace all other followers of Christ just as we would a parent, a sibling or another family member. More than a verbal commitment, Jesus' family connects and interacts in tangible, practical ways to strengthen their faith and extend the scope of the ministry Jesus began, a ministry that seeks justice, works for peace and offers freedom, healing, help and hope.



Questions for Personal Reflection and Group Discussion

- Do you agree that when we pray the Lord's Prayer, we make a commitment to join God in actively pursuing the divine plan? In what ways does your life reflect this commitment?
- How does your personal identity as a Christian affect your attitudes, choices and priorities?
- How does your life reflect God's nature? In what ways can others look at you and see a reflection of the divine?
- How does knowing you are related to God and to Jesus change the way you think about yourself?
- Think about recent world news headlines. Do you think these events and circumstances reflect what God wants for the world? What can individuals and the global Christian community do to help bring God's will for the world closer to reality?
- When you pray for specific things (an end to global poverty and hunger, healing, an end to war, for example), to what degree do you also pray for God to show you how to be involved in answering this prayer? Do you think that these prayers sometimes go unanswered because of our unwillingness to become involved?
- In what specific ways do you think praying the Lord's Prayer involves a commitment to a new way of living?

- To what degree do you think we block the advance of the divine plan with our unwillingness to repent and receive and offer forgiveness? Why do you think it is so difficult for us to forgive?
- How has your idea of family changed over the years? Whom do you consider to be a part of your family? How does your idea of family reflect that you are living the Lord's Prayer?
- Whom do you have difficulty accepting into your family? Why?
- What changes do you need to make in your life in order to more effectively live the Lord's Prayer?

Baptist Center for Ethics is pleased to partner with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Arkansas in the production of this resource.

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