

**THE
LORD'S
PRAYER**

Jon Redmond

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The Lord's Prayer is the most beautiful prayer in all the world. It is the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray. It appears twice in the New Testament. We find it first in *The Sermon on the Mount* (see *Matthew 6:9-13*), and we find it again in Luke's gospel (see *Luke 11:2-4*). Since Matthew's record of the prayer is the fuller and longer version, that will be our focus here.

I learned *The Lord's Prayer* at a young age. When I was a teenager, my football team recited it after our games. It is a prayer that I have always respected and held in highest honor.

That said, I must confess that *The Lord's Prayer* has never played a major role in my life. I have never prayed it with any regularity or consistency. At least not until the last year or so.

I have always thought that whenever the Lord has something to say to one of His children that He often says it repeatedly. I have noticed that in my life. Sometimes God's message to me, for example, is to wait on His timing instead of acting impulsively. When God wants me to wait on Him for something, it seems like every sermon I hear, every song that's played on the radio, every book I read,

and every devotional time I have are all about waiting. When that happens, I know God is speaking to me.

I had such an experience with *The Lord's Prayer* recently. I read where one minister whom I love and admire, Dr. R.T. Kendall, prays *The Lord's Prayer* every morning with his wife. Then I read how another minister's life had been greatly changed by praying *The Lord's Prayer*. Not long after that, I got something in the mail from a worldwide ministry that I follow that stressed the importance of *The Lord's Prayer*. Having read all three of those things in such a short amount of time, I knew that God was speaking to me. So I thought to myself, "Maybe I should pray *The Lord's Prayer*, too." And I started doing just that every morning. And I have been greatly blessed in the process.

I should point out two things about *The Lord's Prayer* at the beginning of our time together. First, even though we call it *The Lord's Prayer*, we need to remember that Jesus never prayed this prayer. One of the lines in the prayer says, "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*" (*Matthew 6:12*). Jesus never prayed that because Jesus never sinned. For that reason, some theologians think we should call this prayer *The Disciple's Prayer*.

While I follow that logic, I still prefer to call it *The Lord's Prayer* as long as we understand it is a prayer the Lord gave *us* to pray and not a prayer that He prayed Himself.

The second thing I would like to stress is that Jesus never intended for us to simply memorize and mindlessly recite this prayer. Just two verses before *The Lord's Prayer* begins, Jesus plainly said, "*Do not use vain repetitions*" (*Matthew 6:7*). So Jesus intended for us to pray this prayer thoughtfully and from the heart. We can also use it as a model, an outline, or a guide in prayer.

Before we delve into the specifics of the prayer, let's take a moment to consider the context. The longer context of *The Lord's Prayer* in Matthew's gospel is *The Sermon on the Mount* (see *Matthew 5-7*). In this sermon, the greatest sermon ever preached by the way, Jesus taught on a variety of topics. One of those topics was prayer. Before Jesus actually gave *The Lord's Prayer*, He taught some very basic principles about prayer. We would do well to consider them.

First, Jesus taught that **prayer should be sincere**. He said to His disciples, "*And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the*

synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward” (Matthew 6:5). Jesus criticized the religious leaders who prayed so that they would be noticed by others. Prayer should be a sincere, genuine conversation between the individual and God. The motive of prayer should be to touch the heart of God, to pour out one’s soul to God, to ask for whatever is needed, and to surrender to the divine will of God. Prayer should never, in any way, seek to draw attention to the one who is praying. Our motive in prayer must never be to impress others with our supposed spirituality.

Second, Jesus taught that **prayer should be done in secret**. He said, *“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:6).* This is not to say that a person can’t pray in public. It is to say, however, that the overwhelming bulk of one’s prayer-life should be done in private, alone with God. Jesus told us to go into a room and close the door. Private prayer is the key to everything. It is how we get to know the mind and will of God. It is where we unload our concerns and find healing for our frayed emotions. It is where we

become one with God. It is truly the source of our spiritual strength and the place where power is found. I have always thought that when it comes to our spiritual lives, there should be more “behind the counter,” so to speak, than is “on display.” There should be much about our spiritual lives that is known only to God.

Third, Jesus taught that **prayer should be simple**. Jesus explained, “*And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him*” (Matthew 6:7-8). This is why I stated earlier that we shouldn’t mindlessly recite *The Lord’s Prayer*. If we do, we are guilty of using the “*vain repetitions*” Jesus warned us against. That is not to say that we shouldn’t recite this prayer. Actually, I think we should. But when we recite it, we should do so slowly, thoughtfully, and from the heart. That is why the emphasis of this booklet is devoted to studying *The Lord’s Prayer* phrase by phrase, so when we pray it, it will mean something to us.

Fourth, Jesus taught that **prayer, at least some of our prayers, should be structured and systematic**. Now don’t get me wrong.

I'm all for spontaneous, free-spirited, unplanned prayer. That is actually my favorite way to pray. But Jesus knew that we also need some structure in our praying in order for our prayer-life to be as effective as possible. As we will see, *The Lord's Prayer* contains six requests. The first three requests have to do with the glory of God while the last three requests have to do with our basic physical and spiritual needs. These requests are specific and direct. Our prayers should be that way, too.

My prayer is that the pages that follow will help you to get the absolute most out of *The Lord's Prayer*. Hopefully by now you have a good "feel" for the background, setting, and spirit of the prayer. I am hopeful that our phrase-by-phrase approach to this prayer will add to your understanding of it and enrich your use of the greatest prayer ever given.

"Our Father in heaven"

The opening line of *The Lord's Prayer* is my favorite line of all. It simply says, "*Our Father in heaven*" (*Matthew 6:9*).

Let me draw your attention first of all to the prepositional phrase "*in heaven.*" That tells us where God is. He's in heaven. He's above everything. From His perspective, things look

differently than they do from ours. How comforting to know that He is able to look down from heaven and see our lives from beginning to end with one glimpse. He knows what's coming. He knows what's already happened. He knows what we're facing right now. And He knows how to work it all out for our good and His glory.

The Bible says, "*The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all*" (Psalm 103:19). That verse tells us that God is seated in heaven and that He is totally in control of everything that happens on earth. He doesn't *cause* bad things to happen, but sometimes He *allows* them. And when He does, there's always a purpose behind it. That's why I said that things look differently from God's perspective than they do from ours.

Notice the main word of the phrase, "*Father.*" This God who made everything and who sits above everything and who is in total control of everything is also our Father. The fact that He's *in heaven* speaks of His *power*. The fact that He's *our Father* speaks of His *love* and *tender care*.

Let's think about that word "*Father*" for a moment. First of all, it's a **family word**. Sometimes you will hear somebody talk about

the “universal Fatherhood of God.” That phrase simply means that God is the Father of all people. While that sounds good, it’s not accurate. God is the *Creator* of all people, but He is only the *Father* of those who are in His family. That’s why we have to be “*born again*” (*John 3:3*). We have to be born into the family of God. And when we are, we become His children, and He becomes our Father.

My earthly father, Charles Redmond, is the pastor of our church. Many call him, “*Pastor*,” but only two of us, my brother and I, can call him, “*Dad*.” We have a special relationship with him because we’re in his family. And that’s how it works with God. He becomes our Father when we receive His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Lord.

Not only is the word “*Father*” a family word, but it’s also **a word of love and respect**. Those of us who have been blessed with good earthly fathers respect both their *position* and their *person*. We respect them for who they are.

Likewise, we respect our heavenly Father for who He is. He is the God of heaven and earth. He is the essence of all that is holy, pure, and good. He is the One who freely forgives us of all of our sins because of what Jesus did on

the cross. He is the One who promises never to leave us and to work all things together for our good. He is patient, loving, redemptive, and kind. He is the God of the second, third, fourth, fifth, and ten thousandth chance. And we love Him for that.

Perhaps you didn't have a good earthly father. Maybe he wasn't there for you as a child growing up. And, as a result, it's not easy for you to relate to God as a loving Father. Your whole image of what a father should be like isn't positive at all. Let me say, first of all, how sorry I am. I think having a bad earthly father would be a big obstacle to overcome. I can't relate to that because that's not been my experience. I had (and still have) a wonderful earthly father. So, for me, it's not difficult to view God as a good heavenly Father.

But maybe for you it is. So what should you do? Well, I would encourage you to identify every bad quality your dad had and then to consider that God is just the opposite in all those ways. If your dad was absent, remember God is present. If your dad was harsh, remember God is kind. If your dad was impatient, remember God is patient. If your father was unfaithful, remember God is faithful. Instead of projecting the negative qualities of your earthly father onto God,

project the opposite qualities onto Him. Don't view God as a bigger version of your earthly father. Instead, view God as a better, a perfect, version of your earthly father. He has every attribute you wish your earthly father had possessed. The heavenly Father is perfect in every way. As a result, we address Him with love and respect.

Not only is the word "*Father*" a family word and a word of love and respect, but it is also **a word of dependence**. When we think about a good earthly father, we think of someone who provides for his children. He feeds them, clothes them, protects them, and leads them.

That's what our heavenly Father does for us. He meets our needs. He directs our steps. He opens doors for us. He fights our battles. He answers our critics. He gives us what He knows is best for us at just the right time.

King David said in Old Testament times, "*I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread*" (*Psalm 37:25*). He noticed, as he looked back on his life, that he had never seen one of God's children going around with his needs unmet. That's what Paul said in the New Testament when he declared,

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Think about it. God’s reputation is on the line. He is committed to us as His children. He may not meet our needs when and how we wish He would, but when it’s all said and done, we will be able to say, “He met my needs better than I ever imagined He would. And His timing was perfect.”

He’s our heavenly Father, and we are totally dependent on Him. He feeds the birds. He clothes the grass of the field (*see Matthew 6:25-34*). And He will take care of us. He will meet our needs. It’s not a matter of *if* He will meet them; it’s only a matter of *when* and *how*.

The opening line of *The Lord’s Prayer* says, “*Our Father in heaven.*” Let’s think for a moment about the pronoun that begins the phrase. The word “*Our*” tells us that we are part of a family. When God becomes our Father, we inherit a lot of brothers and sisters in Christ. As we begin *The Lord’s Prayer* by saying, “***Our*** Father,” we are forced to remember that our lives are not all about us. I can’t go to God in prayer and ask Him for something that I think would be good for me if it would be bad for you. When God answers

our prayers, He does so in such a way that it's good for us and good for everybody else, too.

You shouldn't ask God for a promotion at work if that would mean someone else would have to lose his job. That would be selfish. And that's where the word "*Our*" is so helpful. It reminds us that we should be concerned with what is best for everyone in the body of Christ and not just with what we want.

God is not only *your* Father, He's *my* Father, too. And He's the Father of everybody who has trusted Jesus to save them. He's not just interested in what's best for you or what's best for me. He's interested in what's best for all of us. And we should be, too. When we pray to "*Our Father*" instead of just to "*My Father*," we become a lot less selfish in our requests.

Before we go on to the next phrase of this prayer, let me ask you a question: Can you honestly pray the first line of *The Lord's Prayer*? Can you sincerely say, "*Our Father in heaven?*" Is God your Father?

If not, I want to help you. I want to help you make God your heavenly Father. Remember, the word "*Father*" is a family word. And you have to join His family before He can be your Father.

You do that by simply asking Him to forgive you of your sins based on Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus died in your place. He paid for your sins. He was buried. He rose from the dead. He ascended to heaven. And one day, He's coming back to earth. But before He does, you need to get saved. You need to be forgiven. You need to receive Christ. You need to get right with God. We all do.

If you've never done that, you can pray this prayer now, and God will become your heavenly Father. Just pray this:

“Dear God,

I need You. I am sorry for my sins. Please forgive me. I believe Jesus died on the cross in my place and that He rose again from the dead. I ask You now to save me. I ask Jesus to come into my life and make me a Christian. And I receive Him by faith as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for adopting me into Your family. And thank You for becoming my heavenly Father.

*In Jesus' name I pray,
Amen.”*

Friend, if you prayed that prayer, God just became your heavenly Father. You are now

saved. You are now in God's family forever and ever. And you can now pray the opening line of *The Lord's Prayer* and really mean it.

"Hallowed be Your name"

"*Hallowed be Your name*" is the first of the six requests found in *The Lord's Prayer*. As I said earlier, the first three requests have to do with the glory of God while the last three requests have to do with the basic physical and spiritual needs we all have as human beings. So as we pray this prayer, we begin by focusing on God, not on ourselves. We focus on His name, His kingdom, and His will.

The word "*Hallowed*" is not a familiar word to most of us. The word itself literally means "to make holy."¹ The Greek word that forms the root of the word "*Hallowed*" is the word "*hagios*." The word carries with it the idea of something being holy, different, or separate. New Testament scholar William Barclay put it this way: "*Hagios* is the word which is usually translated *holy*; but the basic meaning of *hagios* is *different* or *separate*."²

In biblical thought, for example, the temple was thought of as *holy* because it was different than other buildings. The priest was thought of as *holy* because he was different than other

people. The sabbath was thought of as *holy* because it was different than other days. And God's name was considered *holy* because it is different than other names.³ The phrase "*Hallowed be Your name*" is thus a request for God to cause His name to be honored, revered, and glorified above all other names.

In our culture, a person's "name" is what he or she is called. I am called, "Jon." My brother is called, "Joel." Those are our names. Barclay helps us to understand, though, that in the Hebrew culture names have more significance than they do in our American world. He said it this way: "In Hebrew the *name* means the *nature*, the *character*, the *personality* of the person in so far as it is known or revealed to us."⁴ So the request "*Hallowed be Your name*" is a request for God to be honored and glorified in His totality. It is a request for God to be set apart as holy, different, and separate because of His countless and incomparable attributes.

When we pray, "*Hallowed be Your name,*" we are asking God to bring honor and glory to who He is, to His very nature, to His whole person. And we are asking God to do that, at least in part, through us. We are asking God to honor Himself through our very lives. But how can that happen? How can we bring honor and

glory to God? How can we reflect well on His name?

Let me mention several ways. First, we can “*hallow*” God’s name **in our worship**. In our *private worship*, we can honor God’s name by asking for His will to become more important to us than our own desires. In our *corporate worship*, we can honor God’s name by keeping the focus on Jesus. In the day in which we live, a worship service is often evaluated by those in attendance. After the service ends, we ask ourselves: “Did I like it? Did I like the music? Did I like the sermon? Was the service itself to my liking?” While those are normal and natural questions to ask, we need to keep in mind that the worship service itself, strictly speaking, is not for us. It’s for God. The better questions to ask are: “Did God like the service? Was He honored? Did the music glorify Him? Did the sermon magnify Jesus?” If our corporate worship fails to please God, we have failed to “*hallow*” His name...regardless of how much we may have enjoyed the service.

The second way we can “*hallow*” God’s name is **in our words**. The Psalmist said, “*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer*” (Psalm 19:14).

Our words have great power for good or for evil. They can build up, or they can tear down.

Let me offer four pieces of advice when it comes to our words...two in the negative and two in the positive. First, don't ever take God's name in vain. Second, don't ever break another person's spirit with your words. Third, make your words gentle, soft, and kind. Fourth, use your words to encourage and to build up. Your words are a natural extension of you. Jesus said, "*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*" (Matthew 12:34). If our hearts are right with God, if we are filled with the love of God, our words will reflect that. So let's honor God in the things we say, in how we say them, and in what we choose *not* to say.

The third way we can "*hallow*" God's name is **in our ways**. While we won't be perfect until we get to heaven, our lives should be such that we are pursuing holiness, godliness, purity, and peace with others now. The Bible says, "*Even a child is known by his actions*" (Proverbs 20:11, NIV). So are adults. We are known by the company we keep, the places we go, and the attitudes we have. We are known not only by the words we speak but also by our body language and overall temperament. We have an opportunity to "*hallow*" God's name in all of these ways. It may feel like nobody is

paying any attention to you, but they are. They are looking at your life. And they are looking to see if you are authentic, genuine, and Christ-like. Someone once said, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day.”⁵ So would everybody else.

The fourth way we can “*hallow*” God’s name is **in our responses**. Adrian Rogers once said, “You can plan your *actions*, but you can’t plan your *reactions*.” That’s so true. If you want to know how you’re doing spiritually then watch how you react when things don’t go your way. Ask God to help you respond to difficult people and difficult circumstances with faith, love, and grace. While we can’t *plan* our responses, we can *control* them. In fact, our responses are some of the only things in life we can control. We can’t control other people, and we can’t always control our circumstances, but we can control how we respond to them. And as we respond properly, God is glorified, and His name is honored, magnified, and even “*hallowed*.”

“Your kingdom come”

We come now to the shortest petition of *The Lord’s Prayer*...“*Your kingdom come*.” Jesus taught us to pray for the kingdom of God to come. But what does that mean?

I define the kingdom of God as “the place where Jesus rules and reigns...where righteousness, stability, love, joy, and peace abound...and where sin and selfishness have been eradicated.” Isn’t that a great description? Who wouldn’t want to be a part of a kingdom like that? We live in a world full of unrighteousness, instability, hatred, unhappiness, and anxiety. The kingdom of God, though, is just the opposite. It is perfect in every way.

Where is this kingdom? Are we supposed to pray this kingdom into existence or is the kingdom of God already established? If you think about that question from a biblical perspective, you realize that the kingdom of God is already established and that one day it will be visible on earth. How can we better understand God’s kingdom?

First of all, **the kingdom of God is above us**. As we live our lives on earth, we must keep in mind that there is another world above us. Heaven is a real place, and it is filled with righteousness, stability, love, joy, and peace. So when we pray this part of *The Lord’s Prayer*, we are praying for what is happening in heaven to start happening on earth.

Second, **the kingdom of God is within us.** If you are saved, the kingdom of God is alive and well in your heart. That's why Jesus said, "*The kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:21). The Spirit of God is living on the inside of you. While we still have to contend with our old sin nature, the fact remains that we also have a new nature. We have Jesus Christ, in the person of the Holy Spirit, living within us. He gives us both the desire and the power to live a righteous life. He gives us an inner stability even when things around us are anything but stable. And He fills our hearts with love, joy, and peace.

Third, **one day this kingdom will come down from heaven and completely take over this world.** There is coming a day when Jesus Christ will set up His kingdom right here on planet earth. He will rule the world Himself. There will finally be real and lasting peace.

As you study the history of the world, you read about one kingdom after another rising and falling. A student of world history can tell you all about the rise and fall of the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, and the Roman Empire. These empires, or kingdoms, once ruled the known world. But their reigns didn't last forever.

When we pray for God's kingdom to come, though, we are praying for a kingdom that will never end. We are praying for the establishment of a kingdom on earth filled with righteousness, stability, love, joy, and peace. We are praying for that day when "*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*" (Revelation 11:15).

Every kingdom needs a king. And the king of this kingdom is Jesus Christ Himself. One day, He will "*rule all nations with a rod of iron*" (Revelation 12:5).

There is coming a day when Jesus will return to this earth. And when He does, He will set up His kingdom in Jerusalem (see Ezekiel 40-48). From there, He will rule the world for a thousand years (see Revelation 20:4-6).

After that period of a thousand years has ended, we read in the Bible that heaven itself will come down to earth, to a new earth. The apostle John described it this way: "*Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride*

adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'” (Revelation 21:1-5).

Think about that. One day the kingdom of God will literally come down to earth. Jesus will rule. And the kingdom will be characterized by righteousness, stability, love, joy, and peace. Not to mention the fact that we will have new bodies, new minds, and a new environment free from anything even associated with sin.

So when we pray this part of *The Lord's Prayer*, we are asking God to hasten the day when His kingdom will become a visible reality on earth. We are looking forward to a better day, a brighter day, a perfect world.

In the meantime, is there anything we can do to more fully experience His kingdom in our hearts? Is there anything we can do to advance

His kingdom here on earth? Let me mention four things we can all do.

First, we can crown Jesus as king in every area of our lives. Second, we can stay away from anything that tempts us to sin. Third, we can “*do what leads to peace*” (*Romans 14:19, NIV*). Fourth, we can lead others to Christ. By doing these things, we are furthering the kingdom of God instead of trying to build our own little kingdoms. After all, Jesus taught us to pray “*Your kingdom come.*” It is *His* kingdom, not *our* little kingdoms, that we must long to more fully experience and to one day see established here on earth. When we pray, “*Your kingdom come,*” we are praying for our hearts, our homes, our schools, our places of employment, our communities, our churches, and our entire world to be filled with righteousness, stability, love, joy, and peace. That’s what God’s kingdom is all about. Now we experience it in part. One day we will experience it fully.

***“Your will be done on earth as
it is in heaven”***

We come now to what I consider to be the “heart” of *The Lord’s Prayer*. The third petition in this prayer is a request for the will of

God to be done on earth just like it is being done in heaven.

What exactly is the will God? Simply put, it is **God's plan for your life**. It is that which is best for you. The will of God encompasses every aspect of your life. It includes the spiritual, vocational, moral, and relational aspects of life. When we are living our lives in the will of God, we have a peace and a joy that we would not otherwise have. I have a beautiful piece of art in my kitchen that contains a C.S. Lewis quote that says, "*In Your will is my peace.*" Truer words have never been spoken.

The clear implication in this request is that the will of God is being done perfectly in heaven. Our desire should be for the will of God to be done perfectly on earth, too. In heaven, there is no sin, no selfishness, no pride, and no rebellion. Since all of those things are on earth, God's will won't be perfectly done down here until Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom. So when we pray for God's will to be done, we are actually praying for God to establish His kingdom on earth.

But as we pray this part of the prayer, there is also a sense in which we are asking for God's will to be done in our lives now. We want

God's will to be done in our spiritual lives, in our vocational lives, and in our relationships. And we certainly want to be in God's will morally.

So I suppose the pertinent question is this: "In what way is God's will being done in heaven?" If we can answer that question, then we will know how to more fully experience His will in our lives on a daily basis. Let me mention several things that are happening in heaven right now that we need to experience here on earth.

First, in heaven there is **the unending worship of God**. The redeemed of all ages, along with the angels of heaven, are worshipping God continually. They are enjoying unbroken fellowship with Him. We should pray to experience the same thing. We should make it our aim to never allow anything to come between us and God. When we pray this part of *The Lord's Prayer*, we are asking God to help us not to allow anything (a sin, a hobby, a habit, or any other distraction) to come between us and Him. We are praying that we would live every moment of every day with a clear line of communication between our hearts and His.

Second, in heaven there is **perfect love**. Nobody in heaven is holding a grudge against anybody else. There is no arguing, no fighting, no strife, and no unforgiveness in heaven. And that's how it should be on earth, in our lives, too.

Third, there is **the meaningful service of God in heaven**. The Bible says that in heaven "*His servants shall serve Him*" (*Revelation 22:3*). While we may not understand all of the ways in which we will serve God in heaven, we know that we will. For that reason, we should look for meaningful ways to serve the Lord now. We serve God best when we serve others. Ask God to show you how you can do that. He may lead you to visit someone in the hospital. He may put it on your heart to give financial assistance to someone in need. He may place an unsaved person across your life's path with whom you can share the gospel. When you wake up every morning, ask God to give you an opportunity to bless and encourage another person in the course of your day. That's part of God's will for your life.

Fourth, in heaven the will of God is being done **in the smallest of details**. Every aspect of heaven is exactly as God wants it to be. Everything is in perfect order up there. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everything in our

lives was in perfect order, too? Wouldn't it be great if every aspect of our lives honored the Lord? This is the part of God's will that is often difficult for us to obey. He leads us in one direction, but we want to go in another. In this life, God's will often clashes with ours. That doesn't happen in heaven, but it does happen on earth. When we get to heaven, God's will and ours will be the same. It will actually be easier for us to do His will in heaven than it is on earth. After all, when we get to heaven, our sin nature will be gone. We will be like Jesus (*see I John 3:2*). We will be perfect.

As I was thinking about that, it dawned on me that we have an opportunity to do something on earth that we won't have an opportunity to do in heaven. We have an opportunity to *surrender our wills* to God's will. That's what Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane. In agonizing prayer, with the cross only hours away, He prayed "*O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will*" (*Matthew 26:39*).

That should be our prayer, too. And when we pray *The Lord's Prayer*, it is. We are surrendering our wills to His, even when it's not easy. And every time we do that, we bring

joy to the heart of our heavenly Father. And we put ourselves in position to experience His very best for our lives. We simply cannot lose by praying for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. We win every single time we make that surrender.

"Give us this day our daily bread"

We come now to the second major division of *The Lord's Prayer*. Just as the first division had three petitions, so does the second division. While the first division of the prayer focused on the glory of God, the second division focuses on our basic human needs.

This section of the prayer begins by asking God to "*Give us this day our daily bread*" (*Matthew 6:11*). What did Jesus have in mind when He instructed us to pray for bread?

Three thoughts come to my mind as I contemplate that question. First, the very fact that Jesus told us to pray this is an indication that **God is committed to meeting our needs**. Jesus never would have commanded us to pray this if that weren't the case.

Human needs come in a lot of different shapes and sizes. We have spiritual needs, physical needs, financial needs, vocational

needs, and relational needs. The good news is that God has promised to meet those needs, all of them, in His own time and in His own way. The Bible says, “*Those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing*” (Psalm 34:10).

But there is a whole other set of needs that we don’t even think of as *needs*. We think of them as *situations*. For example, many people are lonely. Some people are depressed. Others are anxious, worried, and stressed out. Most of the time when we are experiencing one of those situations or emotions we just think of that as something we have to deal with. We don’t normally think of those things as *needs* that God wants to meet. But they are.

God meets the needs of the lonely person by giving him or her an unusual awareness of His presence and by providentially bringing other people into his or her life who can provide healthy companionship. God meets the needs of the person struggling with depression by supernaturally lifting him or her out of that pit. He did that for David. Evidently his circumstances had caused him to be at least somewhat depressed. Listen to his words: “*I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my*

steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD” (Psalm 40:1-3). God lifted David out of his pit, put him on solid ground, and gave him a new song to sing. He can do that for you, too. I should add that sometimes God uses counselors, family members, and friends to help us when we get depressed. And sometimes God shows us a lifestyle change we need to make.

Similarly, God meets our needs when we are anxious, worried, and stressed out. Spiritually, He calms our hearts when we trust fully in Him. Emotionally, He calms our nerves through His indwelling Holy Spirit and through other people who truly care for us. Practically, He shows us steps we can take that will reduce those feelings of being completely overwhelmed by life. Those steps may include limiting our commitments, simplifying our schedules, and having more time for rest and leisure.

The point I am making, though, and more importantly, the truth Jesus was communicating was that God, as our heavenly Father, takes great delight in meeting our needs. Remember, however, that “*bread*,” the thing Jesus told us to pray for, is a *necessity*, not a *luxury*. So if you want a bigger house and a faster car, God

isn't necessarily committed to giving you that. But if your *need* is truly a *need*, He is totally committed, and He will meet it. Keep in mind that it's not a matter of *if* He will meet that need; it's only a matter of *when* and *how*.

A second thing that is obvious in this part of the prayer is that **God wants us to live in “*this day*” and not worry about tomorrow.** That's why Jesus taught us to pray, “*Give us this day our daily bread*” (*Matthew 6:11*). We tend to get ourselves in trouble when we get our eyes too far off of the day and the moment in which we are living. The devil has a field day in our minds by getting us to wonder and worry about what might happen next week, next month, or next year. When our minds go there, we tend to live in the world of “*what if.*” And that's not a good world to live in. Jesus wants us to live in the present day, in the present moment, and to focus on the fact that God will give us just what we need today. Years ago, I heard Chuck Swindoll say that “living in the moment” is one of the most important things we can ever learn to do. He is so right.

A third thing that interests me about the petition, “*Give us this day our daily bread,*” is the plural use of the first-person pronoun. Jesus could have told us to pray, “*Give me this day my daily bread.*” But He didn't. He used

the words “*us*” and “*our*.” Why? Because while Jesus is interested in your needs, He is also interested in the needs of your spouse, your children, your parents, your siblings, your friends, and even the needs of people whom you don’t know. There is something about praying this line of *The Lord’s Prayer* that reminds us that **life isn’t all about us**. Interestingly enough, as you pray this part of the prayer, God may show you a practical way in which you can meet someone else’s need. You may become the answer to someone else’s prayer.

One thing is for sure. When Jesus said that we are to pray, “*Give us this day our daily bread,*” He covered a lot of ground with a very few words. This line of the prayer reminds us that God is committed to meeting our needs. It helps us to stay in the moment in which we are currently living. And it encourages us to remember that life isn’t all about us. It’s about being the body of Christ, the hands and feet of Jesus, to others in their time of need.

**“And forgive us our debts, as we
forgive our debtors”**

This part of *The Lord’s Prayer* is what I believe Jesus considered to be the most important part of the prayer. It deals with

forgiveness. The reason I believe Jesus thought this is the most important part of the prayer is because after He finished giving the prayer in *verse 13*, He again emphasized the importance of forgiveness in the next two verses. Immediately after *The Lord's Prayer*, Jesus said, "*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*" (*Matthew 6:14-15*). Jesus explained that the forgiveness we receive from God is dependent upon the forgiveness we extend towards others. To be clear, Jesus was not talking about salvation and the judicial and eternal forgiveness we receive at that moment. Instead, He was talking about the daily cleansing from sin that makes intimacy with God possible. When we withhold forgiveness from others, God withholds daily forgiveness from us. We are still saved, but our fellowship with God is clouded and dull because of our sin of unforgiveness. All of that to say that forgiving others is very important. At least it's important if you want God to forgive you!

Think about this. We are asking *God* to forgive *us* like *we* forgive *others*. That should make us want to thoroughly forgive others! It should actually inspire us to forgive others like God forgives us. But how does *He* forgive *us*?

First, **God forgives immediately.** He forgives us the moment we ask Him to. Do you remember the thief on the cross who was dying next to Jesus? In his final moments, he requested forgiveness and salvation. And he received it (*see Luke 23:42-43*). There was no waiting time, no probationary period, no delay. Forgiveness was granted immediately. That's always how God forgives us, and that's how we should forgive others.

To be even more precise, we should actually forgive as soon as the offense occurs. In many cases, the person who has hurt you doesn't even know it, or if he does know, he doesn't care. So he may never repent and ask you to forgive him. For this reason, you need to forgive him as soon as the offense takes place. In order for there to be reconciliation in the relationship, the other person would eventually have to repent. But the other person's repentance isn't necessary for you to extend forgiveness. Forgiveness, first and foremost, is between you and God. Forgive immediately, and you'll be free.

Second, **God forgives completely.** God said, "*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins*" (*Isaiah 43:25*). God completely "*blots*" our sins out. They are off

the record. They are removed from His book. They are gone. How wonderful it would be if we would forgive others like that. We can. It's possible.

Third, **God forgives permanently.** God declared, "*I will not remember your sins*" (*Isaiah 43:25*). Think about that. God will never bring your sin up again! He has chosen not to remember it. How seldom we forgive like that. We like to keep a little "dirt" on people just in case we ever need to use it against them in the future. But God has removed our "dirt." He has forgotten about it. He will never mention it again. How different our relationships would be with each other if we would do the same.

Fourth, **God forgives freely.** One of my favorite verses in the Bible says it this way, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (*I John 1:9*). God's forgiveness is absolutely free. There are no strings attached. His forgiveness is not contingent upon our doing better in the future. He chooses to freely forgive us based on what Jesus did for us on the cross.

Sometimes a person will say, "I can't forgive that person because I could never trust

him again.” While I understand that frustration, let me remind you that *forgiveness* and *trust* are two different things. *Forgiveness* has to do with the *past*. *Trust* has to do with the *present* and the *future*. It is true that if a broken relationship is going to be restored, trust must be rebuilt. The guilty party must repent. A reasonable amount of time would need to pass so the offended party could build up his or her trust level again. But don’t let the fact that you can’t trust someone prevent you from forgiving him. Forgive freely and pray for reconciliation. The former is up to you. The latter is up to the other person.

Fifth, **God forgives respectfully**. He never rubs a person’s sin in his face. Jesus shows dignity and respect when He forgives people. Do you remember when Peter denied that He knew Jesus? Three times Peter denied knowing his Lord (*see Luke 22:54-62*). This was a serious sin, and Peter felt terribly about committing it. We know that Jesus eventually restored Peter publicly and put him back into the ministry (*see John 21:15-25*). But there is no mention of Jesus forgiving Peter of this sin.

The only thing the Bible gives us as a possible time, and I think the actual time, when Jesus forgave Peter is when it records a private encounter between Jesus and Peter after the

resurrection (*see Luke 24:34 and I Corinthians 15:5*). Jesus appeared to Peter alone, in private, after the resurrection. While we have no account of the actual conversation they had, we can only assume it was about Peter's sin of denial. Isn't it interesting that Jesus dealt with that sin in private? He didn't want to bring any more shame or embarrassment on the fallen disciple. He dealt with Peter's sin face to face, privately, and respectfully. That's how we should forgive those who have hurt us...with kindness, discretion, dignity, thoughtfulness, and respect.

When we forgive others in the same way that God forgives us, we reflect the love of God. We are free of any and all bitterness. We honor and respect the other person who was, after all, made in the image of God (*see Genesis 1:27*). And we keep an open line of communication between ourselves and God. When we ask God to forgive us of our sins just like we forgive others of their sins, it causes us to take forgiveness more seriously. Our forgiveness of others puts us in position to continue to receive the daily forgiveness of God which we so desperately need. As we forgive others, He just keeps on forgiving us.

**“And do not lead us into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one”**

This particular part of *The Lord's Prayer* is very interesting to me. At first glance, it almost doesn't even seem necessary. After all, God would never tempt us to sin. The Bible is clear on that. It plainly says, “*Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone*” (*James 1:13*).

So why did Jesus tell us to pray this? Why do we need to ask God not to lead us into temptation? Well, while it is true that God would never tempt us to sin, it is also true that sometimes He allows us to get into situations and circumstances where we are tempted so He can test us. He did this in the life of Jesus. The Bible says, “*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil*” (*Matthew 4:1*). Notice that it was the devil who tempted Jesus, but God led Jesus into the wilderness where the temptations took place.

So when we ask God not to lead us into temptation, we are asking Him not to even let us get into a situation where we might succumb to temptation. We are, in essence, asking Him not to allow us to get into a situation like Jesus

got into when the devil tempted Him to sin. Jesus was strong enough to resist the temptations He faced, but we aren't always that strong. The temptations of Jesus took place in "*the wilderness*," so we are asking God to keep us out of and far away from "*the wilderness*." Again, we don't always do as well in temptable moments as Jesus did.

What types of temptations are we especially vulnerable to? Well, there are three types of sin mentioned in a single verse in the Bible. The apostle John, in that amazing verse, wrote, "*For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world*" (I John 2:16).

The first type of sin is called "***the lust of the flesh***." That is, we are tempted to allow our old sin nature to control the way we think and live. Our fleshly desires can be very strong. If we don't submit them to the Lord, they can get us into a lot of trouble.

Sometimes, when it comes to these fleshly sins, we see how close we can get to them without actually sinning. We treat these sins as though they are the edge of a cliff, and we see how close we can get to them without falling over. That is dangerous at the very least and

perhaps even destructive. God's Word tells us to flee these sensual temptations (*see II Timothy 2:22*). I once heard Adrian Rogers say that when he was a young minister he had a little plaque on his desk that read, "*He who would not fall must stay away from slippery places.*" We would all do well to heed that advice.

The second sin John mentioned is called "*the lust of the eyes.*" That is, we are attracted to what we see. This was what got Adam and Eve into trouble in the Garden of Eden. The forbidden fruit looked good to them. It was appealing to their eyes. And they *ate* what they should have *avoided*. We've all been guilty of that type of sin. We have all, in one way or another, eaten of the forbidden fruit. We need to pray for God to lead us far from that tree. And we need to ask Him to make us content with what we have.

The third sin John mentioned is "*the pride of life.*" In other words, our natural tendency is to want to be known, to strive for greatness, to make a name for ourselves. All of that is pride. It is sin. It is wrong.

I was reading through the book of Romans recently, and I came across a verse I never had paid much attention to. It simply says, "*Do not set your mind on high things, but associate*

with the humble” (Romans 12:16). In other words, we shouldn’t aspire for greatness. We shouldn’t seek a position. We shouldn’t strive to make a name for ourselves.

In the Old Testament, we read a similar commandment. The Bible says, “*Do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them” (Jeremiah 45:5).* Pride is a dangerous sin. It always leads to a fall (*see Proverbs 16:18*).

Our desire should be to make Jesus’ name, not our names, known. That’s why John the Baptist declared, “*He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).*

When we ask God not to lead us into temptation, we are asking Him to lead us far away from anything that could even tempt us to sin. Fleshly desires, forbidden fruit, and the desire to be known are things we should all stay far away from.

And then we ask God to “*deliver us from the evil one.*” That word “*deliver*” has with it the idea of “*rescue.*” We are asking God to rescue us from every snare Satan sets for us. As we pray that, we are to be confident that He will answer it. The Bible says, “*The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations” (II Peter 2:9).*

Sometimes God rescues us supernaturally when we find ourselves in a dangerous situation. At other times, He shows us how we can get out of the situation on our own. Remember, with every temptation there is always a “*way of escape*” (*I Corinthians 10:13*).

“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

The last part of *The Lord’s Prayer* provides a nice benediction. While it is not in all of the Greek manuscripts, it is in many of them. For that reason, some English Bibles contain this doxology while others do not.

The thing I love about this ending to *The Lord’s Prayer* is that it answers the question, *Why?* In other words, this benediction tells us *why* we should pray for God’s name to be hallowed. It tells us *why* we should pray for His kingdom to come and for His will to be done. It tells us *why* we should ask God for our daily bread. It tells us *why* we should ask Him to forgive us as we forgive others. And it tells us *why* we should ask God not to lead us into temptation.

We should pray these things because *God’s kingdom* is what really matters. We should

pray these things because *God's power* is what we're counting on. We should pray these things because *God's glory* is at stake. That's why praying *The Lord's Prayer* is so important. It puts the focus of everything onto God. It reminds us that life is all about *His kingdom*, *His power*, and *His glory*. And it helps us to live our lives with Him in mind.

The Lord's Prayer is the most beautiful prayer in all the world. I encourage you to pray it every morning. And as you do, may each line of the prayer mean something to you. If it means something to *you*, it will mean something to *God*. And it will help you start your day the right way!

¹ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1985, p. 287.

² William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 1, rev. ed., The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1975, p. 205.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Edgar Guest, "I'd Rather See a Sermon," Yarbrough Family Homepage, Poems, <http://webpages.charter.net/kyarbrough/poemrather.htm> (accessed 2/6/18).

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