



THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in
heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
forgive us our trespasses as we
forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil.
Amen.**

Living The Lord's Prayer

An explanation of the Lord's prayer by Jesus to the Apostles



Living The Lord's Prayer

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus has revealed the content and orientation of His own prayer. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) speaks of the seven petitions Jesus gave to the apostles as the core of a disciple's prayer. These petitions show us what filled Jesus' mind and heart. They encompass what Jesus thought about, what occupied His deepest reflection and revealed the concerns of his heart.

The Father: Our ultimate Goal

The first thing Jesus taught the apostles, the first two words of prayer summarized everything He wanted the apostles to know: OUR FATHER. Jesus began with the end in view. The Father is the goal of Jesus' life. From the start Jesus is revealing to the apostles the unchangeable truth that human life is defined in relationship to God, who is our Father. He determines the meaning of life. His plan alone can define what a successful human life looks like. Successful living begins with becoming GOD-DIRECTED. Without this basic, fundamental orientation in life, real success is literally impossible.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Jesus' first concern is the honor of the Father. His first goal in life, His mission, and His deepest desire is to see that the Father's name is respected, known, honored and revered through Him. His passion is to see that all of humanity comes to know God as he is - holy, pure, awesome, beautiful, good, glorious and completely trustworthy. He wants to see the name of the Father hallowed, that is, recognized and made holy.

Jesus is answering one of the most fundamental questions about human life: why are we here? He is teaching us to pray that God's purpose for us would be revealed above all else. We were made for his honor and glory. We honor Him by the way we live.

Deliver Us From Evil

Finally, Jesus brings us face to face with our mortal enemy: "The devil is real. Our battle is with him: "We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (Eph 6:12) He is pursuing you: "The devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." (1 Pt 5: 8) He has a plan for your life: TO ENSLAVE YOU AND ULTIMATELY TO DESTROY YOU.

Jesus knows His enemy. He knows his tactics and strategies against us. He also knows how to defeat him: "He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in Him (ON THE CROSS)." (Col 2:15) This petition is intended to help us gain victory over the devil in our own lives.

Living The Lord's Prayer

Jesus knows from firsthand experience that deliverance comes from the Lord. The whole of life is a spiritual combat. There is only one way to win the battle, and that is to walk with and in Jesus. He has shown us the way. He has lived it. He has confronted all the obstacles we will ever face in this world, and He has triumphed over them.

In the Lord's Prayer Jesus has revealed the secrets to His success. If we live this prayer, if we take it to heart, finding within Jesus' formula for success, we too will share in His victory. The life He now lives in eternal glory, we are destined to share. His passion is to see each one of us enter into that glory. Living the Lord's Prayer is our pathway to glory.

Through this petition Jesus is leading us to cooperate with God's work of breaking down our stubborn resistance to His will. He is expanding our contracted hearts, making room in us for love. This makes it possible to give God permission not only to treat us as we treat others, but also to make us capable of receiving His Spirit, of living with a new heart: "And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Rom 5:5)

Lead Us Not Into Temptation

This petition is a call to vigilance. Through it Jesus wants to teach us to be alert, clear-minded, and ready for action; to be awake to the unavoidable combat against sin and the tactics of the devil. Jesus knows the reality and power of temptation because He Himself was tempted: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb 4:15)

Because Jesus was tempted in "every respect" He knows clearly what we are up against. He knows our weakness and our affection for sin but He also knows how to lead us out of sin, into a life where: "Sin will have no dominion over you." (Rom 6:14)

The fact that Jesus commands us to pray against temptation on a DAILY BASIS is an indication of how important our battle against sin really is. SIN KILLS. It is the one thing that can destroy us, forever. Sin, no matter how good it looks, or how thrilling it feels, always damages our lives. At its core, SIN IS A REFUSAL OF GOD, A CONSCIOUS REJECTION OF HIS PLAN AND PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES. Because sin has the potential to destroy, Jesus demands a total commitment against sin from all those who desire to follow Him.

Thy Kingdom Come

Here we can see that Jesus not only lives with the end in view but he keeps the big picture at the forefront of His mind. He knows that life on earth is fundamentally a battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil. What is at stake is a battle for individual lives, for the hearts and mind of men, women and children.

In this part of His prayer Jesus reveals His desire to see the reign of God welcomed into our hearts. He began his ministry with the following declaration: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:15) He proclaims that "the kingdom is at hand," because it has literally come in the person of Jesus himself. He has come to reveal the authority of the Father and to bring all of humanity into conscious surrender to His purpose and plan for their lives.

Thy Will Be Done

What is God's will? The CCC begins its reflection on this petition by quoting the Bible: "Our Father 'desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.'" (CCC 2822) God most desires OUR SALVATION. This is the will of God. Jesus came to fulfill the will of God. He freely set aside his safety, security, comfort, pleasure, preferences, position and plans in order to submit His life to the will of the Father.

Can you hear Jesus' message to us in this petition? What I (Jesus) wants is not of first importance. What really matters in life, what will lead to genuine fulfillment and happiness is to want what God wants. Jesus could not have been more explicit about this fundamental truth in His own life: "For I come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me..." (John 6:38)

Pope John Paul II wrote to the bishops of the Americas, to every Catholic in America, to see mission and the work of evangelization as a defining aspect of what it means to follow Jesus: "To follow Jesus involves living as he lived, accepting His mission, adopting His way of thinking, embracing His destiny and His project, which is the PLAN OF THE FATHER: it involves inviting everyone to communion with the Trinity" and that, "The BURNING DESIRE to invite others to encounter the ONE whom we have encountered is the start of the evangelizing mission to which THE WHOLE CHURCH IS CALLED."

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

In this petition Jesus leads us to seek to share in His utter and complete dependence upon the Father. He wants us to trust the Father, to stand on the conviction that the Father is for us, that He is utterly trustworthy. We are not alone in this world. God is not a fickle, distant, harsh, capricious taskmaster who is nearly impossible to please. He is a loving Father who is committed to us without limit.

Each day Jesus looked to God for His daily provision. He knew He could count on the Father to look after Him and to give Him everything He needed. His ultimate provision did not lie in the hands of other men, or in the circumstances of His life, nor was He subject to fate, or even His own ability to provide for Himself.

Real surrender and dependence upon the ultimate provision of a loving Father, who is all powerful, and who is utterly faithful to His promises, provides the foundation for the security of mind and heart we need in order to live the life to which God calls us. Jesus can say, no matter what He is facing, "Not my will, but Yours be done," because He knows where His security rests. That knowledge produces freedom and confidence in God who is the determiner of His destiny. No matter how terrible or difficult the trials of life can be, no matter how much circumstances seem to contradict this truth, Jesus knows He is safe in the hands of His Father.

"God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the Lord, and He has been my Savior." (Isiah 12:2)

Forgive Us Our Trespasses As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

This is a disturbing petition. Jesus is leading us to place ourselves in a very difficult spot. That is, to ask the Father to forgive our sins based upon the condition that we forgive those who have sinned against us. It is a conditional proposition. Simply put, if we do not forgive, we won't be forgiven. That is a scary thing to pray.

Why does Jesus insist upon this kind of internal disposition and habit of life? The answer is because that is what God is like - full of forgiveness. Jesus made forgiveness possible through His death on the cross. From the cross He prayed for each of us: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 22:34) The Father heard that prayer, and all those who welcome Jesus receive complete forgiveness for all the sins they have committed.

The apostles understood what they had received and what was at stake in Jesus' command to forgive: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God has forgiven you." (Eph 4:32) St. Paul knew he had been forgiven much. And he knew well that we are all prodigals who stand in desperate need of forgiveness. We have all sinned against God and our neighbor; and God, in His infinite mercy has forgiven us.

Not forgiving blocks the flow of God's mercy. It hardens the heart; it binds, it cripples and makes it impossible for the love of God to penetrate and heal the human heart. It stifles the Spirit; it is the stubborn rejection of love and of God's triumph through mercy.