

THE LORD'S PRAYER

A nine session small group study



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Getting the most out of this study

Below you will find a few ideas to get you started in preparing for and participating in your small group.

Personal Preparation

1. Read the chapter and start to think through some of the questions. Jot down a few initial responses.
2. Read the Psalm at the end of the chapter, perhaps even more than once. Highlight or underline inspiring phrases in your Bible that you'll want to share with your group. The Bible references in this booklet are from the New King James Version, but feel free to read a different translation if you would prefer.
3. Take advantage of the Personal Reflection sections each week to further your study and contemplate your own prayers.

Group discussion

1. Come to the study prepared.
2. Be willing to participate in the discussion. If you are worried about speaking in public, just read the answers that you have prepared ahead of time.

3. Be sensitive to other members of the group. *Listen* attentively; you may be surprised by their insights. *Observe* body language so you can properly gauge emotions and feelings. *Validate* and encourage one another. *Engage* in the discussion and connect your responses to what others are saying. Many questions do not have “right” answers, but could have a variety of answers.
4. Be careful not to dominate. Sometimes we might get a little over eager to share our ideas! By all means participate, but be sure to allow others to also.
5. Expect God to teach you through your reading of Scripture and your discussion with others. Pray that you will be open to His teachings and that He will show you how to change and grow.
6. Remember that things shared in the group are confidential and should not be discussed outside of the group, unless permission was given to do so.
7. If you are a facilitator, you will find additional suggestions at the back of the guide.

Foreword

The Lord's Prayer is a valuable legacy that Jesus gave to those who believe in Him.

The prayer is recorded two times, once in Matthew and once in Luke with slight variation. We will mostly be studying the more detailed version found in Matthew, as this is the version that we pray communally every Sunday (CNAC 12.1.7.1).

However, we must not neglect the account found in Luke, as it's here that we see why the Lord Jesus provided this prayer for His disciples. Luke 11:1 says, *Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught His disciples."*

One of the disciples was so moved by Jesus' praying that he asked if He would teach them how to pray. Note that the disciple doesn't ask that Christ teach them a prayer, but rather that He teach them **how to pray**. The Lord's Prayer, then, is a model, or "how-to" prayer that provides a structure that can be followed.

It's a pattern for prayer, and a pattern for life.

Our Father in heaven

The most significant indicator of Christian prayer is not our posture while praying, the geographic direction in which we pray, or the length or frequency of our prayers, but rather an awareness of the One to whom we pray. Jesus shows this very clearly in Matthew 9:9-10 when He says, *In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven.* Here, at the very beginning of His model prayer, the Lord teaches us that before we make any petitions or requests of God, we must first recognize the glory and omnipotence of God. When we pray, we need less awareness of self, and more awareness of Him.

It's incredible, really, that Jesus encourages us to call the God of the universe - the God who has created all things, knows all things, and is over all things - Father. Just as Jesus has an intimate relationship with the Father, He also desires for us to have an intimate relationship with Him, and it is only through Jesus Christ that we can have this relationship to God, the Father. We must see that the image of a father was used for our human understanding. The intimate connection that a child has with their parents is how close God wants to be with us. However, we must also keep in mind that God is much more and entirely different from any earthly father. We are addressing the almighty Creator of heaven and earth.

To pray with intimacy to God is a special right and privilege. In the Old Testament, God is the Father of His people. In the New Testament, Jesus introduces the teaching that anyone who receives the Son and believes in His name can call on God as Father (John 1:12, John 14:6). When we say "Father" to God, we know that we are speaking with someone who loves us without limit, understands us, works for our good and benefit, and will never leave us nor forsake us.

Martin Luther once summed up this unique form of address and intimate relationship nicely:

“Abba” is only a little word, and yet contains everything. It is not the mouth but the heart’s affection which speaks like this. Even if I am oppressed with anguish and terror on every side, and seem to be forsaken and utterly cast away from Your presence, yet am I Your child, and You are my Father. For Christ’s sake: I am loved because of the Beloved. So this little word, “Abba,” Father, deeply felt in the heart, surpasses all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and the most eloquent speakers that ever lived. This matter is not expressed with words, but with groanings, and these groanings cannot be uttered with any words of eloquence, for no tongue can express them.

The word “our” should also be considered, as it identifies the Lord’s Prayer as a communal prayer. When we pray this prayer, whether within the divine service experience or outside of it, we are praying with - and for - the larger body of Christ. We profess that He is not just *my* heavenly Father, He is *our* heavenly Father - and we are all His beloved children. What a sense of community and oneness this prayer affords! As we pray for each other, we should also grow in our acceptance and inclusiveness of each other. We cannot be prejudiced against others if we are praying for all.

Finally, Jesus gives this address special emphasis by calling God, “Our Father *in heaven*.” This is an indication of the superiority and glory of God. The words *in heaven* emphasize that God is exalted above all earthly existence. He - God, the Father - is greater and higher than everything and anyone else, and yet, in His omnipresence, He comes close to us as human beings. How humbling this is when we truly stop to ponder this great truth.

Because God is our Father and His love has been poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5), it should be possible for us to love one another, to look at others in a friendly manner, to give a loving word to those who are left out by some, and to help those in need. Then, the Lord’s Prayer will not only be a prayer, but also a way of life.

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1. In Luke 11, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. From whom did you learn how to pray?

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2. Why is it important to first recognize the glory of God in prayer before praying for anything else?

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3. Why is it so incredible and significant that Jesus encourages us to call God “Father?”

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4. How would you describe your relationship with God, the Father?

5. Discuss Martin Luther's quote.

6. Because we pray, *Our Father in heaven*, we cannot be prejudiced against others if we are praying for all. Consider some prejudices that might get in the way of being able to rightly pray Our Father in heaven. What can be done to work on shedding these prejudices?

7. How can you become less aware of yourself and more aware of God when you pause to pray?

8. Why should the Lord's Prayer be an everyday prayer and not just a Sunday prayer?

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9. How can the Lord's Prayer transcend beyond just a prayer to become a guide on how to live a Christian life?

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down different ways you could address God in prayer, besides *Our Father in heaven*.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

The book of Psalms is sometimes referred to as "the prayer book of the Bible." Each session will have a Psalm for you to read as a group and discuss. **Read Psalm 89:1-37.** What words are used to describe God? What actions has God taken on behalf of His people? Write down phrases that inspire you that you can use in your own prayers.

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Spend time thinking about and writing down how you would like to grow or change in your prayer life. What are you hoping to learn from this study? What do you like about the way you pray alone, and with others? What aspects of your prayer life are you not satisfied with? Ask for God's guidance for ways to grow in your prayers.

Hallowed be Your name

When we come into the presence of God, we come to Him knowing that He is our Father. Being intimate with Him, we can share all that is in our hearts. He is our Father, but we must also remember that He is the almighty God of heaven and earth, the One who created all things. This is one reason why the first petition of the Lord's Prayer is that we ask for His name to *be hallowed*, to remind us who we are speaking to. "Hallowed" means to be *made holy, honored, or set apart*.

When Jesus teaches this part of the prayer to His disciples, He isn't saying that God should make His name holy. Rather, He is teaching them, and us, that *we* need to recognize and affirm the holiness of God. He is reminding believers of the second commandment – to not take the name of God in vain. He is putting our focus on God and His nature because this is what everything else hangs on. It is our responsibility to understand and recognize God as the One who is worthy of all honor and glory, and to *adjust our lives to reflect this truth*. Martin Luther once said, "How is God's name hallowed among us? *When both our doctrine and living are truly Christian.*" How can we pray, *Hallowed be Your name*, and then dishonor God? Our entire life should reflect our awareness of His holiness.

In Psalm 103:1-2, we read: *Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits...* David not only recognizes that God is holy, but also responds with blessing and praise. How beautiful it is when recognition produces a response. What is our response to the holiness of God?

The Catechism provides a few specific responses and ways that we can keep God's name holy: "By giving all honor to God, by praising and extolling Him, and by endeavoring to conduct themselves in accordance with His will, believers contribute to the hallowing of His name" (CNAC 12.1.7.2.2). We can start in worship, as David often did, expressing to God what His name means to us. We also look to Jesus as our example in hallowing God's name. Through His love and compassion for others, He perfectly sanctified the name of God. He drew near to those who had been rejected by others. He forgave those who opposed Him and left Him in His greatest moments of difficulty. And He was obedient to and fulfilled His Father's will, even though it required Him to sacrifice His life (Philippians 2:8).

Living according to the values of God centers our life around His Son and living in Christ transforms us into the new creature God wants us to be. As we embrace this transformation and allow it to occupy our lives, we honor God's name and the work that He has done in us. And we give others the opportunity to see and adore Him.

In biblical times, names were given to describe a person's origin, their purpose, or even their characteristics. For the people of Israel, names tell you all about a person. God's name reveals His essence. What comes to mind when you think about God's name? That He is love. That He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – Three in One. That He is eternal. That He is merciful and good. That He desires all to be saved.

And so you can see why Jesus teaches that the name of God is important, that it *must* be sanctified. Because knowing God's name means that we know who He is, and we recognize what He has done for us and for all people. We have a relationship with the one true God, and we want that relationship to be evident in our lives. Thus, we pray, *Hallowed be Your name*.

1. What does *hallowed* mean?

2. “How is God’s name hallowed among us? When both our doctrine and living are truly Christian.” How do you understand this quote from Martin Luther?

3. How can our life be a reflection of God’s holiness? Discuss some practical examples.

4. Think about the Old Testament. How did the Israelites *sanctify* or *hallow* something? Read Leviticus 8:1-13. How were the priests consecrated? How were they set apart from the people? How do you set something apart in your life? Do you have any rituals for inviting the holiness of God into your life?

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5. Why is God's name holy? Why should we set His name apart from all other names? Discuss the second commandment and what it means to live by it.

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6. In Psalm 103:1-2, David reminds himself to forget not the benefits (blessings) of God. What are some of the benefits of God that you've experienced in your life? Why is it important that we remember all of the good that God has done?

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7. The chapter mentions the phrase "living in Christ." How would you describe what it means to "live in Christ?"

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down different ways you could express God's holiness to Him in prayer.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

Read Psalm 8 together. What does it teach us about the name of God? What effect does recognizing God's glory have on the author of the psalm (see verses 3-5)?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Rewrite Psalm 8 in your own words. Use it as a prayer.

3

Your kingdom come

Immediately following the recognition of God's glory and omnipotence, our renewed relationship with Him through Jesus Christ and the holiness of His character comes humble submission. Here, the Lord teaches us to say, "Father, do whatever advances Your kingdom."

What did Jesus mean when He said "kingdom?" A kingdom is ruled by a king. When we say, *Your kingdom come*, it expresses our desire to be part of the kingdom, realm, or even state of being where God is the supreme ruler. We can understand that Jesus was not referring to earthly kingdoms when He expressed this petition. We see this even more clearly in recalling His response to Pontius Pilate: *My kingdom is not of this world... My kingdom is not from here* (John 18:36). The petition, *Your kingdom come*, refers to the kingdom of God - both the kingdom that is to come, and the kingdom that already has begun with Jesus Christ.

Jesus brings clarity to the present kingdom in Luke 17:20-21: *Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you"* (or, in other translations, *"in your midst"*). The kingdom of God dawned with the incarnation of Christ and becomes present in His church (CNAC 12.1.7.2.3). The Holy Spirit is the guarantor that the kingdom is present and experienced in the church of Christ through the apostolate, the sacraments, the proclamation of the gospel, and preparation for Christ's return.

With this plea, we are asking that the kingdom become increasingly perceptible in the church, and the individuals who comprise it. The church is to be the place where the values of the kingdom are most profoundly known and experienced. Is the kingdom perceived through me? How much is the kingdom revealed in our congregation? Does one experience through the atmosphere before, during, and after a divine service, through the proclamation of the word, through the celebration of Holy Communion, that Jesus is in our midst? It's important that we give careful thought and consideration to these questions and to our responsibility as those who are to be a reflection of the kingdom.

We also understand this petition, *Your kingdom come*, to point to the future. It begins with Christ's return, and is completed in the new creation. When we pray, *Your kingdom come*, we're also praying for Christ to return and for God to reveal His eternal kingdom in all its glory.

A well-known author and theologian once said, "To pray *Your kingdom come*... one must be ready to add, *and start with me*." Many have plans related to their personal future - college, work, family, retirement, etc. - and naturally, desire to turn these plans into reality. For some, the coming of Jesus may interfere with these plans. Even when one asks for the coming of Jesus, perhaps this petition may not always be expressed sincerely and honestly. Anyone who struggles with such a thought should know that God does all things well, and that moving forward with Jesus will never bring about loss. On the contrary, we can trust that in the end - with His grace and through His love - we will be both fulfilled and victorious.

As disciples of Christ, we must be shaped by His priorities. Scripture clearly reveals that the kingdom of God was a priority for Jesus. May our plea for the coming of both the present and future kingdoms always be genuine and sincere, and, following the example of our Savior, may our foremost priority always be to *seek first the kingdom of God* (Matthew 6:33).

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1. How would you describe the kingdom of God? You can reference the Bible, for example, Romans 14:17 and Luke 17:20-21.

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2. Discuss some ways that Jesus lived out the prayer for God's kingdom to come.

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3. How is God's kingdom both present and future-oriented?

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4. What are some ways that we can better reflect the kingdom in our homes? How have you *personally experienced* the kingdom in your home?

5. How is the kingdom of God visible in the church today?

6. As individuals in the church of Christ, what characteristics should be on display to those we interact with?

7. What are some reasons why we may sometimes pray, *Your kingdom come*, less sincerely and genuinely than we should? How can we make this plea with more conviction?

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down some other ways to invite God's rule into your life in your prayers.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

Read Psalm 37:1-11, 23-40. What instruction does this psalm give on how to live according to the rule of God? How does God respond to this person? What phrase from this psalm could you write down or memorize to use in your own prayers?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

This week, remind yourself each morning that *you are living today as a citizen of God's kingdom*. Continue to think about this throughout the day. Write down any observations. Did it change the way you responded to what was happening around you at any point? Did you respond to conflict differently? Did you treat your family any differently? Why or why not?

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

God is omnipotent, and His will stands above everything. In heaven, the domain where God rules, His will reigns supreme (CNAC 12.1.7.2.4). The petition that God may also govern everything on earth in accordance with His will comes to expression in the plea: ***Your will be done.*** The natural inclination for human beings is to live according to their own will, so there is an intense inner struggle when one makes this plea. It takes strength, courage, trust, hope, and complete love for God to present this request to Him with an honest heart. With this plea, we are willing to utilize our free will to choose to do His. **God has given us our own free will, yet we say to Him – Your will be done.**

Consider Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane:

And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."

Here we can see the struggle of Jesus' humanity with fulfilling God's will. Jesus, as the Son of God, knew exactly what following His Father's will would mean; suffering, torture, and death. From this prayer, we can know and be sure that Jesus understands our struggles, injustices, pain, and fear. He has shown us what it looks like to strain against our human nature, and yet ultimately accept, *not my will, but Yours be done.*

Sometimes it is difficult to seek and accept God's will, especially when we don't understand it. However, we must remember that our Father knows everything: what we can and cannot understand, the entire path for our lives, and the entire plan for all mankind. If we are Christians, we must allow ourselves to be shaped by His priorities. To pray to our heavenly Father that His kingdom come, His will be done is to pray that we obey Him, that Christ reigns in our hearts, that we feel His presence, and that we look forward to the day when Christ comes and God's will *is done on earth as it is in heaven*.

How should these words affect our daily lives? We must live *obediently, outwardly, and expectantly*.

When we pray these words, *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*, we are asking that **obedience** to God's will starts **with me**, that His will and kingdom begins to be displayed **on earth in me**. This obedience is not forced or done out of fear. Rather, we allow God's will to guide us because it's what we want to do! As a child follows the will of their parents out of love, we follow God's will because we dearly love Him, and we know His will is always the best for us; it will always lead us down the right path.

This petition also brings about an awareness that there is another path, the will of the evil one. This will can also be done. Along with having a free will, we also have the human inclination to sin. To fight against this tendency, this request should also remind us of the new life that we were given at our baptism and sealing. God poured into us His love, power, and life that we can be victorious in the daily struggle to be obedient to His will.

The **outward** aspect of this request is that God's kingdom and will would become evident to those around us. This starts in our families and in our congregation. Is your church a place where God's kingdom can be known and experienced? Is your family a place where God's love is evident? Where His commandments are the "house rules"? Orienting our lives to the will of God changes us, our families, and our church, and makes them beacons of the gospel for others to see.

This also means that we intentionally pursue renewal and transformation, as Paul encouraged the Romans: *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that **you may prove** [show, display, be a witness of, proclaim, reveal] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God* (Romans 12:2).

Finally, asking that God's will be done means that we live with hope and **expectation** for the day when sin will be defeated and the will of God will finally and fully be done in this world, as it is done in heaven.

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1. Think about the free will God has given you. What does it mean to surrender your will to another? To God? Why could this be difficult sometimes, but easy other times?

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2. What is God's will? Where possible, use Scripture for support.

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3. Why do you want God's will to be done?

4. What can we learn from Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane?

5. When we pray, *Your will be done*, do we always mean it? Why is it sometimes a struggle to make this plea with sincerity?

6. What does it mean to live obediently, outwardly, and expectantly?

7. What steps are you taking today to be Christ-like in your obedience?

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8. Consider the following question from this session: *Is your family a place where God's commandments are the "house rules?"* What does this mean to you? What would this look like?

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9. Read Romans 12:2. How does our renewal and transformation prove the perfect will of God?

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down other phrases that express your longing for God's will and guidance in your life.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

Read the first six verses of Psalm 19. What is being done in heaven?

Read the rest of Psalm 19. What can we learn about following the will of God? How does it change the person living according to it?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

What is one thing you are struggling to give over to God in your life? Where do you find it is difficult to let go? Pray to God about these struggles. Ask Him for strength so that these thoughts won't have dominion over you.

5

Give us this day our daily bread

Up until this point in the Lord's Prayer, the petitions have all been about God – His name, His kingdom, His will. The last four petitions are about *our* food, *our* forgiveness, and *our* deliverance. The first three call attention to God's greatness; the last four call attention to our needs. After recognizing God's greatness, we also begin to recognize our daily dependence upon our heavenly Father.

Let's walk through what we are asking God when we pray, *Give us this day our daily bread*.

We cannot approach our merciful, loving God with demands that imply we deserve whatever He gives us. The beginning of the Lord's prayer gives us the right perspective: we praise Him, we recognize Him as God, we make Him the focus, and then we humbly ask Him for what we need. We ask God to fulfill our needs because we depend on Him. Without Him, we have nothing, and so we have to come to Him! *God's grace is everything, and without God's grace, everything is nothing*. In showing that we need God, we glorify Him. Jesus also repeatedly commands us to come to God with our needs: *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you* (Matthew 7:7). With the right attitude and heart, we are not afraid to come to God with our needs.

The word, "us," is also significant. Praying these words displays our care for each other. We're not only praying for ourselves here, but for all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We need our daily bread, but

so do the rest of those created in God's image. Everything comes from God, and He gives in such a way that there is more than enough for everyone. But it is not just God's responsibility. We are called to help in the task to make sure that the daily needs of others are fulfilled. Praying *Give us this day our daily bread*, we're asking God for the courage and ability to help others and demonstrate our love in this way.

So we are asking God to fulfill our needs, and those of His people, but we only pray for the *day's* needs. Wouldn't it just be easier if God gave us what we needed for the week or the year or even for the rest of our lives? What is Jesus teaching us by telling His disciples to pray for *this day our daily bread*?

It's the same lesson the Israelites had to learn on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. They wanted to collect the manna and save it, even though they were told to only gather what they needed. When they tried to collect more, the manna became infested with worms and couldn't be eaten (Exodus 16). However, God still provided the manna each day. His people didn't suffer from lack of food – they just had to learn to depend on God every day and trust that He would provide.

When we have enough food, money, and physical things, or even an overabundant amount, we may start to feel overconfident. Even though all of it could be taken away with one unfortunate circumstance, it is easy to become confident in what we have and not recognize our dependence on God. We can never lose our understanding of this dependence. He wants us to find our security in Him. By praying for our daily needs in the Lord's Prayer, we are saying to God that we are mindful of our reliance on Him and that we believe in His kindness to always provide.

Beyond our physical needs, there is a spiritual side to this plea. Jesus said, *I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and He who believes in Me shall never thirst* (John 6:35). We are petitioning especially for Jesus, the Bread of life. Only He can satisfy our souls!

In this sense, the petition can also be interpreted this way: Every day I pray that Jesus may permeate my thinking, speaking, and doing. In Holy Communion, Jesus shares His nature with the believer and we take steps toward becoming the creation that God created us to be. We learn to live without the things we think we need, realizing that all we really need is Jesus and all that flows so freely and abundantly from Him.

As you continue to pray the Lord's Prayer, let the spirit of contentment, gratitude, and your need for God's provision build in you, inspired by the words, *Give us this day our daily bread.*

1. Why do you think our physical needs are important to God?

2. How do the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer prepare us for the remaining petitions of the prayer?

3. Share an experience where God has provided for you. Was it hard to trust that God would provide? What did you learn from this experience?

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4. Are you content with what God has given you in life? If not, what can you do to develop a spirit of contentment?

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5. How does it make you feel to know that the God of the universe – the One who has created and knows all things – allows you to come to Him with your needs? What is your response to this?

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6. Have you ever considered your responsibility to others when praying *Give us this day our daily bread*? What could you do about this responsibility?

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7. Discuss the significance of the word “daily” in this petition.

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8. Consider the lyrics from the well-known gospel hymn, **Give Me Jesus**: “*Give Me Jesus—you can have all this world, but give me Jesus!*” How does the plea expressed here connect with this portion of the Lord’s Prayer? Why is it sometimes difficult to be satisfied in Jesus? Why are we so quick to turn our attention elsewhere to satisfy our souls?

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down other words that you could use in your prayers to ask God about your and others daily needs.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

Read Psalm 104. What does it teach us about God’s provision? Share a verse that really stood out to you; how did it make you feel? Use some of these thoughts in your closing prayer together.

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Sometimes God’s provision can come *through us*. Do you know someone who is struggling with material needs, emotional stress, or could just use some help? Reach out to them this week or drop off a ready-made meal or thoughtful gift on their doorstep with a note of encouragement.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors

Forgiveness is a vital ingredient in any relationship involving humans. We can think of this request as voicing two realities: the forgiveness we need to receive (from God), and the forgiveness we need to give (to others).

Let's start with the first phrase: *Forgive us our debts*.

What is a debt? A debt is something you owe. When you owe something that you cannot pay you are a debtor. The word *debt* suggests that we owe God something. We have done things we shouldn't have (commission) and perhaps not done things that we should have (omission). *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 6:23). Thus, we owe our lives to God, and when we ask Him to *forgive us our debts*, we are really asking God for the gift of life made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is brought about when God forgives the sin that disrupted our relationship with Him. Consequently, we need to come to Him, confessing our sins, and asking for His forgiveness.

How often should we come to God in our prayers with confession?

Every day we live as debtors to God because we are born with the propensity to sin. In quiet moments of the day, when we take the time to recognize our sin, repent and confess it to God, asking for His forgiveness and for the strength to be better – we believe we can experience His grace. One does not have to wait until Sunday to confess their sins.

God forgives when a repentant sinner comes to Him – *if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). On Sunday, we hear the words *your sins are forgiven* spoken over us by the apostolate of Christ, as He instructed them. This is a wonderful gift that provides assurance of God's grace and forgiveness.

Sin has a profound effect upon us. With every sin we distance ourselves from God, pushing away His will to follow our own. We see this often portrayed in the Old Testament, mostly the Israelites (2 Kings 17:7, Jeremiah 8:14), but even Pharaoh (Exodus 10:16) realizes what he has done, *"I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you."* In the New Testament, Jesus further confirms this in the parable of the Prodigal Son, when the son comes to the realization, *"I have sinned against heaven and before you"* (Luke 15:18). As these verses display, some of our sins are against God and some are against other people. And here is where the second part of our petition becomes relevant – *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*. This phrase in the Lord's Prayer is unique because it is the only time we voice an expectation of ourselves. What is forgiveness? From our **Resolving Everyday Conflict** materials:

1. *Forgiveness is not a feeling.* It's an act of will, a series of decisions.
2. *Forgiveness is not forgetting.* Forgetting is passive, and may be impossible to do. *Forgiveness* is deciding not to mention, recount, or think about what others have done to hurt us.
3. *Forgiveness is not excusing.* It's acknowledging that what was done was wrong, and though it has been forgiven, there might still be consequences to those actions.
4. *Forgiveness* is a radical decision to not hold an offense against the offender.

Forgiveness is also costly. When someone sins they create a debt, which is owed to God, but is also owed to the person they sinned against. There is hurt and anger, but instead of lashing out or thinking of revenge, we chose a different path. We work, with the power of Christ,

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3. How is the forgiveness that we receive connected to the forgiveness that we give?

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4. How do you ask God for forgiveness?

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5. Read David's confession of sin in 2 Samuel 12:13 and discuss. Why is it important that we repent and confess our sins to God? When and how often should we do so?

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6. How is forgiveness costly?

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7. Discuss what forgiveness is and what it isn't. Do you have anything to add to this list. Think about past conflicts in your life – what about forgiveness is difficult for you?

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8. Why is forgiveness an essential characteristic of a disciple of Jesus?

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down different phrases you could use in your prayers, confessing your sin to God and asking for His forgiveness.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

Read Psalm 51. Discuss the different phrases David is using to ask for forgiveness. What emotions is he working through in his prayer? Do you recognize the path of repentance in his prayer; *awareness*, *remorse*, *confession*, *resolution* to change, and *forgiving* as He forgives?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Write a prayer of confession. Feel free to use some of the phrases from Psalm 51. This week, seek God's forgiveness with this prayer. Speak it aloud, or quietly – even every day

Do not lead us into temptation

During one of the most difficult moments of Jesus' earthly life, when He was praying in the garden of Gethsemane, He found His disciples sleeping. Upon waking them, He exhorted them to *watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak* (Matthew 26:41). Temptation affects everyone no matter how close we are to the Lord. We always need to be aware of the dangers that surround us, which seek to affect our relationship with God, and pray for spiritual protection. In the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to seek the help of God to battle against temptation.

Why do we battle against temptations? Why are they so dangerous? Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have experienced the grace of God and have received forgiveness. We've been made new, and have been given the power by the Holy Spirit to transform and grow into who we were created to be. As children of God, we are to continually grow in godliness, but temptations seek to derail us on our faith journey and set us back.

The Bible provides us with examples to help us understand what temptations are. One way temptation is defined is "trials" or "testing," which could potentially lead us into sin. This happens, for example, when one endures profound suffering and is tempted to doubt God, and ultimately drift into unbelief. We see this in the Bible with Job. He suffered immensely and was even encouraged to turn his back on God, yet he did not.

We are meant to endure trials and testing, and when we plead with God to not lead us into temptation, we seek His strength to overcome. We realize that He alone can help us to understand the purpose of the temptation and not fall prey to discouragement and sin.

It's important for us to know that while God allows us to be tested, He never entices us to sin; sin is not a part of His nature. James writes, *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).

James continues, *But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed* (James 1:14). These are temptations that arise from within us. Our sinful desires cause us to seek after our own will while ignoring the will of God. Sinful lusts pull us away from fulfilling God's calling for us to glorify Him in all we do. Even though we know our weaknesses and those desires that are within us that cause us to sin, we need God's help. For this reason, the Lord's Prayer is a daily prayer.

Temptations also arise from the world around us. We are tempted by the external entreaties of the devil. Just like when Jesus was in the wilderness, the devil puts before us a display that persuades us to separate ourselves from God. He lures with pleasure, pride, and power and uses lies to deceive and confuse. Our ears could become filled with the lies of the evil one that resound throughout our society. We must always be watchful and guard our heart from these temptations. We need to put on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Because temptations exist everywhere we go, this prayer is vital for us. In this petition, we show our heavenly Father that we recognize that danger is within us and all around us, and that although we will be tempted, we do not want to fall back. So when we pray, *do not lead us into temptation*, we are asking for God's help to keep us from situations where the enticement to sin would be greater than we could bear. And He is gracious and faithful to help.

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1. When you are in a moment of temptation, are you usually aware of it or do you only realize it later? Is there anything you can do to help you recognize moments of temptation before or when they are happening?
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2. How have you experienced the help of God when confronted with temptation? How do you feel when you are victorious over temptation?
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3. Read Matthew 4:1-11. How does Jesus face temptation from the devil? How does quoting the Bible help Him with these temptations? How do we prepare ourselves to fend off and overcome temptation?
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4. What desires do you have that could become temptations?

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5. Temptations are so dangerous to us that the Lord included this plea in His prayer. Why are temptations dangerous and how do they affect our Christian journey?

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6. Read about the whole armor of God as outlined by Paul in Ephesians 6:10-20, and discuss the significance of each piece of armor as it relates to the fight against temptation.

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7. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. What's your response to this powerful truth?

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down other words asking God for guidance when it comes to temptation.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

Read Psalm 91. What do these verses tell us about God's protection? What does it mean to make God "your dwelling place"? How does that phrase relate to other parts of the Lord's Prayer?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Read Psalm 141. Besides outside influences, where else can temptation come from (see verses 3-4)? How can we protect ourselves from our own mouth and lips? Write this verse on a piece of paper and place it where you can see it every day: *But my eyes are upon You, O God the Lord; in You I take refuge.* Let it guide your thoughts and prayers this week.

...but deliver us from the evil one

This is a petition that is a continuation of the previous one. In the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to keep us from situations where the enticement to sin would overwhelm us. In this concluding petition, we pray specifically for protection against the evil one, Satan. When we pray, *deliver us from the evil one*, we are saying, "God, protect me from the enemy and deliver me from his hands." When faced with an onslaught of temptation and evil, we ask the Lord for rescue and deliverance.

This prayer is important because the evil one is behind every temptation seeking to kill and deceive. Jesus describes the enemy in this way in John 8:44, *He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.* We must be aware that there is a power at work that desires to damage our faith by spreading lies, causing us to doubt. It's the lie that enters our thoughts when we are facing a temptation that says, "It's okay, it's only this one time. Who's going to know? It's not that big of a deal." The evil one plants thoughts in our mind and feelings in our soul that are simply false. He is seeking to distract and derail us, and lures us away from the One who loves us the most.

We witness how the evil one works in the Garden of Eden when he speaks with Eve. In Genesis 3, we read, *Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.*

And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” **Then the serpent said** to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1-5).

The evil one was able to sow seeds of deceit, filling Eve’s mind with doubt about God’s truthfulness. Here, one who had been experiencing an incredible personal relationship with God was susceptible to the lies of the evil one. No matter how strong you feel your relationship is with our heavenly Father, Satan will seek to deceive you. We need to pray daily to be delivered from the evil one’s attempts to steal you away from God’s kingdom.

Each one of us is susceptible to the temptations of the evil one because of our free will, which can easily lead us into dangerous places and situations. How do we strengthen our resolve to live according to God’s will instead? In Jesus’ high priestly prayer, He echoed the words of the Lord’s Prayer when He prayed to His Father, *I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth* (John 17:15, 17). “Sanctify” means *to be set apart* to God, to holiness, and to be set apart from sin. Jesus is asking for His followers to be made holy so that they can conquer temptation. We are in this continual process of being sanctified when we take in the truth of God’s Word, which helps us identify the lies of the evil one. God delivers us from evil by sanctifying and saturating us with the Word.

When we think about the work of Satan and the temptations that can paralyze us and cause us to become overwhelmed with fear, we must always remember who is on our side and to whom we belong. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Further, we can read 1 John 4:4, *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* The victory of Christ gives us the certainty that evil does not win in the end, and because He lives in us, we can prevent evil from winning today, by continually praying this petition to God, *do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

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1. Describe a time when someone protected you from something. How did that feel?

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2. In your own words, what are we saying when we pray, *deliver us from the evil one*?

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3. Why do we need protection from the evil one?

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4. Evil isn't always the scary monster that is obvious to everyone who sees it. Sometimes, evil disguises itself. What disguises might evil put on to trick us?

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5. Consider God's words to Cain in Genesis 4:6-7. Who gives us the power to rule over sin?

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6. The evil one is the father of lies and is always seeking to deceive us. There are many lies that are rampant in our time. How do you identify and defend yourself against the lies of the evil one? How could the Holy Spirit help you?

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7. What role does the Word of God play in helping to deliver us from the evil one?

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8. Why can we be hopeful when it comes to being delivered from the evil one? Reference Romans 8:31.

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down other ways you can ask God for deliverance.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

Read Psalm 25. Who is David asking deliverance from? What other requests does he make of God? Who are your “enemies”? What do you need to be delivered from? What characteristics and promises of God can you bring to mind as an encouragement (see verses 6-10)?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

In reading Psalm 25, why do you think David asks for forgiveness in the same prayer that he is asking for deliverance? What phrases from this prayer might be relevant for your prayer life? Contemplate 1 John 4:4: *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* What feelings and emotions come up as you repeat these words to yourself?

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For Yours is the kingdom,
and the power, and the
glory, forever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer concludes with what is known as a doxology (a liturgical expression of praise to God). This concluding statement of exaltation and majestic praise is a powerful expression that completes the worship of our Almighty Father in a bold proclamation and testimony of His omnipotence and the glory that He alone holds. The prayer ends as it begins, with us glorifying God - our primary purpose in praying.

This final expression of praise to the glory of God has a strong parallel to one of David's prayers. He spoke these words after the offerings for the building of the temple had been collected and prior to the anointing of his son, Solomon, as king over Israel:

*Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, **the power and the glory**, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; **Yours is the kingdom**, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is **power and might**; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all (1 Chronicles 29:11-12).*

Within David's prayer, we can identify the great themes that Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, and we can see that the doxology also echoes David's prayer.

The doxology, though not included in the oldest and most complete biblical manuscripts, has been incorporated as the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer since as far back as the first century. We are aware of this because it was included as part of the *Didache*, which is the oldest complete document we have outside of the New Testament. It dates back to the first century and reads the following:

Do not pray as the hypocrites either, but pray as the Lord commanded in His Gospel: Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and let us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one; for thine is the power and the glory unto ages and ages. Pray this way three times a day.

Here it is interesting that this early Christian document encourages believers to *pray this way three times a day*. We aren't restricted to praying the Lord's Prayer only when we gather together in a divine service. We can pray it daily, as He taught us, or incorporate its elements into our prayers, always seeking to glorify Him as we begin and conclude.

The Lord's Prayer concludes with the word *Amen*, which stems from Hebrew, and translates as, "so be it!" The *Amen* once more reinforces every plea and statement that has been brought to God in this prayer.

Jesus Christ, who is called *Amen* (Revelation 3:14), who with authority and power has revealed our Father, shows us by using this word that through Him we pray the Lord's Prayer with complete agreement, confidence, and hope. Thereby, a Christian can be filled with the power that this prayer affords, and make *their life* a "Lord's Prayer" through which God is praised. Furthermore, we can gratefully profess with Apostle Paul: *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us* (2 Corinthians 1:20).

The Lord's Prayer is a valuable legacy that Jesus gave to those who believe in Him (CNAC 12.1.7). Each expression and petition has deep meaning, and when we pray as the Lord taught us, our relationship with our God and Father will grow and deepen.

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1. Why do you think that the Lord's Prayer ends with, *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever?*

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2. How is this final statement of the Lord's Prayer connected with the beginning of the prayer, and what does this show us as it relates to our daily prayers?

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3. Why is it our purpose to glorify God not only in our prayer life, but in everything we do? What does it mean to glorify God in all things?

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4. When you look back on many of the Psalms, they also end with a sentence of worship and praise. Why do you think this might be important? What is it communicating to God?
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5. Discuss the significance of the “Amen”. Why do our prayers conclude with that expression and how does it relate to Jesus Christ?
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6. Have you ever prayed the Lord’s Prayer outside of the divine service? What prompted you to do this?
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7. The Lord’s Prayer is more than just a prayer. It’s a way to live. What actions does the Lord’s Prayer call us to?

BRAINSTORMING:

Take a moment to write down different phrases of exaltation and praise that you could use in your own prayers.

PRAYING IN THE PSALMS:

Read Psalm 47. How do the verses describe God? How do they describe how we should be praising Him? Do you have any of these feelings when you are praying the Lord's Prayer?

Pray the Lord's Prayer together as a small group. Take your time and think about each phrase intentionally. What have you learned over the course of this series? What is the number one thing you will try to remember when saying the Lord's Prayer with the congregation on Sunday? How will you use this prayer in your personal life?

PERSONAL REFLECTION:

Put together all the different phrases you wrote down for every phrase of the Lord's Prayer. Put it where you pray. For the next week, write out a prayer every day to God. Use the Lord's Prayer as a model or template, and expand on it with your own personal wording. Read your prayers to God.

Facilitator Notes

Below you'll find a few suggestions for leading your small group discussion. More training materials can be found on ndi.nac-usa.org

1. Begin your discussion on time and stick to 60 minutes unless you have agreed on a longer time together.
2. Be sure everyone in your group has a study guide and encourage them to prepare beforehand.
3. Encourage everyone to participate, but do not pressure those who might not be comfortable yet. Remind the group of the confidentiality of the conversation, that this is a place of trust and if you're comfortable, please feel free to share your personal thoughts and feelings.
4. If everyone was not able to read the chapter ahead, it might be helpful to have someone read it (or take turns reading it) together.
5. You'll notice there are different types of questions; some questions are *knowledge and interpretation* (discussing what has been explained and how each person understands it), and others are *application* (applying the concepts to our personal lives).
6. Feel free to ask the questions in your own words, or skip one if you feel it has already been answered. Consider your group and come up with additional questions if you would like.

7. The BRAINSTORMING section inspires discussion on how to say that specific phrase of the Lord's Prayer in a different way. If you are meeting in person, it might be helpful to have some big paper on which to write everyone's ideas. If you are meeting online, be sure to write down everyone's answers so you can share them with the group afterwards (or ask a participant in the group to do this task).
8. The PRAYING THROUGH THE PSALMS section ends each session with the study of a psalm that relates to the chapter in some way. Be sure to leave sufficient time to read the psalm and discuss the questions.
9. The PERSONAL REFLECTION section is for each participant to do at home, individually. It could be a useful way to start your following session, to ask if anyone wanted to share their personal study or experience.
10. Avoid answering your own question right away. If necessary, rephrase the question until it is clearly understood.
11. Don't be afraid of silence – people may need time to think through their responses.
12. Don't be content with just one answer. Ask, "What do the rest of you think?" or "Anything else?"
13. Acknowledge all contributions, and try to be affirming. If an answer is off base ask, "What led you to that conclusion?" or "What do the rest of you think?"
14. Have fun! Allow your small group to be an environment where people can learn and grow in a place of trust, love, and generosity.

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 forgive our
debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but
deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, forever.
Amen.

