

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Study Guide

The Rev'd Canon Dr. Michael Petty

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Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)

But he [Christ] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:24-25)

Man, a little piece of your creation, desires to praise you. He is a human being “bearing his mortality with him” (2 Corinthians 4:10), carrying with him the witness of his sin, and the witness that you “resist the proud” (1 Peter 5:5). Nevertheless, to praise you is the desire of man...You stir him to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. (St. Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1)

Opening Collect:

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 231)

Background reading for this section: *To Be A Christian: An Anglican Catechism* (TBC), Questions 154-255

Focus Question From TBC:

Question 156: How can you have fellowship with God?

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and in union with him by the Holy Spirit, I have fellowship with God as his adopted child. I experience this in prayer, worship, God's Word, the sacraments, and Christian community, as I daily follow him by faith.

I. What is Prayer?

Prayer is turning my heart toward God, to listen and to speak with him. (TBC, 154)

1. Most of us are inclined to think of prayer as something we do and we are further inclined to think of it primarily in terms of asking God for different things. Thinking this way can put us in dangerous territory because it can lead us to evaluate prayer in terms of how effectively it gets us what we want. To think of prayer in this way is to *become a pagan*.

The Gospel has implications for every dimension of life and one of its implications for the life of prayer is that prayer is not primarily something that we do but is *primarily something that God makes possible*. Jesus makes this point dramatically clear in Matthew 6:7-8 when he says that prayer does not involve an elaborate attempt to persuade God to give us what we want. Christian prayer is not about our getting on God's "good side" (this is the agenda of pagan prayer). This is so for two reasons which Jesus makes clear in Matthew 6:8: (1) God is our *Father* (and so has already graciously inclined himself to us) and (2) God "knows what you need before you ask him". God knows us intimately and, therefore, knows what we really need better than we do and knows this before we ask for anything. An important lesson follows from this: "Prayer is not about telling God something God does not know. It is not about persuading God or changing God's mind. It is certainly not about convincing God to love us and so to do what we want him to do. Prayer is primarily confessing all that God has already done in our lives. Prayer as confession is therefore an act of worship, for it is a celebration of God's goodness toward us" (J. Warren Smith, *The Lord's Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*).

2. It is important to see prayer as a fundamental part of our relationship with God. Prayer is God's invitation to us to draw closer to him. Because this is so, prayer is more than simply "talking with God". It involves us turning our hearts to God, opening our lives to him (TBC, 154). Prayer is not simply a discreet activity but *a whole pattern of living*. (TBC, 224). This becomes clear in the model prayer which Jesus gives in Matthew 6:9-14, a prayer we now refer to as the Lord's Prayer. What we seek in prayer is not a response to all our (many!) requests, but something far more important: "fellowship with God, who made me for fellowship with himself" (TBC, 155).

3. In thinking about prayer as part of our communion with God, it is essential to remember that our relationship with God is not something we initiate but something God initiates with us. Our communion with God is brought about through Christ's self-offering on the Cross, through the Holy Spirit, through Scripture and through the sacraments (TBC, 156). Our communion with God is a gift from God and can be maintained only by God. We must see the Church in all its different aspects as something which God has created to bring about communion between himself and his human creatures (Ephesians 2:11-22; TBC, 157).

4. In thinking about prayer we need to be aware of the obstacles that inhibit its practice. While we are inclined to think that the greatest obstacle to prayer is God somehow being "distant" from us, the truth of the matter is quite different. The real obstacles to prayer have to do not with God but with us and they are, fundamentally, distractions as well as our own laziness, pride, difficulties, and spiritual dryness (TBC, 225). In short, the greatest obstacle to prayer in our sin. As sinners, prayer does not come to us naturally but only with effort and difficulty. This is why we

often experience distractions in prayer and why we can find it to be unrewarding and “dry”. Our experience will often be like that of the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. To them Jesus posed the question “So, could you not watch with me one hour?” (Matthew 26:40). This is why we should develop a regular pattern of prayer (TBC, 159, 224).

5. Christian prayer takes two different forms which are intended to complement and nourish one another, (TBC, 233). Individual prayer refers to the prayer life of an individual Christian. For each Christian, daily and intentional prayer should be the norm. Because we are distracted and self-centered, we must approach prayer as a spiritual discipline. Liturgical prayer refers to the common prayer of the Church (TBC, 244). The Church’s worship on the Lord’s Day is fundamentally an act of prayer, the prayer of the Church. Ideally, the Church’s liturgy is a “school of prayer”. No Christian ever truly prays alone for we are praying with the Church (the Church of heaven and earth). As Christians, we may be certain that God hears our prayers and that God will grant what we really need in accordance with his Wisdom and within his own time (TBC, 242).

II. Introduction to the Lord’s Prayer

The Lord’s Prayer models the primary elements of fellowship with God: praise of God, intercession for his rule and will, petition for his provision and protection, and confession of sins. I should pray regularly in all these ways. (TBC, 163)

1. There are two versions of the Lord’s Prayer in Scripture. The most familiar version is found in Matthew 6:9-13 but another, more brief, version is found in Luke 11:2-4. Matthew and Luke present the Lord’s Prayer in different contexts. In Matthew, the prayer is part of a long discourse known as the Sermon on the Mount and is presented as part of a trio of spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting and giving to the needy) which Jesus assumes his disciples will practice. In Luke, the prayer is taught by Jesus after the disciples request teaching on prayer. While these two contexts are different, both Matthew and Luke’s accounts actually make the same point: the Lord’s Prayer is not a generic spiritual exercise but a prayer intimately related to Jesus’ mission and, therefore, to discipleship. To pray this prayer in either of its forms is essentially pray for one thing and that is that God’s rule or kingdom might come into the world and that it might come into the world by coming into our lives now. Whenever we pray the Lord’s Prayer we are asking God to involve us in his work of reordering the world. This should alert us to the fact that prayer is not simply what is sometimes called a “spiritual issue”. Because God is the Creator, Christian worship and prayer are related to God’s projects of redeeming creation and sanctifying life (TBC, 162).

2. This is especially clear in Matthew where the Sermon on the Mount is the context of the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus calls his disciples to be “salt” and “light” (Matthew 5:13-15). In the ancient world, these two things were crucial. Salt was used both to flavor food and to preserve it while light was crucial in a world without electricity. Salt and light transformed, they made a difference. Jesus called his disciples to “flavor” the world and to shine a light in it. In order to do this, he knew they would need to be formed by prayer (TBC, 161).

3. While the context in which Luke presents the Lord’s Prayer is different, prayer and discipleship are closely related here too. In Luke’s account, the disciples observe Jesus praying and then ask him to teach them to pray “as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). Two things seem to

be going on here. First, the disciples know that the disciples of John the Baptist can be identified by the way in which they pray; they pray in a way that is connected to the person and mission of John. Jesus' disciples wish to pray in a way that connects them with Jesus' person and mission. They are not asking to be taught how to pray (as adult male Jews they would have know how to do this quite well). They are asking to be identified with Jesus through prayer. To pray is to be part of a mission.

4. In his classic book *The Lord's Prayer*, Romano Guardini (1885-1968) speaks about the "gateway" into Lord's Prayer. Guardini says that the gateway into the Lord's Prayer, the thing which allows us to truly enter into it and not simply repeat its words, is the holy intention of God for us and for the world. The whole purpose of praying this prayer is that we might be more and more be freed for God's purposes in our inward being. It is God's intention that we become obedient to him from the heart, becoming truly free by being completely open to him. Our openness to God, Guardini notes, is constantly threatened by our own "indolence, vanity, self-seeking and apathy". If we are honest with ourselves, we will realize that discipleship presents an immense challenge to us not simply in terms of doing this or that but in terms of our very selves: "Man is prone to evil, and his will goes counter to God's. To the will of God, he answers with a rebellious 'I don't want to'." We pray the Lord's prayer most fruitfully when we realize and confess that "God's will is a mystery and can be accomplished by man only through grace." Talking about being obedient to God can sound foreign to people formed by a culture of radical individual freedom. Formed by a culture of autonomy, we may fear that obedience to God will rob us of our freedom. Guardini reminds us, however, that in Christ we see that the glory of God and the salvation of human beings are actually one. Obedience to God does not rob us of our freedom; it actually gives us our freedom. The love of God does not rob us of our dignity; it bestows it upon us.

III. The Invocation: "Our Father, Who Art in Heaven"

With the words "Our Father in heaven" we name, we claim, we confess that relationship which God offers us through his Son, who became our brother, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit, who refashions our spirit in the image of our heavenly Father. By perfect obedience to the Father, our brother has reconciled us to God. Jesus has removed the sin that alienated us from God, the sin that cut us off from life. This is the very relationship for which God made us in the beginning. Now, through the gift of his Spirit who is united to our spirit, we become sons and daughters fo the Most High. (J. Warren Smith, *The Lord's Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*)

1. We address God as Father not because we believe that God is male or because we think that God is supposed to be like our human fathers but because in Jesus Christ we have become *God's adopted children* (John 1:12-13; TBC, 165, 166). Addressing God as Father is an immense *privilege* which God has bestowed upon us. We refer to God as "our Father" because we address God as members of the family constituted by our communion with Christ. We do not pray as isolated individuals but as members of Christ's Body (TBC, 167). When we address God as Father, we are reminded that our relationship with God is founded upon Jesus' relationship with the Father. While

we are naturally creatures of God, we are not naturally children of God. We only become children of God in Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4-5; TBC, 166). “We become children of God when through belief in Christ we receive a gift of power that is beyond the natural power of creatures. Praying to ‘our Father’ is a confession that we have undergone a change—a change from being merely creatures to being children whose Creator has become our Father” (J. Warren Smith, *The Lord’s Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*).

2. When we pray “Our Father” we are reminded that individual or personal prayer is never prayer offered alone. A *personal* relationship with God is never simply a *private* relationship. “When we pray to “our Father,” we realize that we are not praying simply as individuals. We are praying as members of the body of Christ together with all who are my brothers and sisters in Christ. Therefore we are confessing that to claim God as Father is unavoidably to confess our relationship to the rest of God’s children. We confess that, whether we particularly like them or not, they are our family...My prayer is not just about me. It is about us” (J. Warren Smith, *The Lord’s Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*).

3. While God adopts a fatherly relationship with us, the nature of this relationship is not revealed to us primarily through human fathers but through Jesus Christ (TBC, 168, 169). In Jesus Christ we see a love which is not simply all powerful but a love which is also perfect because it is allied to a perfect Wisdom and a perfect Goodness. “Our idea or mental picture of God the Father is not our earthly father with super metaphysical attributes...tacked on. Our image or impression of God comes from Jesus himself, who is the image of his heavenly Father...When we pray ‘our Father,’ we are praying to and thinking of the Father revealed in Jesus, his incarnate Son” (J. Warren Smith, *The Lord’s Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*).

4. God our Father is “in heaven”. It is important to remember that in Scripture heaven is not simply the opposite of the earth. Heaven is “the realm of God’s presence, power, and glory, which exists invisibly alongside this visible realm, and from which God hears the prayers of his children” (TBC, 170). God’s knowledge of creation is perfect and God’s power is perfectly effective through all creation (TBC, 171). God is simultaneously the Sovereign of the universe and the Father who invites his people into an intimate relationship with him (note 1 Kings 8:22-53; TBC, 171).

5. **Insight from Romano Guardini:** The fact that “Father” is qualified by “who art in heaven” is very important. With this affirmation, we are being taught that God is simultaneously near to us but radically different from us: “God is everywhere at every moment and in every situation—but as in Heaven. He is in everything, in all things and in all happenings—but as the One who is in Heaven. God is He who alone is Himself. *Heaven* signifies the way in which the most holy God is with Himself. Heaven is the inaccessibility of God...We must raise our minds from the earth when we address God, who is in Heaven. We must grant God this otherness. We must admit that He is not like things or like time or like ourselves. We do not prescribe to Him what He is to be like...And we are prepared for the fact that He is different from our expectations, mysterious and unknown. Yet it is precisely in this that he is our homeland, in which ‘our hearts can rest’.” (*The Lord’s Prayer*)

IV. The First Petition: “Hallowed be Thy Name”

“Hallowed” means to be treated as holy--set apart, sacred, and glorified. (TBC, 175)

1. “Therefore, when we pray to our Father ‘hallowed by thy name’ we are confessing that who God is determines who and what he wills us to be when he adopts us. Our identity is shaped by our relationships. Because God is holy, we who have been called to be his children are called to share in his holiness. This is what Jesus meant when he declared provocatively, ‘Be ye perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect’...when we confess that God is holy we also confess that we cannot become holy on our own. We cannot be holy apart from the Holy Spirit” (J. Warren Smith, *The Lord’s Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*).

2. To speak about God’s Name is to speak about God *himself* and to do so with reverential indirectness (TBC, 173). In Scripture God has a Name which is revealed to Moses (TBC, 173; cf. Exodus 3:14). In Philippians 2:9 Paul says that Christ has been given “the name that is above every name” clearly meaning the Name of God. This is a way of saying that the Son fully shares in the divinity of the Father. In the New Covenant, God’s Name is revealed to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit (TBC, 174).

3. To hallow something is to make it holy (TBC, 175). When we pray that God’s Name be hallowed or made holy, we are praying two things simultaneously. First, we are praying that God’s holiness, his incomparable greatness and glory, will be recognized and acknowledged in the world (TBC, 176). (This is the only way in which creation can be redeemed.) Second, we are praying that God’s holiness will become manifest in us (TBC, 177). We do not make ourselves holy so that we can then display God’s glory in the world. God sanctifies us and so displays his greatness and glory in transforming the lives of sinners (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24). To pray the Lord’s Prayer is to ask God to involve us in his mission to redeem the world. The Lord’s Prayer is prayed within a Church which has been called to holiness by her Lord who is the source and cause of all holiness. The charge which God gave to Israel, “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy”(Leviticus 11:44), applies to the Church in an even more radical way because in Christ we are liberated and cleansed from sin (Romans 6:5-11). Here the connection between prayer and discipleship becomes quite clear.

5. Prayer and worship form us to hallow God’s Name (TBC, 224). As we pray and worship, the reality of God’s glory and holiness is communicated to us and we are being accustomed to dwell in the presence of God. Prayer and worship impinge upon us, they make demands of our time and devotion (TBC, 226). As they impinge upon us, we are being taught that God’s glory and holiness are not simply theological notions which we affirm but, instead, are realities that touch us.

4. **Insight from Romano Guardini:** Our culture accustoms us to think of God in a casual way, away lacking in reverence. The Lord’s Prayer leads us in the opposite direction: “The name of God is holy: it stands for the special quality of His living being; all that is proper to Him alone; the mysterious, the unknowable, the inaccessible; the familiarity of our final home, and all that we could possibly say to express the absolute, the ineffable, the immeasurable, which is His very Self. This is what we are to hallow. We are to acquire a disposition and an attitude attuned to the holy, responding to it because it comes from the holy. With this deep, tender, inward, strong senses of the sacred, we are inwardly to embrace the name of God” (*The Lord’s Prayer*).

V. The Second Petition: “Your Kingdom Come”

The Kingdom of God is the just and peaceful reign of Jesus Christ over all the world, especially the lives of his faithful people, through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. (TBC, 179)

1. “So when we pray, ‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,’ we are confessing God’s kingly authority over all creation. More than that, we are confessing that our Father is not the God of deism who in creation wound up the universe like a pocket watch and then left it alone to follow the natural laws and light of reason into the future. Our God is neither neglectful nor withdrawn from his creation. Our Father is a king. As a wise and benevolent monarch carefully steers the ship of state in pursuit of justice and peace, so too God is ever working in the world, guiding it in the way of righteousness. Praying for the kingdom is our declaration of submission to God’s kingship and our desire to see his work in our midst” (J. Warren Smith, *The Lord’s Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*).

2. The Lord’s Prayer calls us to desire one thing above all others and this one desire is the center of all discipleship. In praying the Lord’s Prayer we are asking God to give us a desire to see the coming of his reign over the whole world. God’s reign or kingdom is effected through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:15-23; Romans 8:12-17; TBC, 179). Ultimately, discipleship is not simply a matter of doing things or believing things but a matter of desiring God above all things. To desire God is to desire his rule or reign over creation (TBC, 180).

3. God’s reign or kingdom is at the heart of Jesus’ preaching and ministry. God’s kingdom is the heart of Jesus’ preaching. Jesus proclaimed the “gospel of God” and this gospel can be stated briefly: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15). The Gospel is not “justification by faith” or “the forgiveness of sins” but the coming of God’s sovereign rule in human affairs. Jesus does not simply preach sermons about God’s rule but he also enacts it. Through his ministry of exorcism (Mark 1:21-28) and healing (Mark 1:40-45), Jesus is simultaneously the proclaimer and the agent of God’s kingdom. As demons are cast out and as people are freed from diseases, we get an indication of what God’s rule means. God’s rule means the Exodus of creation from all that prevents it from flourishing. In the ministry of Jesus it becomes clear that God’s kingdom is not simply a spiritual reality but a reality which embraces (and refashions) the whole created order (TBC, 180).

4. When we pray for the coming of God’s kingdom we are praying for nothing less than the great and final Exodus, for the deliverance of creation and ourselves with it from sin and evil. We are praying for the end of the rule of sin and evil and the complete realization of the rule of creation’s true King—God. While we may pray for many things, we must not forget that Jesus teaches us to pray for and to desire this above all.

5. In praying for the coming of God’s kingdom, we are not simply praying for God to “fix the world”; we are praying for God’s rule to become effective in all the world, including our own lives. In his book *Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer*, C. S. Lewis writes of his own practice of adding what he calls “festoons” to the Lord’s Prayer. Their purpose, he says, is to help him focus more on what each petition is requesting. To “Your kingdom come” he adds “beginning here in my

heart”. To pray this second petition is to pray for our own conversion (TBC, 182).

6. Precisely because our hope is fixed on the coming of God’s kingdom, on the complete liberation of creation from its bondage (Romans 8:18-25), we are able to live in joy, hope and peace and to be witnesses to the reality of joy, hope and peace in world where these things are in short supply (TBC, 181).

7. **Insight from Romano Guardini:** “To express in a few words what the kingdom of God really is, is simply impossible. Perhaps we may express it in this way. The kingdom of God means that God rules, directly and powerfully; that God, in the freedom of His love, has forgiven sin, and that man, sanctified by the holiness of Christ, belongs entirely to God. The kingdom of God means that His truth illumines the mind, and there is now no longer a weary search, or a wretched, paltry patchwork, but an openly shining, holy plenitude...The kingdom of God means that God is felt in His holiness, perceived in His majesty; that man has surrendered his freedom to Him and that God now reigns; with his joyful consent, in his will and in all his powers. It means that the intimacy and preciousness for the things of God are experienced; that the ineffable bliss of his beauty and sweetness is tasted in the heart and felt in the depths of one’s being” (*The Lord’s Prayer*).

V. The Third Petition: “Thy Will Be Done On Earth As It Is In Heaven”

I pray for God to break the dominion of this world, the flesh, and the devil; to establish justice and thwart the plans of the wicked; to strengthen and direct his Church; and to extend the kingdom of his grace. (TBC, 185)

1. “Christian teaching about the future does not have to do merely with human wish projections, philosophical speculations, rational arguments, or humanistic hopes. Rather, it speaks of a *future that has already met us* in Jesus Christ. It was an expectation planted long before New Testament times that God is acting throughout the whole of human history so as to reveal how the divine promises were in due time to be fulfilled” (Thomas Oden, *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology*).

2. Our deepest hope is that the two dimensions of God’s creation, heaven and earth, will be completely aligned. At the present, we are only too aware that they are not aligned. Earth appears to be a place where God’s will is resisted even when it is known. The key to understanding what the alignment of heaven and earth might mean is to understand what happens in heaven. Heaven is portrayed in Scripture as a realm of unending worship, a place where one is in the immediate Presence of God (Isaiah 6:1-3; Revelation 4-5). To be in God’s Presence, to truly *know* God is to *worship* him. The knowledge of God and the worship of God are organically connected (TBC, 187).

3. To pray for the reconciliation of heaven and earth is not simply to pray for the arrival of a utopia. It is to pray that the world be filled with the perfect knowledge of God, a knowledge which brings with it the perfect love for God. God is the world’s ultimate good and earth can not be a human place to live without him (TBC, 185).

4. At the center of the Lord’s Prayer, and at the center of Christian faith itself, is a deep hope. It is important to remember that hope is not simply optimism or the expression of a personal desire. In Scripture, hope means much more than this. As Warren Smith notes, in the Scripture hope is the confident expectation of the future fulfillment of God’s promise (*The Lord’s Prayer: Confessing the*

New Covenant). In Christ, God promises that heaven and earth will be completely reconciled and that his will for creation will be realized by creation. This means that prayer moves us to look from our present situation in which God's will is imperfectly fulfilled or disregarded to the future in which we will experience nothing less than "new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21:1; TBC, 187). We are only able to pray in hope because God has made promises to us and because he can be trusted to keep the promises he has made. In Christ, all of God's promises find their "Yes" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

5. **Insight from Romano Guardini:** "In Heaven, the divine will is done fully and completely. And how could it be otherwise, since the blessed beings are possessed in spirit by the glory of God? If we do not fulfill the will of God, it is because we do not recognize His holy truth or because His will seems unimportant to us, or because we misunderstand it. But the blessed in Heaven are penetrated by the Holy Spirit Himself with the divine fullness, and so they can do nothing other...We fail to do the holy will because the reality of the world seems to us stronger and more attractive, because we feel some worldly value more closely and more alluringly. The hearts of the blessed, on the contrary, are flooded with the divine perfection, and now power on earth can wrest them away from its power and sweetness." (*The Lord's Prayer*)

VI. The Fourth Petition: "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread"

God calls me to trust him for the needs of each day, to be concerned for the needs of others, to be content with what I have, and to grow in gratitude for his provision. (TBC, 191)

1. The Lord's Prayer is a God-centered prayer in that it is focused on God. Only as we are reconciled to God can we begin to live in a truly human way. An untransformed heart and mind will continue to desire the wrong things. If we desire God above all things all our desires will be properly ordered and we will live in accordance with God's will (TBC, 184).

2. The Lord's prayer invites us to pray for the things which we need to sustain our lives (TBC, 189). As Jesus makes clear in the Sermon on the Mount, God, being our Creator, already knows what we need as is not shocked to hear requests for what sustains us (Matthew 6:25-34). When we pray for what sustains us we are simply acknowledging that we are creatures, creatures who are incapable of sustaining ourselves (TBC, 191). By instructing us to pray for "daily bread," Jesus is reminding us to not allow our prayer lives to become disconnected from our daily lives. Warren Smith offers this wise insight: "If..prayer is about what is most real; if prayer is a confession of faith that allows us to live into the reality of the new covenant we confess; if prayer is a surrendering to the Spirit's dominion so that the kingdom may be realized on earth; if prayer is seeking the grace to live into holy relationships with real people as well as with God, then our prayer must be, as Christian mystics have described it, like Jacob's ladder with its feet firmly anchored on earth and its arms grasping for heaven. Prayer must be in touch with our lives in the here and now at the same time that it speaks of our eschatological hope for the new heaven and the new earth." (*The Lord's Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*). Of course, in praying for ourselves we must pray not lose sight of who we really are and the actual state of our lives.

3. What do we mean by “daily bread”? Bread is one of those words that have multiple meanings in Scripture. Bread, of course, can refer to actual bread (a staple of the average person’s diet) but it can also mean Jesus himself who offers himself as the “bread of life” (John 6:35). When Jesus is tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread, he responds by quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (cf. Matthew 4:4). Bread seems to designate everything that humans might need, whether physical or spiritual (TBC, 190). In Scripture, these are not to be seen as opposites.

4. Daily bread, then, refers to what we need for well being such as food, clothing, work, health, peace, good government, family, friends, a stable social order and a relationship with God. In praying for daily bread, we are reminded both of how fragile human life is and of the fundamentally social character of human life. Our “daily bread” is what we need to flourish and it is certainly God’s intention that we flourish (TBC, 192; Genesis 1:28). Of course, what we need to flourish is often quite different from what our consumer culture educates us to want. The path to flourishing and the path to the accumulation of possessions are not the same paths.

5. One of our problems is that tend to think that most of what we need to flourish will be provided by “the economy”. Our food comes (usually) from a grocery store and our clothes come (usually) from a department store). It is easy for many of us to think that some combination of money and technology will supply us with all we need. In all of this, we tend to lose any sense of things we need as gifts of God and, correspondingly, we tend to lose our sense of humility. We forget (or attempt to cover up) the fact that all we need, including our very lives, comes to us from God’s creation (TBC, 191; cf. TBC, 43).

6. Part of the purpose of creation is provide us with what we need to flourish as Genesis 1-2 make clear. In praying for our daily bread, we should become aware that our neighbor has the same needs that we have. For this reason we do not simply pray for my daily bread but for *our daily bread*. In praying for *our daily bread* we are not we are not merely asking God to give us what we need to flourish. We are reminding ourselves of the One from whom all we need to flourish comes and we are reminding ourselves of our moral obligation to see that the weak and the vulnerable receive their “daily bread” as well (TBC, 189).

7. **Insight from Romano Guardini:** Guardini says that this petition is essentially about God’s providence. God’s providence, he cautions, does not mean that all things work out nicely, sensibly and as we wish them to: “On the contrary, everything that is said here about Providence must be understood in the light of the sentence near the end [of the Sermon on the Mount]: ‘Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be given to you besides’ [Matthew 6:33]...Everything hinges upon this. We are required to make the quest for the kingdom of God our first and most serious quest; to strive above all else to see that the kingdom of God comes from and finds a place in our lives; to make it our first care that everything becomes as God wills it to be—the great God, who thoughts are as high above those of man ‘as Heaven is high above the earth’ [Psalm 103:11]...We must transfer the center of our lives from self to God, and from this center think, judge, and act in accordance with the words of Christ” (*The Lord’s Prayer*).

VII. The Fifth Petition: “Forgive Us Our Trespasses”

God’s forgiveness is his merciful pardon of sin and removal of guilt that results from our disobedience. (TBC, 196)

1. While we may not always acknowledge it, one of our greatest needs is to receive God’s forgiveness. In fact, Jesus makes it clear that forgiveness is one of our daily needs. A trespass is “a sin—a thought, word or deed which offends God’s holy character and violates his Law, missing the mark of his will and expectations” (TBC, 194). The confession of sin should be a daily discipline for Christians for in coming to terms with our sinfulness we are also acknowledging that we can not make ourselves righteous before God (TBC, 5, 238). Confession helps us to become aware of our radical need for God (TBC, 195).

3. In order to understand the importance of forgiveness we have to understand why sin places us in such peril. In confessing our sin and in seeking God’s forgiveness, we are not simply acknowledging that there have been moments in which we failed to be “good” or “moral” people (although this is certainly true). In confessing our sin we are acknowledging our refusal to accept God *as God*, our rebellion against his purposes and the fact that our characters are far from what he intends them to be. One of the consequences of sin is that we become blind to our sinfulness and we tend to underestimate the power of sin in our lives (TBC, 3, 106).

2. God’s forgiveness is his “merciful pardon of sin” (TBC, 196). This forgiveness is effected through Christ’s atoning sacrifice and is communicated to us through faith and Baptism (TBC, 197). Because even our repentance is motivated by grace, we desire not simply to be forgiven our sins but to be free of them. Through grace we come to recognize that sin inhibits the love of God. It is important to not think of forgiveness in mechanical terms. The purpose of forgiveness is to restore a relationship. God’s forgiveness is grounded in his love and his ultimate aim is to restore us to the love of himself (TBC, 7, 198).

3. Having received God’s radical forgiveness in Christ, we practice this type of forgiveness as we live under grace (Ephesians 4:32-5:2; TBC, 199). We forgive others by choosing not to hold against them the hurts they have inflicted, whether they ask for forgiveness or not (Romans 13:8, TBC, 200). To be a Christian is to leave off taking revenge (Romans 13:14-21). In refusing to take revenge, we express confidence in the justice of God. In Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus tells a parable about the refusal to forgive. In this parable, the servant owes his king a debt of ten thousand talents (an enormous sum). When he begs for mercy the king forgives him this huge debt. Immediately after this, the servant encounters a fellow servant who owes him a much smaller sum. Although the fellow servant begs for mercy, the forgiven servant refuses to grant mercy. The parable makes it clear that we have been forgiven by God although our debt to him can not be repaid. To refuse to forgive others their much smaller debts to us only shows that we do not really appreciate God’s forgiveness. Jesus concludes the parable by saying that God expect us to forgive others from the heart. Our refusal to forgive only shows that we do not really love God.

4. **Insight from Romano Guardini:** “Note how the petition of the Our Father warns us: to acknowledge our guilt for the sins that we have definitely committed; to recognize the magnitude fo the wrongdoing we often regard as trifling; to see the sins that lie under our virtues and righteousness. But, over and above all this, it warns us to realize not only that we have committed

sins, but also that we are sinners and, with all that we are, stand guilty in the sight of God. It warns us not to withdraw ourselves from the mass of humanity in an aristocracy of self-righteousness, but honestly to take our place in the universal responsibility of humanity” (*The Lord’s Prayer*).

VIII. The Sixth Petition: “Lead Us Not Into Temptation”

I am tempted by the false promises of the world, the selfish desires of my flesh, and the lies of the devil, all of which war against God and my spiritual well-being. (TBC, 204)

1. Temptation is “any enticement to turn from faith in God and to violate his commandments” (TBC, 203). Temptation comes from three sources: the world and its enticements, our own desires twisted by sin and the Devil (1 John 2:15-17; TBC, 204). In short, temptation comes at us from all sides and resisting it involves struggle, a struggle which can not be sustained apart from grace (TBC, 205).

2. With this petition, we acknowledge our vulnerability and our continuous dependence upon God. St. Thomas Aquinas observes that we do not pray to be kept from temptation (since as sinners temptation is inevitable), but we pray that we will not be lead into temptation. Temptation can actually strengthen the spiritual life for by resisting temptation we grow in grace.

3. “God never tempts anyone, nor is he the cause fo any sin; but he does allow me to be tested so that I may grow in faith and obedience (TBC, 206). Christ submitted himself to temptation for our sake and resisted it for our sake (Matthew 4:1-14). We best resist temptation by continuing to pray for strength, confessing our sins, reading Scripture and living an accountable life (TBC, 207). It is important to know those things which tempt us the most so that we can intentionally takes steps to avoid them. In doing this, we will need to rely on fellow Christians (TBC, 208). Jesus uses radical language to make the point that temptation needs to be avoided (Matthew 5:29-30). Jesus’ language here makes an important point: In some cases, resisting temptation will feel like a kind of death although it is actually a path to life. Very often, the desires which we experience as good are quite distorted and need to be purified.

4. Insight from Romano Guardini: Guardini reminds us that temptation can happen to anyone. “It can happen to anyone, and it can happen again and again, that the multifarious distractions and allurements of life, which no foresight can guard us against, may turn the possibility of sin into urgent danger and, from that, into fierce temptation. And so the prayer leads: Deliver us from it!” (*The Lord’s Prayer*).

IX. The Seventh Petition: “Deliver Us from Evil”

God has triumphed over all the powers of evil through the death, resurrection, and ascension of his Son, Jesus Christ. God will finally destroy all evil, including death, at the end of the age. (TBC, 217)

1. Evil is the deliberate rejection of God’s good order in creation and harms those who

choose it (TBC, 210). While those who engage in evil actions harm others, they harm themselves as well. It is important to recognize that evil is rooted not in creation (TBC, 45) but in the human rebellion against the order of creation (TBC, 46) and in the rebellion of certain angels against the order of creation, who are now referred to as demons (TBC, 214, 215). Thus, evil is rooted in the human will and in the will of supernatural creatures.

2. The existence of evil raises questions about why God permits it. God has created human beings with the capacity to reject his purposes which means that we can choose evil over good (TBC, 46, 211). We have the ability to use our freedom to reject God's purposes. It is important to recognize that "no evil can thwart God's purposes, and he is able to use evil to bring about even greater good" (TBC, 211).

3. When we do reject God's purposes, we also weaken our ability to resist evil since our knowledge of the good is weakened and our will to do the good is weakened. The problem is that evil rarely presents itself as evil but generally presents itself as good. This is why evil can be tempting; it seeks to hold before us a false good. Evil is subtle in that it generally works by tempting us in small ways so that we move incrementally in its direction. In C. S. Lewis's book *The Screwtape Letters*, a senior devil writes to a junior devil rebuking him for thinking that the best way to work is to tempt humans to great sins: "...like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy [God]. It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

4. Through Christ and the Holy Spirit God triumphs over evil (Colossians 2:13-15; TBC, 217). In the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and in the coming of the Holy Spirit, God demonstrates that his capacity to redeem is greater than the power of evil to destroy. It is finally impossible to resist God's purposes (Romans 8:28). It is important to recognize a fundamental truth: "Though disaster, disease, death and the evil deeds of his creatures may cause great harm and suffering, the almighty and all-wise God can use them to bring about his good purposes, both in the world and in my life" (TBC, 219).

5. By reconciling us to himself through Jesus Christ and by enabling us to love him through the Holy Spirit, God enables us to turn from evil, to hate it and to recognize it as evil. The coming of God's reign means the complete end of evil. This is the hope of the Gospel. Growth in the love of God is simultaneously growth in the hatred of evil. We live with an honesty about our susceptibility to temptation but we also live with the hope that, as Paul says, "the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20; TBC, 220).

6. The Lord's Prayer in general, and this petition in particular, reminds us of our vocation: "When we pray, 'Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,' we are confession that God, who calls us to be his witnesses in the world, calls us, as John puts it in his Revelation, to live in Satan's shadow—the shadow of death and worldly temptation. There the greatest temptation is to think that evil and death have the final word...It is a shadow that can make us forget our true identity—forget who our Father is how our Brother restored us to him...As children filled with godly fear in the face of temptation, we confess our confidence that as our Father leads us into a world filled with temptations, he will give us his Spirit to abide with us and to illuminate our vision that

we might see through the illusions and deceptions of the world.” (J. Warren Smith, *The Lord’s Prayer: Confessing the New Covenant*)

7. Insight from Romano Guardini: “It is the deepest layer of Christian consciousness that calls out here—the layer that knows that the world cannot be patched up, that it cannot by positive thinking be turned to the good. Too much of unthinkable magnitude has happened. What God has staked against it is the full measure of His love. The immeasurable catastrophe of sin, the frightful chain of wickedness and evil that runs through history: after man, individually and generically, has done his utmost to defeat it, the realization breaks through that only God can truly do something about it. And the longing swells for the coming of that which not only can turn all things to the good, but also leads into the new: the end of time, which is the breakthrough of the eternal” (*The Lord’s Prayer*).

X. The Doxology

Referring back to the first half of the Lord’s Prayer, the Church rejoices that God can fulfill its requests, for he is already reigning over all creation, working out his holy will, and being hallowed by praise in both earth and heaven. (TBC, 221)

1. The Lord’s Prayer ends with a doxology, which means praise (TBC, 221). This final doxology is very similar to Revelation 5:11-14. Even in the mist of a world devastated by sin and evil, the Church on earth can rejoice in God and join her voice to the voices now praising God in heaven (TBC, 222).

2. Because prayer leads us to a deeper relationship with God it enables us to rejoice in God. The ultimate purpose of prayer is to lead us to the praise of God.

3. We conclude the Lord’s Prayer with a simple but powerful word, “Amen”. Amen means “So be it”. This does not simply mean “I agree”. It means, rather, that “I unite with the faithful, and together we pray as Jesus commanded, believing that our petitions please the Father, and trusting that he will hear and answer us” (TBC, 223).

XI. A Rule of Prayer: Scripture, Prayer, and Worship

1. As sinners, prayer does not come to us naturally. Because this is the case, we need to develop a regular discipline of prayer. This regular discipline is called a “rule of prayer” and it enables us to “cultivate a life of prayer and grow to love and glorify God more fully” (TBC, 224). The historic rule of prayer consists of weekly Eucharist, the Daily Office (Morning and Evening Prayer) and private devotions. (TBC, 226)

2. A rule of prayer should involve the daily reading of Scripture. The reading of Scripture as a spiritual discipline which should involve some pattern which enables one to “know the whole sweep of Scripture” (TBC, 231). As we “inwardly digest” Scripture, it “deepens my knowledge of God, become a lens through which I understand my life and the world around me, and guides my attitudes and decisions” (TBC, 232).

3. There are several dimensions of prayer, all of which are found in the Lord’s Prayer and all of which need to be part of our rule of prayer. Prayer should involve praise in which we glorify and

adore God (TBC, 235), petition, in which we make our requests known to God (TBC, 236), intercession, in which we make personal requests known to God (TBC, 237), and confession, in which we acknowledge our sin to God and repent of it (TBC, 238). It is important to approach prayer with the proper attitude, that is with “humility, love, and a ready openness to hear and do God’s will” (TBC, 240).

4. The liturgy of the Church is grounded in the worship pattern of Israel and the worship pattern of the early Church. Historically, the Church’s liturgy “enables us to worship God joyfully and with one voice” (TBC, 246). For Anglicans, the worship of the Church is guided and shaped by the Book of Common Prayer (TBC, 248).

5. Every Christian should seek to develop a rule of life which orders worship, work and leisure as a “pleasing sacrifice to God” (TBC, 252). A rule of life is made necessary by our fallen natures which incline us to distraction, disorder, and self-centeredness (TBC, 253). Typically, a rule of life involves a regular pattern of Scripture reading, prayer, and worship as well as “witness, service, self-denial, and faithful stewardship of my time, money, and possessions” (TBC, 255).

IX. Memorization

Try to memorize Question 176:

How does God hallow his Name?

God’s Name is holy in itself, and God glorifies his Name by saving fallen humanity, by building his Church, and by establishing his kingdom in this world and in the age to come.

X. Questions for Discussion, Reflection

1. Why is prayer important? What are some of the major obstacles to a life of prayer? What are the obstacles most challenging to you?
2. Why do we address God as our Father? Why is this important?
3. When we pray that God’s name be hallowed, what are we praying for? What implications does this have for our personal lives?
4. Why do we begin by praying that God’s kingdom will come? What is God’s kingdom and why is this important?
5. What do we mean by “daily bread”? How might thinking about this makes us more grateful?
6. Why does receiving God’s forgiveness involve practicing forgiveness?
7. How can we avoid temptation?
8. What is evil and why do we pray to be delivered from it?
9. Have you ever considered following a rule of life?