

## The Lord's Prayer

It is called the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father, the Pater Noster, the Model Prayer and the Oratio Dominica. It is the prayer that Jesus taught to his disciples. It appears in two forms in the New Testament – the shorter version in Luke and the longer in Matthew.

In Luke, one of Jesus' disciples asks Jesus to teach them how to pray. In Matthew, no such request is recorded, but Jesus is clearly teaching them how to pray. He says, "When you pray do this, when you pray do that...", offering them instruction as to style, location and attitude in prayer. Then he eventually prays the prayer.

You will note that both versions seem to end early. –There is no - "for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen" And not And Ever! There is nothing more than forever! How we conclude the prayer is sometimes referred to as a doxology or an addendum and is found in other places in Scripture but not as part of this prayer. If you have ever prayed this prayer with a Roman Catholic brother or sister

you will be aware that they end with....”and deliver us from evil”, just as we find in Scripture. They do not put our addendum on, “For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Forever. Amen.”

Like so many other portions of Scripture, Biblical scholars disagree about Jesus’ meaning in the Lord’s Prayer. Some understand it as a daily prayer, being aware of their immediate human experience. Other scholars interpret it as a reference to the coming kingdom of God.

With regard to the term daily bread, it may be a reference to food for the day, or ‘bread for tomorrow’ – a foretaste of the heavenly banquet to come when we dine in paradise with God.

The most common stumble we make when saying this prayer is when it comes to trespasses or debts.

The Greek word *opheiletes* is most often translated to mean debts. Not necessarily regarding money but a debt can be a wrong you have done or has been done to you. In Matthew, the Lord’s Prayer goes from verse 9-13 of chapter 6. In the next verse, verse 14 we see the

word trespasses but that is derived from the Greek word paraptoma not opheiletes.

When reading the Bible, we always need to be cognizant of the fact that we are working from translations. Just on this one word alone, in 1395 Wycliff made the first English translation of the Bible and used debts. In 1526 Tyndale translated it as trespasses as does the Book of Common of Common Prayer. In 1611 the King James Bible went back to debts!

Which word is better? On the surface they mean slightly different things. Trespasses means that a line has been crossed....not that you have walked on a person's pristine lawn, or have gone onto a farmer's field to hunt without permission, but something less literal and more in terms of relationships and words. You have gone verbally somewhere you should not have, or they to you. Debtors implies that someone owes you or you owe someone. Not money perhaps, but an apology, forgiveness, reparation of some sort.

Once again, let's look at context. It is important to know that the background against which Jesus taught this prayer was one of hypocrisy and immodesty. In the synagogue, religious zealots would stand and loudly recite their own prayers rather than being content to share in the accustomed congregational prayers. 3 times a day, the religiously pious would drop their work and often in the most visible of places, often on the street corners, stand turned toward Jerusalem, and loudly pray. Look at us!!

So Jesus has told them, do not sound the trumpet, go somewhere private to pray. Be genuine. Be sincere. Quiet yourself from distractions so that you can focus on God. If you are going to examine your life, if you are going to repent of your sin, if you are going to ask God's forgiveness, be simple, be straight forward, be sincere, pray from your heart.

The 18 petitions prayed by religious Jews, 3 times a day were 10 times as long as the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray. His prayer was childlike in its simplicity.

**Our Father**....there is a relationship there, and it is an intimate one...Father and child....love and compassion abound

**Hallowed be Thy name**....Holy is your name. We need to always recognize the holiness of God. He is close and caring but He is God....we approach his holiness with reverence

**Thy Kingdom come**....Thy will be done....We pray for God's sovereign rule. He is our king. He is in control.

**Give us this day our daily bread** ...We trust God to meet our needs, to take care of us. We need not worry about the future. We need to depend on God our Father to provide what we need for today. And tomorrow will be the same.

**Forgive us our debts.** Forgive us our sins. We search our hearts and recognize that we need his forgiveness and confess our sins. Forgive us

the ways in which we have not been like the Master, but have gone our own way. And just as God is always sure and quick to forgive us, we too must be quick to forgive the shortcomings of others.

**Lead us not into temptation.** When is the last time that you needed to draw strength from God to resist temptation? The gift of the Holy Spirit is there to guide us into the light. Temptation is powerful. It is relentless. Lord protect us from our weakness to say yes to evil.

It is so easy to slip into automatic pilot. Many of us know this prayer so well. I can't tell you the number of times I have been leading a group in it and I have gotten completely lost because my mind drifted to far off places as I numbly rolled through these words.

We need to take time to let the images fill our minds and heart-

Our Father.....think about that

Hallowed be Thy name...what does it mean to be holy

Thy kingdom come....what does God's kingdom here on earth look like?

Can we experience this? Can we help create it?

Thy will be done.....what a challenge that is!

And on it goes....to be thoughtful. To be sincere. To be genuine.

It is the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples. It guided their ministry.

May it do the same for us.

Amen