

THE PARADIGM OF PRAYER

**The Lord's Prayer
for Today**

By

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Milo Edition

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my brother, Barry, who was an example of sincere prayer and who lived the Lord's Prayer in his life.

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THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

In the beginning, Adam and Eve communicated freely with God. In Genesis 2:16 God is represented as personally instructing Adam with regard to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and his Creator were on speaking terms, and are biblically pictured as conversing openly, person to person, face to face.

In verse 19 of chapter 2 a delightful interchange occurs between Adam and God. In this episode, God brings to Adam the animals he has created; and instead of telling Adam what each animal is, the Bible account explains that God presented each animal to Adam “to see what HE would call them.” Adam is given the privilege of discovering and naming these animals himself, in God’s presence.

It is similar to the experience of parents who take their children to the zoo to find delight in the creatures that God has made: monkeys, elephants, giraffes, tigers; and so forth. It would be a study of interest to know more as to what Adam saw in each of the species, and whether any of the names he gave them and their meanings survive today. It is expected that this extended conversation between Adam and God included a few smiles, laughs, and maybe some exclamations of surprise and curiosity. God and Adam were, no doubt, having a great time, talking to each other, being with each other. God was delighted in finding what Adam was thinking, and Adam was delighted in discovering what God was thinking, when he made each particular animal. God had further reasons for this creature conference, also, of course, which led to the creation of Eve.

The point at this juncture is, however, that God is found conversing in *direct communion* with his creatures in these passages. Genesis 3:8 chronicles that in the evening the Lord God actually came and walked through the garden with Adam and Eve. Apparently this was a regular thing. What a privilege was there for Adam and Eve to ask questions directly of God about his creation and purposes! What better person to interview regarding the creation than the Creator himself?

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Sadly, the entrance of sin interrupted this direct companionship with God. Man no longer wished to commune with God directly. Adam and Eve hid from God instead. But God, one must notice, did not turn from them. He still came to meet with them at their regular appointment--as he had--always.

Says the pen of an inspired writer:

“Up to the time of man’s rebellion against the government of God, there had been free communion between God and man.”¹

But now, since then, sinful man has been, by nature, separated from God. Romans 3:11 (Psalms 14:1,2) indicates that man in his natural condition has a propensity to turn from God. “There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.”

The purpose of prayer is to provide an avenue whereby men individually and corporately can approach God. Through prayer, when motivated by the Holy Spirit, man is brought into direct conversation with God. Few stop to understand and realize the full significance of this privilege. That such a thing is even possible should astound us. That the God of the universe would be able and willing to personally commune with any interested individual is a marvel, for sure, of profound interest.

The teachings of Jesus, the teachings of the Bible, and the testimony of many in the faith, tell us that prayer not only works, but that it is one of the primary essentials of the Christian walk---as essential as breath is to the living person. Prayer is called the “breath of the soul.” It is described as “talking to God as to a friend.” Prayer is often compared to the normal communication process known and used by nearly every human being, simple verbal conversation, person to person.

As most anyone who has tried prayer knows, however, prayer does not always seem to be so simple and successful and meaningful as this. While the human spirit longs for such a realization and a reality, it is seldom felt

¹ Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 184.

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and experienced by most, even by those who have prayed quite regularly over a period of years. Yet the Scripture promises in many places that God himself is ready and willing to communicate with men. Personal testimonies from individuals abound, telling of how God has communicated truth, comfort, and knowledge to them. Therefore it is incumbent upon those who do not experience these kinds of results to discover why this is the case, and to learn the skills that will bring them the same desired results.

This book is not a book written to prove that prayer works, or even a book that claims to teach all the skills that makes prayer a viable and workable tool in every person's life. This author is far from an expert in the science of prayer. He is learning, slowly, patiently through experience, even through trial and mistake, how to reach God. He simply has the desire, like many others, of making prayer an ever-greater avenue to a knowledge of the God he serves.

This small treatise takes as its subject, the Lord's Prayer, or the Disciple's Prayer. The prayer has several names, actually, but it is familiar to most Christians and even to some non-Christians as the Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer was actually given by Jesus, not to be a prayer simply recited and repeated, but to be a model prayer for Christians. It came in response to the disciple's request, "Lord, teach us to pray." This book, then is compiled to evaluate this special prayer with the central interest being one of enriching the reader's and author's own prayer experience.

A paradigm is replicate model of something else. The goal therefore is to study the prayer in such a way that we can learn from the Master, Jesus--- "how to pray." Thus we will be building not just a simple paradigm, but a "prayer-adigm, a template through which one can experiment with prayer in their own life. Hopefully a few things repeated in this study will help someone to meet the Savior in a more personal and meaningful way. Hopefully, all who wish, can in this way or another, find fulfillment in their prayer lives, and connect personally with the God who saves and hears.

Pastor Steven E. Behrmann

THE PATTERN OF PRAYER

How to Pray

Prayer is probably the most important, yet least understood experience of the Christian. There is a great need for the followers of Jesus to understand how to pray. Seasoned Christians, as a rule, still fail miserably in realizing the full potential and meaning of prayer. Because there are so many other pursuits in life, there is a great neglect in learning this science.

Materially, there is a lot of commentary written on prayer. That part is good. The bad part is that most of it is ignored. Another barrier to learning about prayer is that most Christians assume they know enough about it already and really can't learn much more. Another problem is that the real nuggets that would transform faith are sometimes lost in the mountains of information describing what is already known or experienced by the prayer subject, so the seeker makes little progress in his scientific quest. Some writers are simply documenting their own quest with voluminous numbers of words, when the faith-seeker might be better served learning prayer science from the simple saint down the street who regularly receives answers to his or her prayers.

Most must admit they have often been disappointed in their prayer lives. Why, one must ask? Some "would-be pray-ers" just throw up their hands and cease to pray because it doesn't seem to work for them. But we must not conclude that prayer doesn't work because some of our experiments don't work. Edison would have never invented the light bulb, or anything else if that had been his attitude. One should rather learn in whatever ways that person can why it doesn't work, and seek to correct his or her experiments until it does.

What is the problem with un-answered prayer? Let us first offer that the problem certainly is not with God. The problem is more likely with us, and with what we understand, or expect.

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The author of these words is not an authority on prayer. But like you, the reader, I have prayed. I want to explore this subject with you in the next few chapters. I continue to be anxious to learn from others and especially from God’s Word, how to pray.

The template, or paradigm of prayer, is the Lord’s Prayer, so it makes sense to look at this prayer in such a way as to learn what the elements of true prayer are. With this model before us, we can be coached into more effective praying and communing with God. At least, this is the premise we are operating from. The Prayer and the subjects it includes can be broken down as follows:

(Teach us...)	The Pattern of Prayer	<i>How to pray</i>
(Looking at the Beauty, the Symmetry, the principles of the Lord’s Prayer)		
(Our Father)	The Person of Prayer	<i>How to know God</i>
(Thy Kingdom)		
(Thy will)	The Plan of Prayer	<i>How to know God’s will</i>
(Give us)	The Provision of Prayer	<i>How to trust God for your needs</i>
(Forgive us)	The Pardon of Prayer	<i>How to experience forgiveness</i>
(Lead us)	The Protection of Prayer	<i>How to experience victory</i>

One may question why we should look again at the Lord’s Prayer? Why not something new, different, or modern? Why should we choose *it*?

Indeed, one may reason that the prayer is trite, and worn-out. It is very familiar. “We already know it, why look at it again?,” some will say.

Perhaps, though, this is the very reason we should look at it again. The words are too familiar. Because we can recite it by heart, or we can repeat its words almost without thinking, we tend to overlook the precious gems

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that are there. We are looking over a four-leafed clover. Remember, this is a model prayer given by JESUS. I say, WOW! What a find! It is actually just what we need!

The Prayer is recorded in:

- Matthew 6:5-15
- Luke 11:1-4

While the prayer is not exactly the same in each passage it is close enough in wording to study systematically. The differences are also informative. The principle reason is---that it tells us that Jesus was not teaching us a prayer, but rather that he was teaching us “how to pray.” Probably no two prayers of Jesus were exactly alike anyway.

WHAT THE PRAYER IS NOT!

It is probably profitable to take a moment to re-enforce the facts as to what the prayer **does not** teach us.

Jesus makes it very clear that it is not necessarily a prayer to be recited, or a prayer to be repeated. It is not. It may be fine to repeat it, but it is not a prayer to **ONLY** be repeated, in the way that some religions encourage their prayers to be performed. There are at least three reasons for this that are stated or inferred:

The first reason we have already mentioned. The prayer in Luke 11 is not exactly the same as in Matthew. If it were to be always said the same way, it would seem that the gospel writers would have been absolutely consistent in their renditions of it.

The second reason is that the disciple’s asked Jesus: “Teach us to pray...” They did not ask: “Teach us A PRAYER! The prayer is not liturgical but rather didactic.

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Finally, in the very context of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:7, Jesus carefully instructed the disciples in the following way:

“And in praying DO NOT heap up empty phrases....”

Would Jesus say this, and then give us a prayer to repeat? Indeed this is exactly what men have done to it. For some it has almost become a vain repetition, and those who parrot it in this way are no better than the Jews Jesus spoke it to! Again, this is not to say it is wrong to repeat it, for it is a wonderful way for groups to pray together, or for families to pray together. But it should be more than this to us. There is instruction in all of this to look at the prayer as a paradigm, a model, rather than holy words to say over, and over, and over again.

John MacArthur, Jr. in his book *The Pattern of Prayer*, provides interesting content with regard to what the prayer does not tell us. What the prayer does not tell us is also important, because there will always be some who would put narrow constraints on prayer, or that would limit it's usefulness, if they in their pharisaical way could do so. The Lord's Prayer and its context nowhere restricts the place a prayer, the position or the posture taken in prayer, the point in time it is made, or proper garb in which one is found when he prays. Prayer is universal in its parameters. God simply wants an honest heart to be able to reach out to him in all circumstances. This concept in itself is huge:

WHAT THE PRAYER DOESN'T TELL US----

The Place of prayer:

People in the Bible prayed:

“During battle, in a cave, in a closet, in a garden, on a mountainside, by a river, by the sea, in the street, in God's house, in Hades, in bed, in a home, in a fish, on a housetop, in a prison, in solitude, in the wilderness, and on a cross.”

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The Posture of Prayer:

“Standing, lifting their hands, sitting, lying down, kneeling, lifting their eyes, bowing, placing their heads between their knees, pounding their chests, and facing a temple.

When to Pray:

“Early morning, mid-morning, three times a day, in the evening, before meals, after meals, at the ninth hour, at bedtime, at midnight, day and night, today, often, when they’re young, when they’re old, in trouble, everyday, always.

What to Wear or How to act:

“Wore sackcloth, sat in ashes, shaved their heads, cried out, applied dust to their heads, tore their garments, fasted, sighed, groaned, wept, sweat blood, agonized with broken spirits, poured out their hearts, made oaths, offered sacrifices, offered praise, and sang”²

WHAT THE PRAYER IS

But to return, what IS the prayer of Jesus? Is it not an example prayer? A paradigm. A model. It is then a template instructing us “How to pray.” It is about the spirit of prayer, the spiritual content of prayer, and how to harmonize with the divine mind in prayer.

This is the real plea in the prayer...*To teach us to pray.*

Did the disciples really not know how to pray? Had they never prayed? The fact is they had probably prayed thousands of prayers. They were no doubt frustrated much like we are and wished to see their prayers reach God in the way Jesus’ prayers seemed to reach God.

The Jews of Jesus day had two main prayers:

The first was the *Shema*. (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; cf. Num. 15:37-41)

² John MacArthur, Jr., *The Pattern of Prayer*, p. 23,24.

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“Hear, Oh Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk in the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”.....

This prayer was said faithfully, morning and evening.

The second was the “Shemoneh ‘esreh,” which means, “the eighteen.”³

These prayers, the loyal Jewish pilgrim gabbed through when it was time to pray. This was usually expected at the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day. Wherever the person found himself at these hours he was to pray.

(We are often critical of such customs without looking at our own. We must ask, what about our own table grace? Do we not gab through these with almost the exact same words about three times a day?)

The Mohammedans have the same custom. There is the story of a Mohammedan who was pursuing an enemy with drawn knife to kill him. The signal for prayer rang out; he stopped, unrolled his prayer mat, knelt and raced through his prayer; and then rose to continue his murderous pursuit!⁴ Sometimes prayer can become rote and with little meaning when it is merely repeated.

It is OK, wonderful, in fact, to remember God three times a day. This is what Daniel did, we are told. But there is an inherent danger, though, of mere routine taking over, with no real thought of God dominating our prayers. Besides, it is doubtful that Daniel only prayed three times each day. It is expected that like Enoch, he walked with God through the day, but used these special prayer times to receive uninterrupted hope, comfort, and guidance from his God.

³ William Barclay, *Matthew*, p. 192.

⁴ Ibid, p. 194.

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WHAT THE DISCIPLES OF YESTERYEAR REALLY WANTED TO KNOW WAS HOW TO PRAY LIKE JESUS DID. THEY COULD SEE THAT HIS PRAYERS WERE EFFECTIVE. THEY WATCHED HIM OFTEN IN PRAYER. THEY ENVIED HIS JOY IN PRAYER.

So do each of us, I dare to suppose.

The Goal:

I hope each of us can really learn something about praying more effectively in these few pages we travel together. I hope we can learn about what it means to REALLY pray. I hope that after this examination we will change in our approach to God in certain ways. I hope we can learn to pray better prayers.

The first endeavor ahead of us is to show by discovery that prayer or prayers can have FORM:

FORM OR PARADIGM

Originally, we are conditioned to think that organization is equated with vainness and emptiness. We think form and organization is bad, because this is how the Pharisees prayed and how Jesus instructed us not to pray.

But this is not exactly so. Christians often assume that the Lord's Prayer is simple, therefore it is "good." We typically equate simple-ness with sincerity.

However, God's word when carefully studied has many unique patterns, poetic symmetries, and literary beauties.

The Creation account is an example of this. Many think it is just a simple account, almost mythical in content, of God commanding things into being. What many don't realize is that it is actually very complex and

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intricate in its literary and poetic structure. God creates with poetry. There are many other such examples that can be given. It is fair to extrapolate from this that anything that God authors is not only perfect in its own way but is philosophically and materially a masterpiece when examined in proper depth. The Lord's Prayer, I believe, is very like this.

On the surface it appears that Jesus just prayed a nice little prayer. But on closer examination we find that it is much more than this. What this all tells us is that true prayer usually has certain elements and qualities. These are sometimes lacking from our discourses with God.

While God is anxious to hear all of our prayers, even a child's simple prayer, it is not noble of us to approach God with lazy, irreverent references that might indicate we are not very interested in pleasing him. Any honest student of prayer must admit that our prayers could be a little sharper. Especially our family or public prayers, where others are required to listen. Some laborious prayers are said "to weary the angels." (TT Vol. 1, p. 457; GW1892, p.325; 4T, p. 71)

What is particularly practical about Jesus' prayer is that it gives us a ready-made form to instantly know what to say when thrust before the public and asked to pray. This author has personally used the following template hundreds of times and knows how useful and powerful it can be. When asked to pray one simply is given the opportunity to pray the Lord's Prayer in his own words or thoughts. It can form a beautiful, yet unique prayer for any situation, in fact.

The first paradigm we might observe is that like a letter, a prayer has typical components that complete it. One such model divides the prayer as:

- **Salutation or Greeting**
- **Requests**
- **Praise**

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With this simple model in one's head, most anyone can pray a simple formatic prayer immediately:

Our Father

Which art in heaven

Hallowed be thy name
(God)

SALUTATION

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done
(on earth as it is in heaven)

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our debts
As we forgive our debtors
(Man)

REQUESTS

And Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil

For Thine is the kingdom, and the
Power and the glory forever

PRAISE

(God)

Amen

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The prayer starts with God, turns to man, and returns to God. I call this “the prayer sandwich.” God is represented by the two slices of the Bread of Life, and we are the *thin* layer of peanut butter in the middle! Again, anyone can immediately pray a prayer with decent form with this simple image in his mind.

Too many of our prayers give man and his needs a much greater proportion of attention in a prayer than God’s glory and grace. In the Lord’s Prayer of only 66 words, 38, almost 2/3 (44), are about God. This observation is incredibly informative when learning how we should pray and what our attitudes should be in true and righteous prayer.

On the following pages are found charts that represent a few of the marvelous patterns and forms that can be found in the Lord’s Prayer. These apparent forms, these paradigms, represent a complexity most will not have realized exists in the seemingly simple prayer of Jesus. These patterns are not intended to be charted dogmatically. Any reader is welcome to adjust or reject them. The intention in tracing them is to teach that true prayer often does have *form*. It is doubtful that the prayer of Jesus is a spur of the moment, accidental, or simply extemporaneous saying. This is hopefully demonstrated in the following pages. This concept is informative to our entire learning curve when the subject of prayer and communication with God is entertained.

The following paradigm explores the different ways in which God is said to relate to man in the prayer. Credits are given to John MacArthur, Jr. for some of the relationships charted on the first chart. The remainder have formed during personal reflection by the author. It is an exercise of worth to explore other prayers or passages in the Bible and compare them with this marvelous prayer-adigm. Anyone is strongly invited to do so:

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RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PRAYER

		<u>PRAYER</u>	<u>RELATIONSHIP</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
1	GOD'S GLORY	OUR FATHER	Parent/Child	Paternity
		WHICH ART IN HEAVEN	God/Man	Pre-eminence
2		<u>THY NAME</u> BE HALLOWED	Deity/Worshipper	Priority
3a		<u>THY KINGDOM</u> COME	Sovereign/Subject	Program
3b		<u>THY WILL BE DONE</u> ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN	Master/Servant	Plan Purpose
4	MAN'S NEED	<u>GIVE US THIS DAY</u> OUR DAILY BREAD and	Benefactor/Beneficiary	Provision
5		<u>FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS</u> AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS and	Savior/Sinner	Pardon
6		<u>LEAD US NOT UNTO TEMPTATION</u> BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL	Shepherd/Sheep Or Guide/Pilgrim	Protection
7	GOD'S GLORY	FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY	Owner/Borrower	Property Propriety Power Praise
		FOREVER	Mortal/Immortal	Perfection
		AMEN		

As one can see, God relates to man in a number of ways. It is important to realize that there is a balance in how these ways are noted in Jesus' prayer. While Jesus likens the Father to a heavenly "Daddy," he is also careful to distinguish between any familiar earthly father, and the transcendent and hallowed divine figure.

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There is but one writer that I am aware of who has noticed ties between the Ten Commandments and Jesus' prayer. But when looking carefully at the sequence of the words it is hard to argue that Jesus *did not* have the commandments in mind when he authored this prayer. It also speaks volumes in the matter of how God views his commandments and how we should view his commandments when we pray. The following chart indicates some of these patterns and relationships:

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

		<u>PRAYER</u>	<u>COMMAND</u>	<u>PRINCIPLE</u>
1	GOD'S GLORY	OUR FATHER	No other Gods	Subordinance
		WHICH ART IN HEAVEN	No earthly image	Transcendence
2		<u>THY NAME</u> BE HALLOWED	Name in vain	Reverence
3a		<u>THY KINGDOM</u> COME	Honor King and Creator	Remembrance
3b		<u>THY WILL BE DONE</u> ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN	Obey and Honor God's Will---And Thus Bring God's Kingdom to Earth	Obedience
4	MAN'S NEED	<u>GIVE US THIS DAY</u> OUR DAILY BREAD and	Honor Parents, i.e. provide for their social security and sustenance— thus it will come to you also	Sustenance (cf. Mark 7:9-13)
5		<u>FORGIVE US OUR</u> DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS and	Trespasses and Sins (killing, stealing, lying, adultery)	Delinquence
6		<u>LEAD US NOT UNTO</u> TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL	Not covet (entertain temptation)	Resistance Deliverance
7	GOD'S GLORY	FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY		
		FOREVER		
		AMEN		

Of note are the similarities between Psalm 23, which really turns out to be a prayer---and the Lord's Prayer. What this tells us is that giants in prayer use similar sentiments in their prayers. This can teach us volumes as well:

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PSALM 23

		<u>PRAYER</u>	<u>PSALM 23</u>	<u>PRINCIPLE</u>
1	GOD'S GLORY	OUR FATHER	My Shepherd	Authority
		WHICH ART IN HEAVEN	The Lord	Heavenly and Divine authority
2		THY NAME BE HALLOWED	For His Name's Sake	Acknowledging God's Character
3a		THY KINGDOM COME	Experience Presence—"for thou art with me," Rest in Green Pastures	Honor God's Ways—his kingdom
3b		THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN	Honor and follow the Shepherd, Perfect Kingdom described	Peace, Rest, Safety
4	MAN'S NEED	GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD and	Shall not want Cup Runs Over Thou preparest a table	Sustenance
5		FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS and	He restoreth my soul (to explain: a "cast" sheep" is a wooly sheep turned on its back, that cannot regain its feet, and will die in that position)	Forgiveness and Restoration
6		LEAD US NOT UNTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL	Leads us in the paths of right--- I will fear no evil Rod and staff protect	Guidance Protection
7	GOD'S GLORY	FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY	I will dwell in the house of the Lord	Kingdom realized
		FOREVER	<i>Forever</i>	Eternal Blessing
		AMEN		

Inspired prayers and inspired material will have similar elements as well. Please note how the Lord's Prayer covers the same ground as do the Beatitudes, or Blessed's of Matthew 5; or the powerful little book "Steps to Christ," in its titles:

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“BEATTITUDES” AND “STEPS”

		<u>PRAYER</u>	<u>BEATTITUDES</u> (Matthew 5:1 ff.)	<u>BOOK:</u> <u>“STEPS TO CHRIST”</u>
1	GOD	OUR FATHER	Poor in Spirit—God Loves the Spiritually Destitute	God’s Love for Man
		WHICH ART IN HEAVEN	Mourners---God notices the repentant and sorrowful	The Sinner’s NEED of Christ Repentance
2		<u>THY NAME</u> BE HALLOWED	The meek or teachable are given blessing	Confession
3a		<u>THY KINGDOM</u> COME	Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness	Consecration
3b		<u>THY WILL BE DONE</u> ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN	Filled---faith is rewarded	Faith and Acceptance
4	MAN	GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD and	The Merciful are provided with benefits	The Test of Discipleship Growing Up Into Christ
5		<u>FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS</u> AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS and	The Pure and Holy in turn receive of God’s purity and holiness—“see or understand God”	The Work and the Life A Knowledge of God
6		<u>LEAD US NOT UNTO TEMPTATION</u> BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL	The Tempted, Tried, and Persecuted are remembered by God	The Privilege of Prayer What to do with Doubt
7	GOD	FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY	Those in God’s Kingdom of Grace can rejoice and give doxology to God	Rejoicing in the Lord
		FOREVER	In the Kingdom of Glory	Kingdom of Heaven
		AMEN		

The Lord’s Prayer is for all time and covers all circumstances. Every tense, past, present, and future is covered in the prayer:

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TIME AND TENSE

		<u>PRAYER</u>	<u>TIME AND TENSE</u>
1	PAST	OUR FATHER	Past (A father comes first and is a “creator”)
		WHICH ART IN HEAVEN	
2	(to present)	<u>THY NAME</u> BE HALLOWED	Present
3a		<u>THY KINGDOM</u> COME	
3b		<u>THY WILL BE DONE</u> (completed) ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN	Future
4	PRESENT	<u>GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD</u> and	Present (DAILY) infers constant sustenance to the present
5		<u>FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS</u> AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS and	Past (continuing present—“as we”) (Debts are from the past)
6		<u>LEAD US NOT UNTO TEMPTATION</u> BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL	Future (Desire for the future)
7	FUTURE	FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY	
		FOREVER	
		AMEN	

The Lord’s Prayer is a marvelous paradigm! It is a superb and practical model of what our prayers should be. It is universal in its application, both simple and complex in its composition, god-like in its presentation and attitude. It is for all time. It is for all people. May each seeker of the friendly Lord of Kingdom learn to enjoy precious interchange and communion with his God, both now and forever more, Amen.

THE PERSON OF PRAYER

How to Know God

In the previous chapter we looked at some of the extraordinary patterns and forms in the prayer. In this chapter we look at the *Person* to whom the prayer is addressed. The object of prayer is not us, of course, but God.

But before we look at the first few lines of the prayer together let us notice ---with amazement--- the timelessness and the eternal appropriateness of this prayer. It doesn't matter what age, what civilization, what race one may live in, the prayer is superbly apropos, yesterday, today, and always.

This prayer speaks of a father in heaven, a term that still leaves God above and beyond everything even though we live in a "space age." Rockets and space shuttles may leave our atmosphere, but these things are "peanuts" when considering the God of the universal heavens.

- The prayer hopes for a kingdom to come, yet man continues to experience only the present, flawed, materialistic age.
- It talks of daily bread to a world that still has not solved its hunger problems. Affluent societies need this prayer as well to remind them that God is still the source of their bread.
- It speaks forgiveness to a crime filled, hating world where 30 wars rage continuously and peace cannot be arbitrated.
- It talks of power over temptations when man's moral power has never been so weak and when sin is continuously advertised with brazen clarity and with such shameless example everywhere.

WE NEED THIS PRAYER EVEN MORE SURELY TODAY.

We are looking at the prayer as a model of prayer. Ellen White says:

"The Lord's prayer was not intended to be repeated merely as a form, but it is an illustration of what our prayers should be---simple, earnest, and comprehensive. In a simple petition tell the Lord your needs and express gratitude for His mercies." 6T. 357.

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The first question that presents itself to us is how should we address God?

In what way is our prayer to begin?

I remember well a few years back in Berrien Springs, where I witnessed a young ministerial student step up to the microphone and kneel. The seminarian was at that time, unusually, a woman. I had attended college with this girl and knew her. Whatever the situation, I remember her most by this instance. With no apology or hesitation in her voice she began her prayer with “Dear MOTHER in heaven.”

Well, is that the appropriate way to address God? I don’t know what you think. I know, more or less, what I think!⁵

Regardless of one’s opinion on this matter, it does raise a pertinent issue. This issue is how should one address God. This is an important issue, especially if God says it is. If we want our prayers to be successful, it seems we would wish to address God in a way that he prefers. The Lord’s Prayer and the sayings of Jesus give us a principled answer to this question.

LIKE AS TO A FATHER

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus suggests that we call God “Our Father.” While it might not be everyone’s preference, it is certainly a safe title to ascribe to God, at least when it is properly understood. Some may not have had an experience that creates a favorable image for them of a father.

⁵However one might feel about the issue of male-dominated language or sexism is entirely one’s personal right, and one should not publicly judge. One should always be fair and balanced in their representation of all human beings. However, I do not agree with the following charge made by the same brand of *feminism*:

“Male-dominated language is an indication of a consistent human tendency toward idolatry.” Quoted from---*Gleaner*: Jan 2, 1984 issue.

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Nevertheless Jesus still uses this designation as his consistent example when addressing God. Perhaps he wishes all to form such a picture of God, not even as the Father *they know*, but as the type of father God wants all fathers to be. Says one who was awarded the prophetic gift:

----“Jesus teaches us to call His Father our Father.” *MB* 103

Of course, the stunning circumstance of all of this is that it makes all of us brothers *and sisters* of Jesus!

To state it simply Jesus instructs those who pray, to pray to the Father in Jesus’ name. We are to address the Father, in Jesus’ name. (John 14:13)

To ask in Jesus’ name means more than simply using his name. The book *Steps to Christ* indicates that it is more than using his name at the beginning and the end of prayer. It says there that it means to pray in the spirit and mind of Jesus.⁶ This author is coming to learn that it particularly means to ask for those things that Jesus himself has clearly promised.

John 16:26 “In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you. For the Father himself loves you.

Few people understand the Trinitarian roles of each being of the Godhead and how they relate to prayer. Some think we should pray to Jesus. Some think we should pray to God. Some think we should pray to the Holy Spirit. Some think we should pray to all three.

One dominant concept is that God cannot be approached, so we must pray to Jesus and then Jesus will pass it on to God, especially if we are in good graces with Jesus at the moment. Some also believe that the Holy Spirit has to talk to the Father and to Jesus for us, representing us, or else we can’t get through.

Perhaps none of these ideas are completely true by themselves.

⁶ Ellen White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 100, 101

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Romans 8: 15,16 –26 teaches indeed that the Holy Spirit does intercede for us. But careful understanding of this passage and others indicate that the Holy Spirit is working through and helping us, not the other way around (cf. Appendix, “The Holy Spirit and Prayer”).

There is one mediator between man and God, and that is Jesus. But Jesus even indicates that his mediation is one-sided. The Father himself loves us and wishes to hear us. Jesus simply pleads to us in our sinful condition, and shows us the way to the Father. His merits plead for us, not because God is reluctant, but because we are mostly reluctant.

The sanctuary of Israel provides a graphic portrayal of how prayer and blessing work in regards to God the Father, Jesus the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When one prays his prayer, empowered and motivated by the internal Spirit, it comes to Jesus, the great High Priest who stands before the altar of incense offering up our prayers to the Most High. The smoke of the incense in Jesus’ hand combined with his efficacious mercies ascends before God who accepts them. In turn, God rains spiritual blessing down upon the one praying in the form of the Holy Spirit. God through the Spirit blesses the recipients with gifts that in turn influence the recipient of Grace to approach God with Spiritual sensitivity. The Spirit convicts, changes, influences, and guides. It is a complete and continuous circle of life and blessing and forgiveness.

Through impressions on the heart, conviction through the Scriptures, and through the providences of life, God and Jesus through the Spirit guides our lives and prepares us for heaven.

Do we miss something by teaching children pray to Jesus? Perhaps we do, at least if we leave it at that. The result of maintaining this singular view makes God distant, uninterested, and scary. This view often continues through life. But if the above paradigm is understood, a more balanced appreciation of all the aspects of God are entertained in the minds of every believer starting from childhood.

In any circumstance God’s name or more particularly his person should always be reverently hallowed. The abuse of God’s name, or Jesus’ name

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is frightfully committed in this modern age and sometimes makes the more conscientious worshipper cringe.

We are counseled to:

“Avoid frequent or needless repetition of God’s name in prayer.” *ED*
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We are also counseled to avoid using God’s official names, such as the Almighty, El Shaddai, Jehovah, etc. in a common or light manner. Excellent material is available for reading in the book, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, by Ellen G. White, on this issue. The suggestions found there are much needed today. Moderners are all witnesses to preachers and evangelists sometimes “slurring” or “cooing” the name of Jesus, repeatedly. We assume they do this in order to “sound holy.” Musicians often cheapen the holy designations with their antics or with their blaring instruments or even their “performance persona.”

Sometimes Jesus or God are referred to in a flippant or familiar manner that indicates the speaker has no true idea who they are really talking about. They talk of “the Lord” as if he were their street friend at a party. Reverence as perceived in one’s culture should always be assigned to the names of God. Another cringe factor is the use of the word “Lord.” Some ministers especially, use the word about every other word until it becomes very distasteful and even annoying.

One coach in California, whose team prays before the game, reports that he doesn’t address God in the typical way at these games but simply asks “the Big Cougar in the Sky to help us out.”⁷ In reporting this apparent attempt to be politically correct, writer Eugene Durand wonders what God is supposed to “do when the opposing team prays to the Big Bulldog in the Sky?” Perhaps it is a moot point, with this seeming attitude of irreverence at play. A tragedy occurs when in an attempt to be politically correct, the situation turns out to be spiritually *incorrect*.

⁷ Durand, *Adventist Review*, December 15, 1988, p. 5.

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The fact is that Jesus suggests a heavenly Father as the object of our petitions. He could have suggested we call him Lord, for He is. He could have suggested we call him King of Kings, for He is. He even could have suggested we call him the Son of Man, His favorite reference to himself when on earth. Son of Man means “child of the people.” This would be quite appropriate. But Jesus suggested we talk to His Father, and our Father, in His name. This should not be difficult to honor and grasp.

“Our Father” is a good enough salutation for this author, at least. The idea of a divine mother is not at all a distasteful one, though there might be some indigestion when prayer is used as an opportunity to promote feminism or any other agenda, for that matter. The images of a mother are sometimes used in the Scripture as attributes of God (Isaiah 49:15; Matthew 23:37). But for God’s own reasons He has chosen the image of a father and son to approximate the relationship of himself and Jesus to us. One reason is perhaps that in the image of a Father is found the concept of great love, strength, power, and protectiveness, something God wants us to particularly believe about Himself.

What images come to mind when we look at the word “father?” What is a father? How is God like a father (we assume a good father)?

A good father:

- provides for us
- loves us profoundly
- gives us our life, for it originates from him.
- has gone before us.
- disciplines us – teaches us
- gives us gifts
- is patient and interested in us
- is proud of us
- protects us

Jesus actually surprised His followers by using the word “Father.” In doing so he was restoring a lost concept. God had to most become remote,

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and uninterested, like the gods of the Stoics and Epicureans. That He was an intimate God was a shocking idea to the Jews of Jesus' day.

Scholars have discovered that in searching the voluminous extant writings of Jesus' day such a designation for God in prayer cannot be found. It wasn't consistent with their view of God.

The Hebrew word for father is ABBA, "Daddy." It was the address of a small child to his father. ABBA and IMMA were the first sounds the child learned to stammer!!

In such a way Jesus made prayer an *elementary* teaching.

Grown up children also used the term "abba" from which we get "Papa." It was an affectionate, *yet respectful* title. It is doubtful that it can be compared in any way to such terms as "the old man," "pops," or the like.

The term Father still preserves that God is first in time and authority. He is the head of the household of faith. Our helplessness and dependency upon Him as our Father is emphasized.

Jesus himself prayed to God as a Father. Every prayer of Jesus we have He uses this term except for one... on the cross: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here He is quoting Scripture, and is using a reverent possessive.

Jesus was not sickly sentimental in His designation of the Father. But He was intimately close to His Father.

On the cross, Jesus prayed using the words of Psalm 31:5:
"(Father) into thy hands I commit My Spirit."

The term used again is ABBA.
(Luke 23:46)

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William Barclay reports that these words were what every Jewish mother taught her child to pray before he went to sleep. (It was the “Now I lay me down to sleep,” of their day.) Jesus died then with a child’s prayer upon His lips! Like a child He anticipated sleep secure in His Father’s protective presence. What a lesson of dependence is there for us, to trust in God, to pray to Him as our Father. Jesus says we should pray “as to a Father.”

One of the principle aims of a parent is to do what is best for their child’s success in life. Parents can even be over-protective of their children at times. But this motivation to love, protect, and nurture their children is a good thing, placed in their psyche for a reason.

Many times in the Gospels Jesus gives His Father the attributes of a human father. In Matthew 7:7 ff. Jesus teaches that God, like any human parent, will try to give us what is best. He says:

7 – “Ask, and it shall be given you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened unto you. . . .

9 – Or what man (Father) of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent.”

In the Aramaic language the words, *stone* and *bread* sound nearly the same.

In Hebrew – Stone= *seor*, Bread = *tsur*

The same is true of the words for fish and serpent. Luke adds another one, egg and scorpion, the consonants also being similar for each word. Any language has words that are pronounced similarly but when read mean entirely different things. Such is true of the words “red, “ or “read.” A riddle says: “What is black and white, and read/red all over?” The answer is a newspaper. The riddle is not referring to the color “red,” but to the process of “reading.” We can usually tell by context whether the speaker means the color, or if he is talking about something that is read on a page of words.

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What Jesus is saying is that even if it isn't clearly stated what you are asking for, God knows what you mean in your heart, and like any parent he will be glad to provide it. Even if you can't say it clearly, a good father will understand. Children cannot pronounce their words precisely and so often they ask for things that might actually be harmful if it were given them. Every parent understands this and provides the child with what he actually meant to say and not what he "verbally" asked for. I knew when my tiny daughter asked for "ov-dives," she meant "olives."

God knows your need even before you ask. Therefore, he is ready and waiting to provide help in time of need.

All through my life my earthly father has given me the things I needed. He was a carpenter and cabinet-maker. There is hardly a finger on his hands that has not been either cut off, shortened, injured, or grafted back on. This was because he worked incessantly to earn money for our family. Both my parents worked hard and sacrificed to provide for my needs. When I graduated from the college and the seminary, my dad on his own volition helped me secure cars that I desperately needed, or helped with the down payments, and such. Fathers greatly desire to provide good things to their children. God does even more so.

Brotherhood with Christ

There is another aspect that must be mentioned as regards the expression: "Our Father." This is that as God's sons and daughters we don't have exclusive rights.

The Salutation is : **"Our"** Father. There are no singular personal pronouns in the entire prayer. In the word "our," is found the brotherhood of man. Says Ellen White:

"No one prays aright who seeks a blessing for himself alone." TM 105

Jesus is our brother. God is our Father. And in some ways the Holy Spirit is much like a mother.

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Please do not take this statement to mean that I am saying the Holy Spirit is a woman, for this is a foolish and insupportable claim. But it does seem that the role of a mother is very close to what the Holy Spirit does for us. The Holy Spirit convicts, influences, and guides. People often refer to their mothers as their moral guides through the early and even later part of their lives. We are born of the Spirit (John 3). The Spirit “nourishes” us as does a mother. The Holy Spirit instills truthfulness, honesty, and refinement. This also is the calling of a mother. Mothers “plead” and “grieve” as the Spirit does. The Spirit seems to have the “sweet, soft” qualities of a mother. The Spirit is said to intercede for us with “groanings,” the same word often associated with birth. The Spirit works with us through pain and trial to bring forth the new offspring of love, joy, and peace. The New Testament often indicates that we pray *IN* the Spirit, making it seem we are actually surrounded by our mothers, as we were when we were carried in the womb.

I am satisfied to call God, my Father, but God’s image also retains both male and female characteristics, and the images of a heavenly parent of both genre’s is mentally resident in calling God our father.

Hallowed be Thy Name

Students often somewhat miss the point on what is meant by hallowing God’s name. The society in which Jesus lived took it to mean that you should never even mention the name of “Yahweh,” for it was too holy to speak aloud.

While this deference to God’s name is certainly reverent, it does not fully cover the intent of the third commandment, “Do not take the name of the Lord, Thy God in vain.”

What the name represents is more important than the name itself, in its verbal or consonantal pronunciation. It is what the name stands for.

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The same is true of the Sabbath day. It is like any other day. The sun comes up and goes down like all the other days. It has the same number of hours as the other days. But what that day really represents, is God. It is his day. It is the memorial of his creative power. It is a memorial of his redemptive power. This is what makes the day sacred. Not just its name.

A name in Bible times was closely related to the character and attributes of that person. Jacob lived up to his name of “heel-grabber,” by tripping up and deceiving people. He had to unlearn this tactic, and when he finally did, God changed his name to “Israel,” which means “overcomer.”

Certain names carry special respect with them: Roll’s Royce, Cadillac, Lexus, Mercedes, etc., are examples. Its not the arrangement of the letters in the name, its not the syllables. It’s the quality that it stands for. Rolls Royce, thus for some, has a “hallowed name.” We still use this nuance when we say, “he made a name for himself.” We are not talking about his syllabic name. We are talking about his reputation.

This is why we should be careful in our use of God’s name, but even more in HOW WE LIVE!. To live after the divine precepts is how we *honor* God’s name. When we misuse the name, or carelessly misrepresent it in our lifestyle, we are damaging God’s reputation, or misrepresenting what he stands for.⁸

Exodus 34: 5-7

“And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.”

“And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”

⁸ “God Almighty.” *EW 122*—be careful in use.

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A Loving Father

The greatest attribute of a Father is his love. This is the dominant theme in all the attributes of a father. It is this that draws us to him. He desires to help us with what we need and to guide us in times of perplexity, grief, and disappointment. Fathers are particularly great at “bailing us out,” and getting us “out of a jam.”

While living in the Sunnyside, Washington, a district I pastored in the early years of ministry, I had many experiences where God helped and mentored me like a Father. In one instance, I had had a very difficult week. On top of all of that I was called upon to perform a funeral for a prominent member of the community. For me, it was a difficult assignment.

The life and experience of the deceased was very unique, and as I hastily pasted together a personal message for the service I remembered a poem or an illustration that I had recently cut out and saved that was perfectly appropriate for this memorial, and wouldn't be quite as appropriate for most anyone else. It was *the* perfect illustration, I knew, and I desperately needed it, right then! The problem was I didn't remember enough of the facts to safely relate it from memory. I knew it was probably in my office somewhere, because I had remembered having it there only recently.

I searched for it in my files but couldn't find it. I searched high and low. I looked in the car, and at the church. Soon panic set in. I needed “that” illustration. I felt strongly that it might be of comfort to the bereaved, and I became obsessed with finding it. I started to feel that I would be very miserable even giving the message at the funeral without that illustration. I searched some more. But it was to no avail.

Finally, trying to put my panic aside I got down on my knees in my office and said to my heavenly Father, “Father, I've been careless and lost that clipping. You know where it is. I really think I need this. Aren't you the God of help and comfort? Is it important enough that you could help me remember it, or find it? Lord, I need it.”

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Like many pastors, the walls of my office had rows and rows of books clear around the room. But when I looked over from where I was kneeling I could see along the top of a whole multi-volume set of commentaries. If I hadn't been kneeling I would not have been able to see the tops of the books. In maybe the fourth volume a piece of paper was barely sticking up that made me curious. *But why would it be there?* I thought. I reached for the book and opened it to find my missing illustration! I had used it as a bookmark sometime before (I do this!) in preparing a sermon or something. With relief I thanked God for his care, and raced out the door to the funeral.

It turned out just as I expected. The illustration was even powerful enough to elicit comments from family members sometime later on how much it meant to them. But it meant even more to me, for my heavenly Father had helped me minister to others in a very special way. As dads often do, He had "bailed me out"----once again!

THE PLAN OF PRAYER

How to Know God's Will

THE PROGRAM OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Every American president, at least in recent times, has given the agenda, or platform of his administration a descriptive campaign name. For Franklin Delano Roosevelt it was "The New Deal." Lyndon Baines Johnson named his "The Great Society." Some will be able to remember the names given to other president's administrations.

The "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN," is the name that Jesus gave to his program or campaign. It was his purpose to connect heaven and earth together into one grand and holy kingdom. He wanted his "spiritual" kingdom to begin its administration and influence in the present as well as to be permanently established in the future.

The Jewish *Talmud* says,

"A prayer in which there is no mention of the kingdom of God is no prayer at all."⁹

Writes G.E. Ladd of the Lord's Prayer in this regard:

"The Kingdom of God is a society upon earth where God's will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven. Here we have the explanation of how the Kingdom can be past, present and future all at the one time."¹⁰

Christians are particularly interested in this Kingdom. For some in my Seventh-day Adventist faith it is divided into two parts:

⁹ MacArthur, *Jesus' Pattern of Prayer* p. 55.

¹⁰ G. E. Ladd, *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, "Matthew," p. 211.

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- The Kingdom of Grace
- The Kingdom of Glory

The Kingdom of Grace is the reign of Jesus' purpose and redemption in the hearts of men today. The Kingdom of Glory is looking forward to the time when God's purpose in restoring a perfect world after Christ's second coming is realized.

THE TWO "THOU-PETITIONS"

Writes Joachim Jeremias:

The first words which the child says to his heavenly Father are, "Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come." These two petitions are not only parallel in structure, but they also correspond to one another in content. They recall the Qaddish ("Holy"), an ancient Aramaic prayer which formed the conclusion of the service in the synagogue and with which Jesus was no doubt familiar from childhood. What is probably the oldest form of this prayer (later expanded) runs:

Exalted and hallowed be his great name
In the world which he created according to his will.
May he rule his kingdom
In your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime
Of the whole house of Israel, speedily and soon.
And to this, say: Amen."¹¹

But there are actually three "Thou" or "Thy" petitions in the first half of the Lord's Prayer. These are diagrammed as follows:

- **Thy name** be hallowed
- **Thy kingdom** come
- **Thy will** be done....

¹¹ Joachim Jeremias, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 21.

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A triad also occurs in the latter part of the prayer: These are diagrammed as follows:

- Give Us
- Forgive Us
- Lead Us

Triads often occur in Jesus' ancient teachings and in inspired literature. While it is true that three is a small and common number it should not be assumed that all of these triads are accidental or spontaneous. I believe one of the reasons these are given is to indicate the fullness of the Trinity and to represent the fullness of blessing given by the Trinity. "Holy, Holy, Holy," is another designation used in addressing God. For some there is found a Trinitarian concept inherent in this expression, as well. I think it is probably more than providential that when God is addressed in the Lord's Prayer, there are also three aspects addressed.

Not only is God's name to be hallowed (1), not only is his kingdom to be invited (2) to earth, but also his kingdom, his will and desire, is to be established. It is to be done. What it means for God's will to be accomplished in the heaven and earth, and in our own personal lives, is a subject of huge proportions and a matter of great understanding.

GOD'S WILL

As to our *personal* understanding of God's will we are told that it is revealed to us in the **three** following ways:

"There are three ways in which the Lord reveals His will to us, to guide us, and to fit us to guide others. How may we know His voice from that of a stranger? How shall we distinguish it from the voice of a false shepherd? God reveals His will to us in His work, the Holy Scriptures. His voice is also revealed in His providential workings; and it will be recognized if we do not separate our souls from His by walking in our own ways, doing according to our own wills, and following the promptings of an unsanctified heart, until the senses have become so

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confused that eternal things are not discerned, and the voice of Satan is so disguised that it is accepted as the voice of God. . . .

Another way in which God's voice is heard is through the appeals of His Holy Spirit, making impressions upon the heart, which will be wrought out in the character. If you are in doubt upon any subject you must first consult the Scriptures. If you have truly begun the life of faith you have given yourself to the Lord to be wholly His, and He has taken you to mold and fashion according to His purpose, that you may be a vessel unto honor. You should have an earnest desire to be pliable in His hands and to follow whithersoever He may lead you."¹²

Of course, there are more than three ways in which God reveals his will. Other ways are through mentors, friends---or other people, through the example of Christ, through Christian music, and through prophetic guidance. In the Old Testament it was sometimes communicated through the "Urim and Thummim," or through "lots," and a variety of other ways. One source lists at least 21 different ways in which God speaks. We are even told God has a thousand ways to speak. But if one will notice, these "other" ways are really just different variations of the same original three.

These three seem to equate also with the trinity. Providence (1) seems to often be equated with God the Father, though sometimes also to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is called the Word of God (2), therefore he is equated with the Scriptures, though the Holy Spirit and God are very much involved with the "giving" of the Word. Impressions on the heart (3) are notably attributed to the working of the Holy Spirit, though, of course this Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and of God.

Guidance of the Nations

The idea that God has a will for everyone's life is quite foreign to some. Most Christians agree that God superintends the greater matters; the matters of the nations, the matters of the universe. Still few non-Christians believe that God has any will or control over the cosmos. The Bible

¹² E.G. White, Testimonies to the Church, Vol. 5, p. 512.

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teaches, however, that God does have a will that he works out in the unfolding history of our planet:

In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition or caprice. But in the word of God, the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power, and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.—E.G. White, *Education*, p. 173.

As the wheellike complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations, He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of the earth. . . . All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes.” Ibid. p. 178.

It is of interest to read from the ancient Jewish author Josephus about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. According to God’s prophetic timetable “not one stone” was to “be left upon another.” But God’s “will” transpired despite the deliberate efforts of Tiberias Alexander, the “Jewish,” Roman general, to save the temple. (Cf. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book VI.; chapter V). It was as if a divine hand was controlling the ultimate outcome.

Personal Guidance and God’s Will

Yet many wonder if God has a particular will in regard to individual lives, our lives. They can believe that God has a will for the heaven and the earth, but does he have a will for the single life of an individual?

The prophetic voice seems to tell us so:

“To every nation and to every individual of today God has assigned a place in His great plan.” (*Education*, p. 178)

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Guidance is not something unusual, reserved for some privileged believers. “The Lord will teach us our duty just as willingly as He will teach somebody else. If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally...Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them as Christ has promised.” *The Desire of Ages* – p. 668

Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 481

How all of this works, is not within the scope of this short chapter, nor is it fully understood by this author, and for the most part anyone else but God himself. But it is an awesome thought, and one of great worth, to realize that God has a personal interest and calling to each individual. It should be the lifetime endeavor of every Christian to seek this particular calling and to live it out to the best of their ability and to the fulfillment of God’s glory in them.

Certainly, God’s purpose is not to subjugate our wills so that he can have his own way. God gives us time and choice. His desire is that our wills will come into harmony with his will, and thus his will can be done.

Some people entertain an almost fatalistic view of God’s will. Some even attribute terrible things to God’s as a result. It is important to understand what is truly meant by “God’s will.”

The Will of God

Writes John H. Eastwood:

“The parents were devastated with grief. A thief had broken into their home in the evening, killed the baby sitter and the children, taken a few dollars from a dresser drawer and escaped. In attempting to comfort the

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distraught parents, some of their Christian friends said, ‘We must bow to the sovereign will of God.’ Or some simply said, ‘It is God’s will.’

When comforted this way, the parents made no response, for it confused them. They wondered how the murder of their children could be the will of God. And it occurred to them that if the thief was doing God’s will, he should be rewarded, not punished for a wrong.” *Pulpit Helps*, John H. Eastwood, Volume 8, Number 8, May 1983.

Eastwood explains that “we need to make a distinction between the revealed will of God and His decreed will.”

God’s *revealed will*, he says “is given to us in Scripture. Here He tells us how to live; here, we have His perfect will for us.” However, God’s *decreed will* “includes all that actually occurs in time and space.” Ibid.

Many books have been written on “the Will of God.” Though they do not answer all our questions on this matter, they do help us in understanding how God realizes his purpose in our lives and in the destiny of the nations.

In his book on God’s will, Leslie Weatherhead divides the subject of God’s will into three parts. These are:

- The **intentional will** of God—God’s ideal plan for men.
- The **circumstantial will** of God—God’s plan within certain circumstances.
- The **ultimate will** of God—God’s final realization of his purposes.

Weatherhead provides the following picture to illustrate how God’s ultimate purpose is always realized:

The picture in my mind is that of children playing beside a tiny stream that runs down a mountainside to join a river in the valley below. Very little children can divert the stream and get great fun out of damming it up with stones and earth. But not one of them ever succeeds in preventing the water from reaching the river at last. (Don’t press the illustration and remind me that the Royal Engineers could do so!) In

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regard to God we are very little children. Though we may divert and hinder His purposes, I don't believe we ever finally defeat them; and though the illustration doesn't carry us so far, frequently our mistakes and sins are used to make another channel to carry the water of God's plans to the river of His purpose. ---- Leslie Weatherhead, *The Will of God*, p. 38

Finally God's purposes are realized. This is a cardinal tenet of the Scriptures:

Job 42:2 - "I know that thou canst do all things and that no purpose of thine can be restrained."

Moffat's Translation - "Nothing is too hard for Thee."

God's will would always be immediately realized if it were not for the sinful circumstances that have come to our planet. It is not fair to say that the child that dies of a tragic disease is a subject of God's true will. If so, Jesus should not have healed the people he did. He should have left them to die in God's will! But, no! "When Jesus healed men's bodies and gladdened men's live in Palestine, he was doing the will of God, not undoing or defeating it." (Weatherhead, p. 22)

It is only in the context of God's ideal, circumstantial, and ultimate will that we can make sense of such statements as in Isaiah 53:

It was "God's will to bruise him:" Is. 53:10

(For) "example:

It was not the intentional will of God, surely, that Jesus should be crucified, but that He should be followed. If the nation had understood and received His message, repented of its sins, and realized His kingdom, the history of the world would have been very different. Those who say that the Crucifixion was the will of God should remember that it was the will of evil men.

But when Jesus was faced with circumstances brought about by evil and was thrust into the dilemma of running away or of being crucified, then

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in those circumstances the Cross was His Father's will. It was in this sense that Jesus said, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt."

The ultimate will of God means, in the case of the Cross, that the high goal of man's redemption or, to use simpler English, man's recovery to a unity with God—a goal which would have been reached by God's intentional plan had it not been frustrated—will still be reached through his circumstantial will. In a sentence, no evil is finally able to defeat God or to cause any "value" to be lost.—Weatherhead, p. 23.

It is our privilege to learn from God what his will is:

"There are three ways in which the Lord reveals his will to us. . . . in His Word..... his voice is also revealed in His providential workings.....AND through the appeals of His Holy Spirit, making impressions on the heart...." 5T 512 Cf. MH 230, 231

It may not even be safe to go by any one of these three by themselves. But as others have illustrated, when they are placed together, or lined up as buoys guiding a ship into a channel, then they are a surer guide into God's will.

Jesus asks us to pray in his will. It is not about our wills, it is about his. As John MacArthur says:

Prayer, then, is a sanctifying grace. It changes us. We do not pray to manipulate God. We do not pray to get God to do what we want. We don't pray with incantations and vain repetition to put on a show. We go into God's presence to hallow His name, bring His kingdom, and fulfill his will.—MacArthur, p. 83

In *A Layman Looks at the Lord's Prayer* (Chicago: Moody, 1976, pp. 90-99) Phillip Keller writes of an experience where he watched a potter fashioning a vessel as is described several places in the Bible:

In sincerity and earnestness, I asked the old master craftsman to show me every step in the creation of a masterpiece...On his shelves were

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gleaming goblets and lovely vases and exquisite bowls of breathtaking beauty.

Then, crooking a bony finger toward me, he led the way to a small, dark, closed shed at the back of his shop. When he opened its rickety door, a repulsive overpowering stench of decaying matter engulfed me. For a moment I stepped back from the edge of the gaping dark pit in the floor of the shed. "This is where the works begins," he said, kneeling beside the black, nauseating hole. With his long thin arm he reached down into the darkness. His slim skilled fingers felt around amid the lumpy clay searching for a fragment of material exactly suited to his task. "I add special kinds of grass to the mud," he remarked. "As it rots and decays, its organic content increased the colloidal quality of the clay. Then it sticks together.

Finally his knowing hands brought up a lump of dark mud from the horrible pit where the clay had been tramped and mixed for hours by his hard, bony feet. With tremendous impact the first verses from Psalm 40 came to my heart. "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay." As carefully as the potter selected his clay, so God used special care in choosing me.

He walked, clay in hand, over to where a huge, round slab of stone stood in the center of his shop. The great slab of granite, carved from the rough rock of the high Hindu Kush Mountains behind his home, whirled quietly, but what stood out most before my mind at this point was the fact that beside the potter's stool, on either side of him, stood two basins of water. Not once did he touch the clay, without first dipping his hands in the water.

The water was the medium through which the master craftsman's will and wishes were transmitted to the clay. His will actually was being done in earth, a most moving demonstration, that my Father's will and wishes are expressed and transmitted to me through the water of His own Word. It is the water of the Word, the expressed will of God, that finds fulfillment in fashioning me to His will.

Suddenly, (to Keller's astonishment), he saw the wheel stop. Gently the man picked out a piece of stone, and then later he stopped it again and picked out a larger piece. With the tenderness of his hand he could feel

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every rough spot, every stone, every small grain of sand. The two he had taken out were too large, and the would-be goblet was marred. So the potter crushed it in his hands.

In dismay I turned to my missionary friend and asked him in a hoarse whisper, “what will the potter do now?” The question was passed on. Looking up at me through eyes now clouded and sad, he replied with a sorrowful shrug of his tired old shoulders, “Just make a crude finger bowl from the same lump.”

The word of God from Jeremiah came home to me like an arrow to its target: “So he (the potter—my God) made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.” (Jeremiah 18:4)

The sobering, searching question I had to ask myself in the humble surroundings of that simple potter’s shed was this: Am I going to be a piece of fine china or just a finger bowl? Is my life going to be a gorgeous goblet fit to hold the fine wine of God’s very life from which others can drink and be refreshed? Or am I going to be just a crude finger bowl in which passersby will dabble their fingers briefly then pass on and forget all about it? It was one of the most solemn moments in all of my spiritual experiences.

“Father, Thy will be done in earth (in clay), in me, as it is done in heaven. (Macarthur, p. 84,85)

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How To Trust God for Your Needs

“Give us this day our daily bread” Mt 6:11

In this verse the prayer shifts from God to man:

First have come three petitions about God:

Thy Name
Thy Kingdom
Thy Will

Next come three petitions concerning man’s need:

Our Daily Bread (Give us)
Our Debts (Forgive Us)
Our temptations (Lead Us)

The second three petitions indicate God’s continual surveillance:

- Our daily bread is the present
- Our debts are from the past
- And “lead us not” is a prayer for the future

“Give us this day our daily bread,” is not just a “spiritual” prayer. It deals with tangible needs. God is not oblivious to human need. He is greatly concerned about our needs, physical and spiritual.

The first half of the prayer Jesus has taught us is in regard to the name and kingdom and will of God – that His name may be honored, His kingdom established, His will performed. When you have thus made God’s service your first interest, you may ask with confidence that your own needs may be supplied. If you have renounced self and given

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yourself to Christ you are a member of the family of God, and everything in the Father's house is for you. MB, p.110

The priority in prayer comes in this order: God first, then us!

But it is important to human beings to realize that God's interest in us is not just spiritual, but practical as well. He cares about the "temples" He has created. In fact true spirituality is the practice of taking the natural and turning it to the right purpose.

Martin Luther, commenting on this petition said: "Everything necessary for the preservation of life is bread, including food, a healthy body, good weather, house, home, wife, children, good government, and peace."

The simple meaning of the phrase is:

"Give us the bread of the coming day."¹³

William Barclay provides interesting commentary regarding this expression "daily bread:"

This petition teaches us to pray for our daily bread, for bread *for the coming day*. It teaches us to live one day at a time, and not to worry and be anxious about the distant and the unknown future. When Jesus taught

¹³ The first of the two "We-petitions" asks for daily bread (Greek, *artos epiousios*). The Greek word *epiousios*, which Luther rendered as "taglich" ("daily") and Tyndale in 1525 and the King James Version as "daily," has been the object of lengthy discussion which is not yet finally settled. In my opinion, the decisive fact is that the church father Jerome (ca. A.D. 342-420) tells us that in the lost Aramaic Gospel of the Nazarenes the term *mahar* appears, meaning "tomorrow," that here therefore the reference was to bread "for tomorrow." Now it is true that this *Gospel of the Nazarenes* is not older than our first three gospels; rather it rests on our Gospel of *Matthew*. Nonetheless the Aramaic wording of the Lord's Prayer in the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* ('bread for tomorrow')---Jeremias, p. 23

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his disciples to pray this petition, there is little doubt that his mind was going back to the story of the manna in the wilderness. (Exodus 16:1-21). The children of Israel were starving in the wilderness, and God sent them the manna, the food from heaven: but there was one condition—they must gather only enough for their immediate needs. If they tried to gather too much and to store it up, it went bad. They had to be satisfied with enough for the day. As one Rabbi put it: “The portion of a day in its day, because he who created the day created sustenance for the day.” And as another Rabbi had it: “He who possesses what he can eat today, and says, ‘what shall I eat tomorrow?’ is a man of little faith.” This petition tells us to live one day at a time. It forbids the anxious worry which is so characteristic of this life.

The difficulty of interpreting this petition was increased by the fact that there was very considerable doubt as to the meaning of the word, *epiousios*, which is the word which the Revised Standard Version translates *daily*. The extraordinary fact was that, until a short time ago, there was no other known occurrence of this word in the whole of Greek literature. Origen knew this, and indeed held that Matthew had invented the word. It was therefore not possible to be sure what it precisely meant. But not very long ago a papyrus fragment turned up with this word on it; and the papyrus fragment was actually a woman’s shopping list! And against an item on it was the word *epiousios*. It was a note to remind her to buy supplies of a certain food for the coming day. So, very simply, what this petition means is: “Give me the things we need to eat for this coming day. Help me to get the things I’ve got on my shopping list when I go out this morning. Give me the things we need to eat when the children come in from school, and the men folk come in from work. Grant that the table be not bare when we sit down together today.” This is a simple prayer that God will supply us with the things we need for the coming day.¹⁴

Our Father in heaven wants us to have this kind of dependence on him. God promises us the things on our “shopping list!”

Notice God’s historic assurances for necessary food, particularly bread:

¹⁴ William Barclay, *Matthew Commentary*, p. 217, 218.

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It is among God's first concerns for **Adam and Eve**:

"Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food." Gen. 1:29

Also vs. 30 – *"every green plant for food."*

2: 9 – *"God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food."*

Noah

"Every moving thing that lives shall be food; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything." 9:3

Joseph

"But God meant it for good, to bring it that many people should be kept alive." 49:20

Moses

"And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is bread which the Lord has given you to eat." Exodus 16:14,15

Elijah

"And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening." 1 Kings 17:6

"The jar of meal shall not be spent, and the cruse of oil shall not fail, until the day the Lord sends rain upon the earth." 1 Kings 17:14

"Arise and eat. And behold there was at his head a cake (bread) baked on hot stoves and a jar of water." 1 Kings 19:6

Jesus

"I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now 3 days, and have nothing to eat...They will faint....loaves. Mark 8:2 ff

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Matthew 6:33, the very same context as the Lord's Prayer, promises that if one seeks the kingdom of God first, all the things that are necessary to sustain life will be given in turn. We are not to worry incessantly about these things. God takes care of even the birds. We are to trust in God to supply all our need according to his riches in glory.

While serving as a colporteur, or door-to-door salesman of religious books, this author found himself in an incredibly poor condition financially. Though praying often, the books were not selling.

At the suggestion of my district leader I was invited to spend a couple of weeks away at a rally in a city (Tacoma, Washington) across the state from where I lived. The purpose of the rally was to prepare the community for some evangelistic work and to train literature salesmen such as myself. Even though I didn't have the money to go, I agreed, and charging the gasoline expense on my gas card I headed to the assignment.

I had been instructed that we would be staying in the homes of members of my denomination, but that we would be responsible for our own meals. I was nervous because I had absolutely no cash money to take. I told the Lord that I hoped the church members would be generous, because I had no way to eat for the next two weeks. Though I had a credit card it was really not to be used since my wife's income was all we had to maintain the minimum payment, from month to month.

When I got to the first meeting in the evening our state leader told our group that there had been a communication breakdown and that no homes were lined up for us to stay in. I thought, *Lord, There goes my only chance of eating this week!* The district leader said we could stay in a dormitory at the local academy and meet him in the morning at his house nearby for breakfast. I immediately thanked the Lord in advance for the breakfast. I reasoned with the Lord that he had promised "bread," and that "bread" was all that I expected. Anyway, if Moses could go 40 days and 40 nights on the strength of his food, maybe I could go two weeks on that breakfast!

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The next morning at the breakfast (a good, nourishing one, cooked by his wife) the district leader handed us each an envelope that contained per-diem cash for the next week or so. Though this was not the usual practice to give per-diem in this way, he was apologetic for the housing difficulty and because of that had arranged with the publishers for a per-diem allowance.

The allowance was far more than I needed to eat each day, so I actually took most of it home to my family later. Each day my working partner and I got the soup, salad, and breadsticks lunch special at the *Olive Garden* for very little money. I was truly thankful for the breadsticks. Not only did I have *minestrone* soup, and delicious salad; I had BREAD. It was an worshipful moment each time the waitress renewed the supply of breadsticks. Not only did I have bread, but I had dipping sauce as well!

God is true to his promises to supply the basic needs of his followers. One of my favorite stories happened years ago at the Pine Springs Youth Camp in Southern California. The summer camp collected water from the arroyos nearby which were systematically funneled into tanks during the winter. Usually there was enough captured water to last the camp season.

But one year there was virtually no water in the tanks and the camp was scheduled to begin the following weekend. The camp staff prayed for rain to no avail. Clouds without moisture only passed by. Desperately, they prayed for rain. If they did not receive rain they would have to cancel the Christian youth camp for that year. The final day came and there was still no rain. For all practical purposes the staff decided they had better send home the campers that would be arriving the next day. In despair, no one on the staff had checked the water tanks that day. No rain, they figured---no water.

Then someone passing by the tanks heard the sound of running water. What they soon discovered was that not only were the tanks full, but they were overflowing with water. The camp that year was saved. God didn't need rain to supply the water!

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Another of this author's favorite stories is about a family traveling across the States to a new job. Apparently they ran out of money for food because of car difficulties or the like. Yet God supplied their needs uniquely, time after time. First it was lettuce to go on what bread they had, given them from a nearby field being harvested. Another time it was melons. And so forth. The family daily rehearsed the story of the manna given to Israel in the wilderness. But the youngest in the family, a small girl wanted "peanut butter manna." She was warned by her parents that they could only have what God supplied. They could not order certain foods from God. But she insisted she wanted "peanut butter manna."

At one of their stops the family was parked by the side of the road and the children were playing. As they ran about, they found several packages that contained food. They soon found out they were army rations that had been stowed during maneuvers in that area. They inquired about them and were told to help themselves to them, they would never be retained by the army ever again. Inside the boxes were several meals, and one of the main ingredients was peanut butter.

But someone will be inclined to ask: "Doesn't God miss some? What about the starving people in the world?" And there are some. In fact, a large proportion of the world goes to bed hungry at night.

But is God the problem?

David writes in Psalm 37:25

"I have been young and I have been old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

An important question to ask is where, in the world, is the starvation taking place. It is not in the developed countries of the world, but in the under-developed places in the world. And it is pretty much true that if you list the developed countries alongside a list of the undeveloped countries you basically have a list of Christian countries over against countries that

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are largely dominated by other world religions, or who are agnostic or atheistic in their policies.

Even countries that have advanced technology sometimes are socially under developed. This was true of the once called Soviet Union, now divided by the results of the fall of Communism. Though a country of incredible land mass and space age technology the nation consistently had to buy grain for its people.

Countries like the U.S.A. and Australia, that were founded, at least originally, on Christian principles are nations that have grain in such abundance that they are able to export huge portions to other countries.

God feeds his people, and He also feeds those who are not His people, when they hang around with His people. God honors the simple prayer of the Christian every day – “Give us this day, our daily bread.”

A curse largely rests on the remaining countries of the earth. It rests especially on those nations that do not acknowledge the true God. In parts of the world where there are no Christian roots, you see a low view of human life, great famine, and poverty. Nations that have known Christian teaching have a high respect for the value of man as created in God’s image. There are isolated cases where this is not always true. But in general there is a trend very similar to what we read in the Bible. When God’s people honored him, they prospered. When they didn’t they were left to famine, pestilence, and war.

Cites John MacArthur, Jr:

Six of ten people in Calcutta live on the street. There are 660 million people in India, and fifteen million die every year. Twenty-seven million are born, so they just keep getting more and more people living on the streets. Is it because they don’t have any food? No.

Indira Gandhi herself said there is enough resource in India to feed that nation entirely and then export two-thirds of all that it produces.

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Only fifteen percent of the harvestable land on the globe is being farmed, and only half of that every year. Our problem is not a lack of resources. Our problem is not too many people. By the early twenties a study revealed that there were less people per square mile in New York City-42,000-than there had been fifty years earlier-45,000 (Murray Norris, *The Myth of Overpopulation*, [Clovis, Calif: Family Gook Club, n.d.])

In India:

The cows are supposedly the incarnations of the gods. They then become the centers of worship. Everything that comes from a cow is sacred, including its excretions. To a Hindu, to kill and eat a cow is worse than cannibalism. But get this: cows eat 20 percent of the food supply in India. They have rest homes for old cows that cease to give milk. Not for old people, just old cows. Every cow eats enough for seven people.

Fifteen percent of the food supply of India is eaten by mice, but nobody kills mice either, because they might be killing a relative. In the Hindu system one is saved by stopping one's births. They believe a person is born over and over, and Nirvana, or the state of nothingness that one desires, is reached when one no longer gets reborn.

Obviously, doctrine is important after all. What one believes about God has a direct effect on even his physical well-being. In this, God is not favoring the righteous. He is willing to supply bread to all. But being the gentleman that he is, he cannot give to those who do not acknowledge him or who refuse his mercies.

Writes Ellen White:

You are to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Be not dismayed if you have not sufficient for tomorrow. You have the assurance of His promise, "so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." David says, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Psalm 37:3, 25. That God who sent the ravens to feed Elijah by the brook of Cherith will not pass by one of His faithful, self-sacrificing children. Of him that walketh righteously it is written: "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of

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famine they shall be satisfied.” “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Isaiah 33:16, Psalm 37:19; Romans 8:32 (MB 111)

It is well to note that the promise is only *bread*.

- Not jam and jelly on it particularly but bread.
- Not French fondue, eggplant parmesan, stroganoff, lasagna, vegemeat casserole, but *bread*.
- Not an ice cream sundae, peanut buster parfait, banana split, but *bread*.

But God in his goodness often gives much more than just bread. Sometimes there is soup, salad, and even dipping sauce too!

It is sometime too on the condition of our effort: (and in moderate quantity). God wants us to neither eat too little nor too much.

As someone has jokingly said, “God does not help those who help themselves, and help themselves, and help themselves.....either!”

“A man by the name of Dick Sheppard used to love a certain story. There was a man who had an allotment; he had with great toil reclaimed a piece of ground, clearing away the stones, eradicating the rank growth of weeds, enriching and feeding the ground, until it produced the loveliest flowers and vegetables. One evening he was showing a pious friend around his allotment. The pious friend said, “It’s wonderful what God can do with a bit of ground like this, isn’t it?” “Yes,” said the man who had put in such toil, “but you should have seen this bit of ground when God had it to himself!” God’s bounty and man’s toil must combine. Prayer, like faith, without works is dead. When we pray this petition we are recognizing two basic truths-that without God we can do nothing, and that without our effort and co-operation God can do nothing for us.”¹⁵

God gives food to birds – yet nothing works harder for a living, and is busier than a sparrow. God does not drop grubs down the gullets of young

¹⁵ Barclay; 6:12,14,15.

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birds nor does he give handouts to indolent people who sit in the shade and do nothing.

God spoke to Adam: “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,” which St. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians interpreted as: “If any will not work, neither let him eat.”

No *extra* manna was given to Israel. Just enough, adequate to feed each family.

The reason I believe that there are such stories of providence about food, is that Jesus promises it in the Lord’s Prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is consistent with his will and with the history of how God deals with his people. When one prays the Lord’s Prayer, he will find his prayers answered, for no other prayer comes closer to the Lord’s will than this prayer.

Among the most notable examples of prayer for the things that sustain life comes with the work and experience of George Mueller. Mueller became a Christian as a mature youth. He soon recognized the face of Christ in the suffering poor, especially the plight of the children of England.

In England in 1835 it was a common sight to see small children, orphans begging in the streets. Such things as the workhouses, which in reality were a social disgrace were about the only attempt at helping orphans and outcasts.

This social problem was recognized by Charles Dickens who presented it to the public in form of the famous book, “*Oliver Twist*.” The situation of the orphan was as he describes, “the humble half-starved drudge who was doomed to be cuffed and buffeted through the world—despised by all, and pitied by none.”

There were few, if any orphan homes in England at this time. In fact, in 1835, private orphan homes were regarded as revolutionary experiments.

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For those that did exist, almost insurmountable obstacles barred the way for the homeless child. First of all, a sponsor was necessary to pay the child's expenses. Then class barriers prevented their acceptance. Certain orphanages required that the orphans be only those who were children of middle class parents, or those who once had moved in a superior station in life, or who were respectably descended. Many homes refused to accept children who were in any way diseased or deformed.

George Mueller had in the last few years noticed the plight of the orphans. What began as a passing thought soon began to occupy his mind more and more. He began to pray about it until he became convinced that God wanted him to start an orphan house. Thus began the adventure that was to make him famous.

He was not just building an orphan house. He was embarking upon a daring and revolutionary experiment.

Said Mueller, "Now, if I, a poor man, simply by prayer and faith, obtained, without asking any individual, the means for establishing and carrying on an Orphan-House, there would be something which, with the Lord's blessing might be instrumental in strengthening the faith of the children of God, besides being a testimony to the consciences of the unconverted, of the reality of the things of God."

George Mueller was setting out to prove that God is faithful still and that he still hears and answers prayers.

Here is what happened:

A few days later he received the first shilling for the orphan house, and this was followed by a flood of articles and funds. He began receiving furniture, blankets, all kinds of clothing, food and money of various denominations. In answer to his prayer, several individuals offered their services for superintending the Orphanage, believing that God would provide for their needs. Within less than six months a house was found and the first children arrived.

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One year later there was another orphan house and within a few months, a third. In a little over a year, Mueller had received every schilling of his requested 1,000 pounds.

Operating and maintaining the orphanage in the early years was, not, for George Mueller, without cause for anxiety. Allow us to list some excerpts from his diary:

“Aug. 18, I have not one penny in hand for the orphans. In a day or two many pounds will be needed. My eyes are up to the Lord.
Evening. Before this day is over, I have received from a sister 5 pounds.

Aug. 20, The 5 pounds I had received on the 18th had been given for house keeping, so that today I was again penniless. But my eyes were up to the Lord. I gave myself to prayer this morning, knowing that I should want again this week at least 13 pounds, if not above 20 pounds. Today I received 12 lbs. in answer to prayer, from a lady who is staying at Clifton, whom I had never seen before.

Aug. 23, Today I was again without one single penny, when 3 pounds was sent from Clapham, with a box of new clothes for the orphans.

These fascinating accounts of God’s providences continued to occur over a period of many years; to recount them completely would be too repetitious to be beneficial, but the lesson is that throughout this period God provided. Many times God answered a specific need; for example, one morning Mueller became aware that the supply of potatoes was nearly gone. No sooner had the thought crossed his mind that he was notified that they had already been delivered.

The most famous story, purported to be true by most any biographer and attested to by many witnesses, happened when there were about 300 children at one of his orphan houses. On this day the children gathered for breakfast and the plates and cups or bowls were on the table. There was nothing on the table but empty dishes. There was no food in the larder, and no money to supply the need. The children were standing waiting for breakfast, “children, you know we must be in time for school,” said

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Mueller. Then lifting his hand he prayed, “Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou are going to give us to eat.”

According to the account, a knock was heard at the door. The baker stood there and said, “Mr. Mueller, I couldn’t sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn’t have bread for breakfast, and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So I got up at two o’clock and baked some fresh bread, and have brought it.” Mueller thanked the baker and praised God for His care. “Children,” he said, “we not only have bread, but the rare treat of fresh bread.” Almost immediately there came a second knock at the door. This time it was the milkman who announced that his milk cart had broken down outside the Orphanage and that he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk, so that he could empty his wagon and repair it.

“Our God will supply every need according to His riches in glory.”

Mueller once said:

“1,400,000 pounds have been sent me in answer to prayer.”

Today this would be the equivalent of thousands if not millions of dollars.

Many people often asked him, “What would happen if there was a mealtime to come and you had no provisions for the children, or they really needed clothes, and you had no money to procure them?” “Such a thing is impossible,” Mueller would assure them, “as long as the Lord gives us grace to trust in Him.”

Another time he was asked if he had ever contemplated a reserve fund. To this he said emphatically, “that would be the greatest folly. How could I pray if I had reserves? God would say, “bring them out; bring out those reserves, George Mueller.” Oh, no, I have never thought of such a thing! Our reserve fund is in Heaven. God, the living God is our sufficiency. I have trusted Him for one sovereign; I have trusted Him for thousands, and I have never trusted in vain. “Blessed is the man that trusts in Him.”

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Another time, late in life he reported: “If I say that during the 54 years and 9 months that I have been a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I have had 30,000 answers to prayer, either in the same hour or the same day that the requests were made, I should not go a particle too far.” The great point is to never give up until that answer comes. I have been praying every day for 52 years for two men, sons of a friend of my youth. They are not converted yet, but they will be! The great fault of the children of God is that they do not continue in prayer—they do not go on praying; they do not persevere. If they desire anything for God’s glory, they should pray until they get it.”

One of these men supposedly became a Christian at George Mueller’s funeral, the other some years later.¹⁶

God delights in supplying our needs:

The following short story demonstrates this:

The tile floor felt cold to my knees as I knelt to take a brief inventory of my kitchen cabinets. It did not take long to see that there was almost nothing to eat—a little rice, a one-pound sack of beans, a can of tomato sauce, a couple cups of flour. From this small store my husband and I would have to find the night’s supper, morning’s breakfast, and tomorrow’s lunch before he would receive his small paycheck and be able to buy groceries.

Bitter thoughts began to lash out inside me. I was out of work, and my husband had had to accept a low-paying job to keep from having to work on Sabbath. Hunger had a way of outlining sharply both our necessities and frustrations. It is not easy to be kind and patient when you see the man you love work for less than half the salary he had been offered if he would work on Sabbath just once or twice a year.

Because I was kneeling on the floor already, I was in the proper position to ask for the help I needed. The cold floor brought my mind back to the contents of the cabinet. I could cook the rice and the beans, make some

¹⁶ *Evangelism as a Lifestyle*, Page 142.

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sort of bread out of the flour, and make it last for one more *day-but* there was no oil, no shortening, no margarine.

I thought about Elijah and another woman who had faced cupboards that were nearly bare. Because I was kneeling on the floor already, I was in the proper position to ask for the help I needed. As I began my prayer, asking the same God who likewise had helped Elijah and Elisha by supplying oil, I had trouble concentrating because someone walked up on my front porch, made a noise at the door, and walked away rapidly.

As soon as I had said Amen, curiosity led me to the front door. There hanging in a plastic bag with a circular hole at the top that fit over the doorknob was a brown bottle. A printed tag proclaimed, "HERE IS YOUR SAMPLE BOTTLE OF OIL."¹⁷

God consistently provides for our needs, day by day. The following is another of this author's favorite stories in this regard. It is told by Dick Tanner:

Recently I sat in a prominent lawyer's twenty-third- floor office in a large Indiana city. This man and his colleagues are busy men, but he was willing to share his time with us. As we discussed our Community Crusade Against Drugs program he told me and my companion, George Dronen, about the faith factor in his life. He related an experience that had taken place while he served in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

Ted was on board a ship in Lake Michigan that docked one Sunday morning at Traverse City. The crew was given a mandatory shore leave until eight o'clock that evening. The problem was that Ted had just three cents when he stepped ashore. He reflected, "I knew I wouldn't starve that day, but the prospect of going hungry all day was an unpleasant one."

As he walked up the street that led into town he came to a church where a service was in progress. He felt blessed by the service and when the offering was taken he said, "Well, Lord, it's Your money anyway," and as

¹⁷ When written, Ruth Fillman Arias was a homemaker living in Grand Prairie, Texas. *ADVENTIST REVIEW*, Feb. 26, 1981. "A bottle of oil"

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unobtrusively as possible placed his last three cents in the offering basket.

After the service he walked down the street again, wondering what he was going to do for the day. An older couple, driving by in a car, stopped and asked him to have dinner with them. He agreed happily. They fed him well and then showed him all the points of interest around Traverse City. When the afternoon was nearly over, the gentleman, after whispering to his wife, said to him, "We have enjoyed our day with you so much that we would like to buy you supper." After eating they drove him to the ship. On the way, they asked, "Is there anything more we can do for you?" Ted wanted a chocolate soda, but was determined not to ask for it.

After saying thanks and goodbye, he walked up the gangplank. The sentry met him and said, "Ted, I wish I'd asked you to get me a toothbrush today." Ted responded, "I bought a new toothbrush last shore leave. It was a 'Buy one, get one free' deal. Let me show it to you." Ted brought the extra toothbrush. The sentry said, "It's still in the box and marked 29 cents." So he gave Ted the 29 cents Ted had paid for the toothbrush. Ted took the 29 cents, headed for the drugstore, bought a 25-cent soda, paid 1 cent for tax, and headed back to the ship.

He had three cents left in his pocket--exactly what he started out with that morning!¹⁸

- From the beginning God made every plant yielding seed and its fruit for food.
- For Noah and his family instruction for food was among God's first concerns.
- For Hagar – A well sprang up in the wilderness.
- For Joseph, when carried to Egypt--became according to the writings of Josephus – the mover of food – and later the national manager of food –“That many people should be kept alive.”

¹⁸ In 1981 Dick Tanner was publishing director for the Indiana Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. *ADVENTIST REVIEW*, SEPTEMBER 10, 1981, p. 3.

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- Israel was given—bread from heaven – 40 years – and in Canaan ate from vineyards they had not planted and from fields they had not sown.
 - For the widow of Zarephath the jar of meal was not spent – the cruse of oil did not fail while Elijah stayed in her humble house.
 - God fed the prophet with ravens by the brook.
 - When Elijah fled, all hope seemed lost, yet there was at his head—some baked bread and a jar of water.
 - Ruth received not only a handful of grain, but infinitely more.
 - Elisha, and the widow in Israel, saw the cruse of oil poured until her debt was paid and her children were spared of slavery.
 - God miraculously fed and preserved the schools of the prophets – removed poison from the pot, and purified a water source.
 - In 2 Kings 4:42-44, God fed an army in the desert.
 - Jeremiah was pulled from the mire and fed at the table of the king's court.
 - Daniel and his friends were fed at the King's table.
 - Jesus fed a crowd of 20,000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish lest they would be too weary on the road home.
 - The apostle Paul found that God will supply all our *need*.
-
- And He will!

THE PARDON OF PRAYER

How to Experience Forgiveness

“And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Matthew 6:12

Forgiveness mean’s “to give before.” Some linguists even teach that the prefix means, “away,” “off,” “to the uttermost,” “extremely.” Therefore it means to give “extravagantly.”

It has been said that: “The most essential and the most blessed and the most costly thing God ever did was to provide man the forgiveness of sin.”¹⁹

It was the great need of forgiveness that cost the Son of God His life. The importance of forgiveness is seldom realized by mortals. Because forgiveness has a mental and psychological dimension many dismiss it as really necessary or absolutely essential to human peace.

God recognizes that just as we need physical security, or our temporal daily bread, we equally need mental, social, and emotional security as well. “Soul” health, or personal peace is totally necessary for the happiness of the person. Without it terrible things happen every day. Women and children are abused, people commit suicide, deadly conflicts arise, and the list goes on interminably.

The head of a large hospital once said, “I could dismiss half of my patients tomorrow if they could be assured of forgiveness.”²⁰

In her biographical sketch, the writer Ellen White describes the experience of her early life, in which she was taught of an eternally burning hell, and how it affected her. She felt the horror of a life without forgiveness:

I had been taught to believe in an eternally burning hell, perspiration would start, and it was difficult to suppress a cry of anguish. This

¹⁹ Douglas Cooper, *Living God’s Love*, p. 105.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 105, 106.

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impression deepened upon my mind until I feared that I would lose my reason. I would look upon the dumb beasts with envy, because they had no soul to be punished after death. Many times the wish arose that I had never been born....

Could the truth have been presented to me as I now understand it, much perplexity and sorrow would have been spared me. If the love of God had been dwelt upon more and His stern justice less, the beauty and glory of His character would have inspired me with a deep and earnest love for my Creator.

I have since thought that many inmates of insane asylums were brought there by experiences similar to my own.---EGW biographical sketch²¹

Debts

Why did Jesus use the word “debt” or “debts” in his prayer? The word (*opheilema*) is actually translated in various ways.

- “Forgive us our trespasses” (Knox).
- “Forgive us our shortcomings” (Weymouth).
- “Forgive us what we owe to you” (Phillips).
- “Forgive us our sins: (TLB).
- “Forgive us our resentments (Amplified).
- “Forgive us the wrong we have done” (NEB)

There are at least five words in the New Testament for sin:

Hamartia - Missing the target, to err
Parabasis – Stepping across the line/right and wrong
Paraptoma – Slipping across, lose control---not so deliberate
Anomia – conscious, blatant, deliberate, flagrant iniquity
Ophedema – debt – failure to pay.²²

²¹ This passage is taken from the book *Early Writings*, p. 24, 25.

²² P. 220. W. Barclay – *Matthew*

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Jesus seems to use a term that is unique in at least one particular aspect. That is the inability to pay. A debt signifies that the person who owes is unable in his present circumstances to pay. He is in need of Grace, Grace that is a gift (Ephesians 2:8). There is nothing that the offender can do to receive the favor of God. He simply needs his impossible debt *paid* to be right with God. The word “debt” does not imply simply erring, or glaring iniquity. It covers both. It includes all shortcomings.

The word “debts” also has a Jewish orientation. To the Jews in Jesus’ day the misuse of money was something they were all focused on. Some of the Jews of even today are known for being money conscious. Jesus spoke to them in symbols that were significant to them.

The Offer of God’s Forgiveness

Among the great promises in the Scripture is 1 John 1:9:

“ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

This is perhaps the greatest known promise of forgiveness. Yet thousands of Christians fail in truly grasping the reality of the promise. Many are gloomy, miserable, and discouraged.

A good many are not able to experience forgiveness and complete acceptance. They might be struggling against some sin and or failure in their lives and are under a ribbon of darkness and guilt. Many are living in the past. Some are caught in the trap of dwelling on a particular problem. They don’t believe they are forgiven. REALLY FORGIVEN.

But God has promised complete forgiveness in scores of places.

Hebrews 10:17 is another such place: Hear the promise of God...

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the lord, I will put my law into their hearts, and in their minds will I write

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them; AND THEIR SINS AND INIQUITIES I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.” (quoting Jer. 31:33,34)

When it comes to our sins, the promise is that when confessed, they are forgotten by God. In this way God is “absent-minded” about them. This does not say that God, who knows all, has a memory problem. For God to be God he cannot have a flaw in his mental ability. What it is telling us is that in human terms God blots out these sins with his Grace. For us to believe otherwise is an affront to his efforts of Grace. God’s attitude is one of conveniently forgetting these sins forever.

The thoroughness of this forgiveness is manifest in the Scripture. The following three texts provide a three dimensional dismissal of our sins and iniquities.

- Micah 7:19

“He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou will cast ALL THEIR SINS INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA.”

(In some places the ocean is 7-8 miles deep. Our sins are safely buried. And God even puts up a sign, “NO FISHING!”)

- Psalm 103:12

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.”

(Considering a “round” world--we are really talking about “infinity”)

- Isaiah 44:22

“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.”

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These verses assure us that when it comes to our sins, “God is absent-minded.” In saying so we are not making light of God. This is what God says he does about them. He deliberately forgets them.²³

This should be accepted as good news for most of us. And most of us do accept it to a point. The problem is we don’t accept it completely. There are problems usually. What are these problems?

- We think we somehow have to “earn” forgiveness
- We rely on “feeling” forgiven, or...
- We simply refuse to accept the fact of our forgiveness

1. That we can do anything to “earn” or salvation is, of course, totally absurd. Our forgiveness is not dependent on our prior or future behavior, or in any way resident in our own works. It is a gift of God. *Ephesians* 2: 8 and 9 declare, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”

2. Many, if not all, of us struggle with “feeling” forgiven. The problem with this scenario is that our forgiveness is not based on feeling, but rather in fact. Feeling is very deceiving anyway. *1 John 3:19 and 20* assures us, “This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.”

While I, the author, was at a Christian high school a devotional speaker illustrated this in the following way. He brought a barber chair onto the platform and asked for volunteers. He blindfolded the volunteers one at a time and allowed them to sit in the chair. Sometimes he would swivel the chair, sometimes he would stop it. In front of the audience he would ask

²³ Please note that God does not say in any of the verses that “sin is done away with,” or “ignored.” The sin is still present and must be dealt with by Christ. But to our view it is hidden and ignored. While sin is forgiven, its negative results still abide, until the kingdom of Glory comes in its fullness.

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the subjects if they were moving or if they were stationary. In many instances the blindfolded subjects had no definite idea whether they were moving or holding still. Their “feelings,” were totally unreliable.

During World War II, pilots often found out how unreliable their “feelings” were. Sometimes in darkness, clouds, or haze only their instruments (if they had them) could tell them their true position. Pilots called this effort to fly apart from instrumentation “flying by the seat of their pants.” Some pilots who felt sure they were flying just fine would come out of the clouds sideways, or even upside-down. Not a few pilots have totally crashed or flown into the ground under the same circumstances. Feelings are not reliable.

We are not to believe we are forgiven because we “feel” forgiven, but because God supplies and promises the fact. It is so. Counsels the little book, *Steps to Christ*:

“If you believe the promise, believe that you are forgiven and cleansed, God supplies the fact;... It is so if you believe it. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole, but say: ‘I believe it; it is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.’” SC 51

When Luther was asked whether he felt his sins had been forgiven he said,

“No, but I am just as sure there is a God in heaven. For feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the word of God. None else is worth believing. I’ll trust in that unchanging word till breath and body sever. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but thy word shall never.”²⁴

3. Finally, there are always some who simply refuse to believe what God has promised. But we are accepting our own sin-diseased thoughts above God’s Word if we refuse to accept that we are forgiven, for God plainly tells us that “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.

²⁴*In the Morning*, p. 196.

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Shortly after the civil war a northern woman stopped at little highway hotel and was waited on by a Black-American woman. The service the Black woman gave was careless, listless and un-attentive.

The northern woman was a little nettled at the way she was being treated. She asked the hotel maid, "Is this the way you treat someone who has worked to set you free?"

From the black woman there was no reply. She left the room. Later, however, she came back and her whole demeanor had changed. With great emotion she asked in the jargon then used:

"O MISSUS, IS WE REALLY FREE, IS WE REALLY FREE?"

The fact was, the Emancipation Proclamation was already in effect. The southern woman even had heard the news. But she refused to believe it. Therefore, she was still as much a slave and she had been before.

The Promise of Forgiveness

This promise of forgiveness should be good news to any follower of Christ. In fact it is really the *essence* of the Gospel. God forgives us. No matter where sin is, God covers it, every dimension. Beneath us, beside us, above, and around us, whatever. We can call it "three-dimensional forgiveness." It is complete.

- He has cast them into the depths of the sea
- He has separated them as far as the east is from the west
- He has hidden them in the clouds
- God has forgotten them

God forgives!! Like in the story of the prodigal son, God forgets the past. "And their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." When it comes to our sins God has forgotten them. He is ABSENT-MINDED. Not due to any ineptness, but by His choice and love.

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One time when I, the author, was gesturing from the pulpit--regarding these dimensions--someone in the audience called out, "You have just indicated a cross." This is really no surprise, for that is what the cross represents. The vertical bar represents the connection of Grace between heaven and earth. The horizontal bar represents the eternal dimensions of God's forgiveness from the east to the west. As someone has observed, "Christ on the cross was holding out his arms to embrace the whole world." As my child has interpreted it, "Jesus wanted to give the whole world a 'hug.'"

Forgiveness and cleansing is a "fact" of the Gospel. As Paul said "For I delivered to you as of first importance what also I received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." 1 Cor. 15:3

If we know Jesus in a personal way and ask for forgiveness, we are perfect in God's sight, we are cleansed, and the sin is forgotten. We think we understand this but I'm afraid in most cases Christians really don't.

The problem comes when we don't forget about them also. We too must not dwell on them. The mind plays a mental trick on us that needs to be observed in this regard. Once something is visualized in the mind, it cannot be forgotten, especially when we try to.

For instance, let us mentally picture a "hot fudge sundae" or something of that nature. That being done, I challenge the reader to now forget about the "hot-fudge sundae." "Do it." I ask you---I order you, "forget about the HOT FUDGE SUNDAE!"

What are you thinking about? The Hot-Fudge Sundae, of course.

Sometimes this happens with the area of forgiveness.

Mentally we say, "God forgive me for the sundae I had last week. It sure was a terrible thing to do, to eat that hot---fudge---sundae. Yes, it was a hot-fudge sundae. A hot fudge sundae has ice cream, hot, rich chocolate syrup, sprinkles, etc., etc. Forgive me, Lord, for eating the hot-fudge

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sundae. It was a good hot-fudge sundae, though. But Lord, please forgive me.”

Instead of forgetting our sin, as God does, it’s the very thing we think about. It is because sin has worn pathways in our mind. Rather than looking at the sin we need to look to Christ. Dwell on Him. Let our thoughts be on Him. Then we will be safe. This is what Paul means by being renewed and transformed in our mind.

FORGIVING OTHERS

There is but one condition on which God will not grant his forgiveness. That is that we forgive others---Matthew 6:14, 15.

Forgive us our debts...*As We Forgive Our Debtors*, the prayer says.

This one is tough, and most of us would like to leave it out of the prayer entirely. But it is important as well.

“When Robert Louis Stevenson lived in the South Sea Islands he used always to conduct family worship in the mornings for his household. It always concluded with the Lord’s Prayer. One morning in the middle of the Lord’s Prayer he rose from his knees and left the room. His health was always precarious, and his wife followed him thinking that he was ill. “Is there anything wrong?” she said. “Only this,” said Stevenson, “I am not fit to pray the Lord’s Prayer today.” No one is fit to pray the Lord’s Prayer so long as the unforgiving spirit holds sway within his heart. If a man has not put things right with his fellow-men, he cannot put things right with God.”²⁵

Referring to this in Matthew 5:23-24: “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee. . . first be reconciled to your brother.” In the same sermon in which Jesus presents to us the Lord’s Prayer he recommends that anyone who has aught against his brother should first “leave there thy gift before the altar,

²⁵ Barclay, *Matthew*, The Lord’s Prayer.

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and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

In today’s language this would mean:

- Before a Communion Service
- Before kneeling for morning prayer.
- Before doing anything else, when a quarrel or misunderstanding is active between work associates, spouses, brothers and sisters, or whoever.

Writes John MacArthur:

Matthew 18 provides us a final illustration to this important truth. The text down to verse 15 deals with the same issue of brothers in the church and society making things right between them, But in Verse 21 Peter says, “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?” Till seven times?

Jesus said, “I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.” Indefinitely, infinitely, unendingly.

Then he begins a story in verse 23. “Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he has begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.”

Now let’s stop there a minute.

That servant was a real rat. The worst. Ten Thousand talents is so much money that it’s hard for us to even conceive. For example, one talent could be worth about six thousand days’ work. So it would take this man nineteen years working six days a week to earn one talent, and he owed ten thousand.

How could a servant ever owe that much? Perhaps he had been pilfering from the king’s treasury and had lost it all on a bad investment. He had nothing with which to pay.

If it is inconceivable how he gained that much, imagine what he must have done to lose it all! It’s one thing to steal—that’s crooked—but it is stupid to lose it all.

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Now that is really stupid! He would have to live 190 years and put every dime he ever earned into his debt. The man was a fool no matter how you look at it. Our reaction might be fury. If we had somebody holding out a couple of thousand dollars on us, we might be basket cases.

But the Lord of this servant was moved with compassion, loosed him, and forgave him the debt. Amazing.

Guess who that king represents? God.

Guess who the servant is? All of us. We owed a debt we could not pay. And He forgave. Why? He was compassionate. How could He forgive a debt as astronomical as that: Because of His great love.

The same servant, in verse 28, went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him money worth about three months' work. Peanuts. The one who had been forgiven the ten thousand grabbed the other by the neck, the Bible says, and demanded, "Pay me what you owe me."

And the fellow servant fell at his feet and besought him. "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." But the evil man cast him into prison.

When the other servants saw what had happened, they told the king, who called the evil one to him. "O you wicked servant," he said. "I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; should not you also have had compassion on your fellow servant even as I had pity on you?" His angry lord delivered him to the inquisitors.

So likewise shall God do unto us if we do not from our hearts forgive anyone who has trespassed against us. This is a picture of somebody who wants to take all the forgiveness God can give but is not willing to give it to somebody else.

That parable has primary application for one who is not truly saved (see author's note below²⁶). His redemption has been purchased by God, the gift of forgiveness offered, but his

²⁶ I would perhaps prefer to say truly "converted" or having never claimed the promises of God, rather than say "unredeemed" or "unsaved."---S. Behrmann

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unforgiving, merciless spirit reveals that he has never been redeemed. Thus he is sentenced to pay his own debt—eternally.

But the disciples were also in the audience when Jesus taught, and I can see the scope of this principle broaden to encompass indirectly and secondarily a believer who is unforgiving and merciless, and thus subject to chastening.

Lord Herbert put it very well when he said, “He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass.”²⁷

In Joachim Jeremias’ book, Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, we get an idea of how much 10,000 talents was. The entire tax tribute for one year in the kingdom of Israel was less than a thousand talents. Therefore 10,000 talents would be like the “national debt,” today.²⁸ ----

This is what God forgives in each of us.

The Prayer of Forgiveness

Prayer in which there is no forgiveness, received and given, is also no prayer at all. Christ invites the sinner to partake freely in his Grace. It is a glorious fact, the award of his love.

As Paul says: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherefore Christ has made us free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage.”²⁹ “Go, and sin no more.” (John 8).

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

²⁷ MacArthur, *The Pattern of Prayer*, p. 130,131.

²⁸ Herod Antipas received 200 talents, Phillip, 100, and Archelaus 400----the entire revenue for whole kingdom was between 760 to 960 talents. Agrippa had about 1,166 talents. So with a thousand talents even the government could survive. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p. 91.

²⁹ Galatians 5:1

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THE PROTECTION OF PRAYER

How to Experience Victory

The concluding petition in the Lord's Prayer is for preservation and for help in difficulty:

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"And lead us not into temptation"

A question immediately comes to mind: What does this mean? Would God ever deliberately bring us into temptation and trial?

A problem arises when we cross languages and translate thoughts and idioms that do not fit our own traditional speech.

When comparing the Lord's Prayer with the 23rd Psalm it becomes clear what the statement really means. The same thought is expressed in this way---

Lead us in the paths of righteousness for thy name's sake---right paths.

Says the writer Ellen White in the delightful little book---*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*:

"Temptation is enticement to sin, and this does not proceed from God, but from Satan and from the evil of our own hearts." p. 116

Says James, the brother of our Lord Jesus: (Ellen White here uses the *Revised Version*) "God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man." James 1:13 RV

"Lead us not into temptation" is a phrase where the negative is used to stress a positive or an opposite, such as: "take no prisoners" or "thou shalt not steal."

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(In the opposite sense these phrases really mean: “completely annihilate the foe,” and “leave others’ property alone”) It really means what Ellen White says:

"We surrender ourselves to the guidance of God, asking him to lead us in safe paths" MB, p.117

It could be translated as: "Keep us out of trouble, God " (McArthur, p. 134), or this author’s personal paraphrase: "Help us not to fall prey to trial." Martin Luther said: "We cannot help being exposed to the assaults, but we pray that we may not fall and perish under them."

How to Overcome Temptation

If there is anything sinners need to know today it is this: How to overcome temptation. The Bible warns that “Satan goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 4:19)

In this prayer we have more than instruction, or hope. We have a promise that God will definitely help us. We can resist and find deliverance from every sin. It is possible. There is here a complete victor's recipe:

“Lead us not” is... PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE.

“Deliver us from” is... CURATIVE MEDICINE.

But we must first identify the antagonist. The cardinal rule of combat is “know your enemy.”

The Lord’s Prayer really says, LITERALLY....”the evil ONE.”

The world describes evil as an impersonal force. But the Christian does not.

Phillip Keller reports: "It is worthy of note that whenever Christ was attempted or assailed by Satan, He immediately reacted by addressing Himself directly to His antagonist." *A Laymen Looks at the Lord’s Prayer*, p. 143.

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Indeed, “we war not against flesh and blood....” but against principalities and the powers,” the hosts of the Satan.

“Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying swiftly to aid these tempted ones, who are standing as on the brink of a precipice. The angels from heaven force back the hosts of evil that encompass these souls, and guide them to plant their feet on the sure foundation. The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend”--- White, MB 119

So what is the secret to overcoming all temptation and trials sent to us by the evil one?

The first mistake is to think that anyone *can overcome*---alone.

There are a lot adages and advice that might work at times, but they do not work always.

Thomas Jefferson advised : "When angry count ten before you speak." This is nice advice, but what happens when you are tripped suddenly into anger before you even thought to count ten?

Another adage is not to go on “Satan's ground.” This is of supreme importance, that we not tip the scales in Satan’s favor, but the reality is Satan can come most anywhere. He comes right into the church sometimes. So we must be prepared for him. He is in Wamsutter, Wyoming, as well as Los Angeles CA, He is in Canyonville, Oregon, as well as in New York City, New York.

Another important element of resistance is that we should not dwell on the temptation, or parley with the devil. If we do we are sure to lose.

"It is not safe for us to linger to contemplate the advantages to be reaped through yielding to Satan's suggestions." MB, p. 118.

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This is what happened when the ducks rested their feet on the floating ice above Niagara Falls. They lingered in danger, their feet froze fast, and they went over the falls. But Satan can take us quickly and suddenly as well.

WHAT IS THE SECRET?

Some organizations have a "Twelve-step Plan." But Christians really have a much simpler paradigm. It is a---"Two step Plan."

"James 4:7,8 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.... Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you...."

"The only safeguard against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. It is because selfishness exists in our hearts that temptation has power over us. ...Live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold you firmly by a hand that will never let go.... " MB, p. 118.

The **ONLY** thing that will work is an abiding relationship with Jesus the Savior.

Some are fighting against a sin in their life. They cannot overcome it.

The problem may be that they have not given it to Jesus, the sin-bearer. They have not really **GIVEN** it. They seek aid, or help instead of total victory. Christ is the only real hope for any temptation or trial---without Him you can do *nothing*.

Steve Winger from Lubbock Texas writes about his last college test---a final in logic class known for its difficult exams:

To help us on our test, the professor told us we could bring as much information to the exam as we could fit on a piece of notebook paper. Most students crammed as many facts as possible on their 8 ½ X 11 sheet of paper.

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But one student walked into class, put a piece of notebook paper on the floor, and had an advanced logic student stand on the paper. The advanced logic student stood there and told him (the student) everything he needed to know as he proceeded through the exam! He was the only student who received an “A.”

We have someone who stands in for us in our tests and trials.

One spiritual pilgrim has related that he uses Psalm 91:1 as his emergency number. In the temporal world someone calls 911 in an emergency. Well, the 911 of the Scripture is Psalm 91-1. There God is equated with his cloud or shekinah glory that symbolized his presence, power, and covering in the innermost “sanctuary.” “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” The rest of the Psalm is about God’s protection through plague and suffering.

In the New Testament the word for *trial* is *peirosmos*.³⁰ 21 out of 22 times it is used it means trial, rather than deliberate temptation. Satan sends both but God uses them for our good. We can be successful in Christ by directly appealing to him in time of trial.

I once had a church member who was bothered by the rock music at his workplace. It wasn’t a matter of mere irritation or preference, it was a matter of living his faith, keeping his mind pure, and keeping his meditative thoughts on God. Finally, lured back to his old life by the music, or because he wished to better connect with his God at work he prayed that God would do something to help him tune out or be able to ignore the music. He knew it was a large request, because his work associate who insisted on playing it had seniority and had worked in this

³⁰ The Greek word “peirasmos,” ----has a two fold meaning---

- led into sin
- trial or testing

21 times in the New Testament. Only one of these times does it have the first meaning. (1 Timothy 6:9). All the rest mean “to test.” Thus also in the OT. It means: trial of testing: “And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham.” Genesis 22. God doesn’t really “tempt.” He does allow “tests.”

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mobile-home manufacturing plant for something like 20 plus years and was permanently settled in his home and position. Within a week or two, with no hint of such a thing in the works, this same fellow took a job in a different state and moved out of town. The rock music also left with him.

There is a non-canonical saying---that purportedly Jesus spoke to his disciples on that last evening prior to the prayer in Gethsemane. It says:

"No one can obtain the kingdom of heaven who has not passed through testing" Jeremias, p. 30.

The message and the context seem to make the statement authentic. In this world one must pass through trial and temptation. But God, through Christ and his Spirit has made a way of escape from them.

"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and delivers them out of their troubles." Psalm 34:17

"The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth." (145:18)

Physical Protection

The Lord's Prayer also teaches us that God provides a hedge of security and protection around his people. We are instructed to pray for this canopy of protection for ourselves and for our families and even our nation.

It is true that bad things happen to good people. But this may not necessarily mean that it makes no difference whether or not one prays for God's protection. *The Psalms* are replete with promises that God through his angelic hosts is a personal guard, a refuge, a tower, a shepherd, a rock, a guide, and a help.

The following story re-enforces the premise that God protects those who seek his care:

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"Several months ago as I was preparing to kneel by my bed and say my nightly prayers, I was suddenly overcome with the feeling that I should "Pray for protection. Pray for protection." It is difficult to describe, as I certainly did not hear a voice and did not see anything. Yet the words were being firmly planted in my mind: "Pray for protection. Pray for protection."

That night as I kneeled, I did not say a casual prayer asking God to watch over me and my loved ones to keep us safe. Instead, I was more specific. "Dear Heavenly Father, please place your angels around our house tonight. Let them watch over our home, our cars, and our property. Please keep us free from danger or harm of any kind."

I prayed about other things, then got in bed and went to sleep. Curiously, the next day I did not think of this prayer once. That is, not until that night, when again I was standing in the same position, preparing to kneel for prayer. Again I sensed the words, "Pray for protection. Pray for protection."

Although I didn't understand why this had happened to me two nights in a row, I felt close enough to God to recognize a warning. I did not feel afraid, but simply that I must obey. I proceeded to repeat the same specific prayer I had prayed the night before, then went to bed.

Since nothing was out of the ordinary when I awoke Monday morning, my weekend prayers did not come to mind. I ate breakfast, dressed for work, and was starting my car when I noticed one of my neighbors hurriedly coming toward me as if to tell me something important.

"You had better check around your house," she said. "The whole neighborhood was vandalized over the weekend--two nights in a row." As she proceeded to point out each car that had been broken into (cars; that were parked just nine feet from ours) and described how the vandals had emptied neighborhood trash cans, scattering litter throughout out and destroying property along the way, chills ran up my spine. I remembered the words: "Pray for protection. Pray for protection."

As my husband and I inspected our property for signs of vandalism, we found that absolutely nothing had been touched. This incident reminded

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me just how real God and His supernatural beings are. I smiled as I imagined angels in my yard and what they might have done to deter what I surmise to have been delinquent teenagers from approaching our cars and property.

As my relationship with God grows and I demonstrate my faith in Him by my willingness to obey, He continues to impress me with His faithfulness in return. "Lord, you are my God. I will exalt you. I will praise your name. For you have done wonderful things; your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth." Isaiah 25:1, NKJV.

----Karina Poteat, Baltimore, Maryland³¹

God wants us to be safe. God wants our needs met. God wants us to trust in him:

It was warm and sunny as the Greyhound bus left Pendleton, Oregon, that summer day with two little girls aboard. I was ten years old, my niece with me was nine. We were on our way to Caldwell, Idaho, to spend some time with my sister. This was not our first bus trip alone but it was one we will never forget because of the miracle. It was a rather strange miracle but to us a miracle none the less.

I don't recall what time the bus left Pendleton but we were to arrive in Caldwell at 2 a.m. It was a long, slow trip. If you have ever traveled by bus you know they stop at every wide spot in the road. At that time there were no restrooms on the buses so we had to get on and off the bus regularly. There were 10-minute stops for restroom breaks and 45-minute stops for lunch and dinner.

We were afraid to buy dinner for fear we might not have enough money to pay for it, or that the bus would leave without us. But at almost every stop we would buy candy bars or some other snack.

Some time before dinner we discovered twenty-five cents was all the money we had left and it cost fifty cents to take a taxi from the depot to the room where my sister lived. She was single, didn't have a car, and worked as a nurse from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Besides that, I am not sure she even knew we were coming; therefore we couldn't expect any help from

³¹ Amazing Facts, "Answers to Prayer," Nov. 1993, p.13.

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her. It was only about two miles. If it had been daylight we would have thought nothing of walking. But at two in the morning alone! We didn't know what to do. We both prayed quietly, "Dear Jesus what are we going to do?"

At the dinner stop we were beginning to feel hungry. We discussed it and decided twenty-five cents was not enough to take the taxi so we might as well spend it.

We got a bag of potato chips which cost about 15 cents. I gave the lady at the cash register our last 25-cent piece. She was busy with people from the bus standing all around her trying to pay for their dinners. She quickly took our quarter and gave us back the wrong change.

We tried to tell her our change was wrong but she started yelling at us. "Can't you see I'm busy;" she said. "Get out of here and leave me alone." I said, "But you gave us the wrong change." She yelled, "I said get out of here. Now get:" We got.

We climbed back on the bus and just sat there scared to death. We didn't know what they do to people who get the wrong change and keep it. Every time we heard someone coming to get back on the bus we were sure it would be the cashier to drag us off the bus by the hair, or a policeman to take us away. Even after what seemed like hours, everyone was back on the bus and we were riding down the highway we kept looking behind us to see if the police were coming to stop the bus and take us. Finally we decided we had gone far enough; no one was going to come after us. I opened my hand and we looked down at a shiny 50 cent piece. Just what we needed to take the taxi.

I don't remember too much about arriving and the taxi ride. But I have since wondered if that lady's cash register totaled out correctly that night. I wouldn't be surprised if it did.

"Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing." DA 330³²

³² Janie Grabill writes from College Place, Wash. *Gleaner*, Feb. 16, 1987, p.2.

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SUMMARY

Jesus places before us a perfect paradigm of how we can communicate with him. The science of prayer cannot be learned in these few short chapters, but through the priceless example of prayer found in the Lord's Prayer anyone is instructed how to enjoy conversation and companionship with the Creator of the heavens and earth. Hopefully this small book has helped someone gain a closer understanding of how to know God more personally.

Christians should PRAY---PRAY---PRAY! They should seek God's face. They should advance God's kingdom, they should do his will. Through prayer God has promised to supply every need, forgive every sin, and defend and sustain in every trial.

**If radio's slim fingers can pluck a melody
From night and toss it over a continent or sea;
If the petalled white notes of a violin
Are blown across the mountain's or the city's din;
If songs, like crimson roses, are culled from thin blue air
Why should mortals wonder if God hears prayer?
----Ethel Romig Fuller**

Conclusion:

The Lord's Prayer closes with praise and acknowledgment of God's glory. Every prayer should begin and end with God. It should end with joy and thanksgiving.

The ending of the prayer is thought to be the typical ending of any prayer given in Jesus day, and some suggest that Jesus did not teach the disciples these words. Some manuscripts leave it out entirely. But the content of the doxology at the end is totally appropriate, and the sentiment it expresses should be the sentiment that closes any of our earthly prayers. To God be the glory!

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Clement of Alexandria has preserved a saying of Jesus that is not written in the Gospels. It says,

“Ask ye for the great things, so will God add to you the little things.”

This, of course, does not mean you may not bring small things into your prayers, but these must not govern our prayers. Our prayers should always begin and end focused on the great things of God’s plan and will. But the *Lord’s Prayer* teaches us to pray for “great things.”³³

"Heavenly Father

Thank you for this prayer. Blessed be your name. Please come in your kingdom---today in our hearts, tomorrow in the clouds of heaven. In all, let your will be done.

Continue to give us the things that we really need. Help us to forgive others so we can know the fullness of your forgiveness. Thank you for the promise that you will never lead us into something we can't handle through you.

Help us meet the conditions to know the fulfillment of the inestimable promises of this prayer. Help us to ask for the great things.

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.”

³³J. Jeremias, *The Lord’s Prayer*, p.33.

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APPENDIX

Seven Conditions of Answered Prayer (As seen in the Lord's Prayer)

Our Father (which art in heaven)

- “One of the first of these is that we feel our need of help from him.” Isaiah 44:3

God expects us to do whatever he has already empowered us to do in answering our own prayer. One little girl is said to have prayed that her brother would not kill or harm the birds he was trying to trap. But just to make sure she crushed her brother's bird trap into several pieces!

Hallowed Be Thy Name

Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done....

- We must pray in Jesus name and according to his will (Matthew 26:42—not mine but thy will...)

“But to pray in the name of Jesus is something more than a mere mention of that name at the beginning and the ending of a prayer. It is to pray in the mind and spirit of Jesus, while we believe his promises, rely upon his Grace, and work his works.” SC p. 101.

- Mentally forsake any known sin (Psalm 66:18-20)
- Faith (Hebrew 11:6) “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
- Perseverance. Romans 12:12 “Be constant in prayer” (daily bread) 1 Thess 5:17 “Pray constantly.”

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“Some people think that prayer is like a parachute; they’re glad it’s there but they hope they never have to use it.” *MacArthur*, p. 15

- Forgiveness Matthew 6:12 (Forgive us our debts---as we forgive. . .)
- Praise (For thine is the) Isaiah 51:3

The Holy Spirit and Prayer

"The Holy Spirit will be given to those who seek for its power and grace, and will help) our infirmities when we would have audience with God." *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pg. 1078.

Writes Kevin Wilfley: "When it says the Holy Spirit "intercedes" for us, it does not mean He repeats our prayers-He is not a heavenly interpreter. It means He inspires and draws out our prayers."

"We must not only pray in Christ's name, but by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This explains what is meant when it is said that the Holy Spirit 'maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.' Rom. 8:26." *Christ's Object Lessons*, pg. 147.

"Christ, our Mediator, and the Holy Spirit are constantly interceding in man's behalf. But the Spirit pleads not for us as does Christ who presents His blood, shed from the foundation of the world; the Spirit works upon our hearts, drawing out prayers and penitence, praise and thanksgiving." *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pg. 1077-78.

Study Guide

STUDY GUIDE

The Purpose of Prayer

1. Discuss why “prayer” is needed.
2. Why does it seem to some that prayer does not work?

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The Pattern of Prayer

1. Compare the Lord's Prayer with Jesus' prayer in John 17. Note the similarities and differences:

Study Guide

The Person of Prayer

(Prayer is to be Personal)

One of the most significant contributions Jesus made to the subject of prayer was to teach that we can talk to God as to a _____.

The Lord's Prayer is appropriate for any _____ or _____.

"The Lord's prayer was not intended to be repeated merely as a _____, but it is an _____ of what our prayers should be- _____, earnest, and comprehensive" (6T 357).

It is appropriate to address _____ as our _____ (MB 103).

We are to ask our petitions in _____ name (John 14:13).

In a biblical sense we are to address the _____ in _____ name and thereby receive the gift of the _____ (Romans 8:15,16,26).

There are three distinct ways in which God speaks to us:

We should avoid _____ or _____ repetition of God's name in prayer (*Education*, p. 243).

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The people in Jesus' day were not used to viewing God as a _____.

To call God our Father is intended to show us that God wishes to be viewed _____ with _____ and _____.

God is more concerned with what our _____ is in prayer than in the actual _____ we _____.

No one can pray the Lord's prayer _____.

God's name represents his _____.

Study Guide

The Plan of Prayer

(How to Know God's Will)

God's name (or names) is a _____ who he is.

The Disciples' Prayer anticipates the _____
of Christ.

There are two heavenly kingdoms of heaven. The Kingdom of _____
and the Kingdom of _____.

_____ is not something unusual, reserved for
some privileged believers.

The will of God may be looked at in at least three ways: These are:

The _____ will of God.

The _____ will of God.

The _____ will of God.

We can know God's will in at least three major ways:

God is _____ that we _____ him about the
important _____ of our life.

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The chief way God informs our decisions is through _____
_____.

We should also watch for his _____
_____.

_____ must be carefully measured by the

and the _____ of God. All three must
_____ up.

Study Guide

The Provision of Prayer

1. List ways in which God has made provision for you, personally:

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The Pardon of Prayer

1. Why don't more people experience God's forgiveness?
2. How can God know everything and yet forget our sins?
3. Why are feelings an unreliable guide when experiencing forgiveness?
4. What problems emerge when forgiveness is not sought?
5. What happens if we are not forgiven by others?
6. What happens if one is no longer able to make restitution for something they have done in the past?

Study Guide

The Protection of Prayer

1. Does God protect the righteous more than he does the wicked?
2. Do you know of any times God has directly protected you? Share it with someone else.
3. Is “temptation” sin?
4. What is the secret to complete victory in Christ? How does this really happen?
5. Write a prayer of your own using the Lord’s Prayer as a template: