

Journey of Faith



In Short:



- Jesus invites us to call God our Father.
- Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer.
- The Lord's Prayer contains seven petitions.

Jesus' Advice on Prayer

In the Gospels, Jesus gives us some pretty specific instructions on how to pray. According to Jesus' teaching, the most important issue is our attitude. We should pray because we want to develop a closer, personal relationship with God.

It was common practice for the devout Jews of Jesus' time to pray in public at set times. Routine and community can be great motivators in our prayer life, but Jesus encourages us to be aware of our interior motives. Our goal shouldn't be to "get caught" praying so others are impressed by our piety. Jesus tells us:

"When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Matthew 6:5-6

When "one of [Jesus'] disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray'" (Luke 11:1), Jesus responded by sharing the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

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

- Are you familiar with the Lord's Prayer?
- If yes, what does it mean to you?
If not, what's your first impression?



In the words Jesus taught us, we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven...

Jesus called God *Abba*, a personal name given by children to their father (like daddy). To call God by this intimate name was unheard of in Jewish custom. By inviting his disciples, and us, to call God *Abba* Jesus invites us into a close, personal relationship with God and reminds us that we are God's beloved children.

It can be challenging to see God as our daddy, as the perfect parent. Especially if we have a difficult or strained relationship with our own parents. That's OK. As humans, even our parents make mistakes. As you build this image of God as father, draw upon the positive and loving qualities of your parents and mentors.

Prayer Suggestions

Imagine God like a loving parent, holding you close and telling you how deeply you're loved. God tells you he loves you no matter what. As a child rests in the arms of Mom or Dad, relax in the embrace of your loving God.

- *How have you experienced God's unconditional love in your life?*



Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come...

Usually, when we imagine the reign of God, we think of a place very far away from our everyday lives. God, however, asks us to begin the awesome task of building that kingdom here on earth!

Through our loving words and actions, we can usher in the reign of God here and now. This includes keeping the name of God holy and showing others how much reverence his name deserves. Jesus has given each of us a mission for the reign of God: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Prayer Suggestions

Think about the next hour of your life. What will you be doing? Think of ways that you can bring the reign of God to your corner of the world in the next hour. How can your interactions with others be more Christlike?

- *What gifts or talents have you been given by God? How can you use them to build up God's kingdom?*
- *How do you see other people in your community building the kingdom of God? Your country? The world?*



Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

Jesus came to reveal God's boundless, limitless love. God's love shined through his every action. As we work to do God's will on earth, we pray his heavenly love will shine through us, too.

Prayer Suggestions

Look back over your life. Can you see how your joys, sufferings, and failures are connected to your relationship with God and forming who you are? Can you thank God for the good and ask forgiveness for the bad?

- *What obstacles to doing God's will do you face?*
- *What events in the past week really showcased God's love for you?*



Give us this day our daily bread...

According to some biblical scholars, in this phrase Jesus is calling us to trust him to take care of our needs (remember that our needs are different from our wants). Catholics especially profess that Christ himself is our bread of eternal life; he is our "food for the journey."

Prayer Suggestions

The next time you're at Mass, reflect on how Christ satisfies our spiritual hunger with the gifts of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Receiving holy Communion transforms us into new reflections of the body of Christ. Jesus is present in the world through our presence to our sisters and brothers.

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...

In this phrase, we acknowledge that we've done wrong, we've sinned, but we also acknowledge God's great mercy when we beg for forgiveness. We are not only forgiven by God, but we're called to forgive those who hurt us as well:

"If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions."

Matthew 6:14–15

True forgiveness can be difficult, and sometimes it's a process that begins with just the desire to forgive (or sometimes even just the desire to desire to forgive).

Prayer Suggestions

Take a minute and think if there's someone you need to forgive or seek forgiveness from. Then take the time to write out what you'd like to say to that person. If you can, set up a time to talk with this person face to face or send her or him the letter and invite the person to meet later.

If it's impossible to send the letter or if meeting in person would put you in danger, keep the letter and share it with God in prayer. Trust that the grace of God's mercy and forgiveness is strong enough to cover you both—even from a distance.

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

It's easy for us to get lost, to fail, to slip into a sudden weakness. We face a tremendous number of temptations every day. In our search for who we are, we must constantly make decisions that can have lasting repercussions. We may be encouraged to do things we know are wrong. We may be ridiculed for doing what's right. We are tempted. We have to choose.

God can guide us in our decision making. When we're open to God's voice and willing to do what God tells us, God can keep us on the right path.

Prayer Suggestions

Pray with faith that God's power may free you from any sinfulness that controls your life. As you pray, imagine the light of Jesus filling the dark places within you. Recite the following prayer, mentioning and perhaps writing on the horizontal line the areas where you need God's help (for example, my pride, my stubbornness, my anger). Repeat as many times as you need to.

Come, Lord Jesus, shine the light of your glory

on: _____

The peace that Jesus offers his followers is his own peace, which flows from his intimate union with the Father. This peace does not leave us during times of temptation, loneliness, or low self-esteem. It does not leave us when we feel completely lost. Even when we really mess up, Jesus still offers his light and his peace. He longs for us to turn back to him.

In fact, sometimes we come to know Jesus best during the darkest, most difficult times of our lives. It is Jesus who helps bear the burden of our heavy cross. It is Jesus who carries us, lifting us up into the arms of our *Abba*.



With a partner or on your own, pick a line from the Lord's Prayer that stood out to you or that you found challenging. Then create an image, story, dialogue, or some other vehicle that shows what it means to really live this line.



Reflect on a time in your life during which Jesus lifted you up.

What did that mean to you?

How can you offer that kind of support to someone else?



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