

Some Notes on The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven

Many of us will know the Lord's Prayer off by heart.
 We pray the Lord's Prayer every Sunday, perhaps daily or more often, even.
 We use it at Morning and Evening Prayer.
 So of course it's good for us to think together about what this prayer means.

Important, then, to reflect on this prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us.
 No doubt its one of the best known but least understood texts in the world.
 It's a prayer that sometimes Christians neglect.
 But perhaps more often we can be tempted to say it mechanically and thoughtlessly.
 Certainly none of us really grasps and lives out the full implications of this prayer.
 Being given this prayer by Jesus is rather like being given a fine new suit that we're
 always growing into!
 We may have known this prayer for 70 years, but there's still more of it to know!

The prayer is recorded for us twice in Scripture, in Luke 11 and Matthew 6, with two
 slightly different introductions.

Luke 11:2, "When you pray, say..."

Lots of people think that prayer involves listening to God.
 Or they're very keen on silent prayer – contemplative prayer, prayer beyond words.
 I'm all for thinking and being quiet and so on, but it seems that in the Bible prayer is
 talking to God.
 Jesus is pretty down to earth and straightforward about this.
 Our Lord seems to think prayer is talking to God:
 "When you pray, say..."
 Its dangerous to say "the Bible never says..." but £10 for the first person who can show
 me where prayer in the Bible is listening to God.
 Biblical prayer is speaking to God – and it involves words!
 (Of course, as Paul tells us in Romans 8:26, prayer involves "groans that words cannot
 express" too, but there's nothing unspiritual about words.
 God invented them and Jesus tells us here to use them.)

Prayer is not about stirring up particular feelings in yourself.
 You needn't think your prayers are inadequate if they lack some kind of mystical
 experience.
 Prayer is talking to God.
 And its good to do that even if we don't feel especially in the mood for it.
 Praying may often feel pretty ordinary, but that's no reason to neglect talking to God.

Jesus says, “When you pray, say...” – and there follows the Lord’s Prayer.

When you pray, *say this prayer!*

So we do.

We should!

We know we pray according to God’s will when we pray this prayer God has given us (1 John 5:14)!

In Matthew’s gospel the prayer has a slightly different introduction.

Matthew 6:9, “This, then, is how you should pray...”

Here, Jesus is not so much telling us to recite this prayer.

But giving us a pattern / model for our prayers.

(This prayer serves as an example – a template or mould we can make all sorts of other similar prayers of our own out of)

(Even in Luke’s gospel, this prayer is an answer to the disciples’ request “teach us to pray” rather than “teach us a prayer”!)

We are to compare all our prayers to this Prayer of Prayers.

This is the Gold Standard prayer.

This is The Great Prayer which judges and evaluates our prayers.

This is the kind of prayer we should pray.

It shows us the sort of concerns and attitudes that should be reflected in our prayers.

The Lord’s Prayer sets the agenda for our prayers.

We might use each of the clauses of this prayer as hooks for further prayers of our own.

Our prayers might expand from this prayer and riff off it.

What prayers might this prayer prompt from us?

(Maybe we could take a different clause of this prayer to chew over each day of the week).

For example, when we pray for God’s kingdom to come, we might pray for the mission events coming up and our various other evangelistic initiatives.

When we pray for our daily bread, we might pray for all sorts of other needs we have and also for all those around the world who lack bread, who will go to bed hungry tonight.

This prayer is an antidote to the pagan prayer Jesus has been talking about in Matthew 6vv7-8:

“When you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.”

Length and eloquence are not essential to prayer.

Jesus’ ideal prayer is simple, clear and direct.

It’s only about fifty words long.

You can say it in well under a minute.

Of course this is an immensely profound prayer, but a small child could pray this prayer.

So let's look at what Jesus actually tells us to say.

"Our Father in heaven".

We are to pray, "**Our Father**".

Matthew 6:9, "**Our** Father"

That "Our" is a bit of a surprise.

Jesus has been talking about going to our rooms, closing the door and praying secretly to God (v6), but he still tells us to pray "Our Father".

Jesus doesn't tell us to pray "*my* Father" – although of course we could.

There's something very personal and intimate about speaking alone to my Father in heaven, but that's not the pattern Jesus gives us.

It seems that even in our secret private prayers on our own, we are to call God "our Father".

That simple little change could make all the difference to our praying.

If your prayers are sometimes selfish or petty, or preoccupied with your own little world, "Our Father" could be just what you need.

We always come to our Father as part of a family – and we need to remember that we are not an only child!

We pray in fellowship with other believers down the ages and across history.

This is a prayer that unites us with all those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord – all our brothers and sisters, whatever differences we might have.

This is not the prayer of any one denomination or group of Christians; it belongs to us all.

If we pray "Our Father" it ought to keep us from an aloof, detached or critical spirit with respect to other Christians.

We pray in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Their needs and troubles are our family business so we pray for them and we help them where we can.

We think not just of our own needs, but of the needs of the whole family.

A prayer list can remind us to broaden out our prayers from ourselves and our nearest and dearest.

It's good for us to pray for our Church family here.

Use the notice sheet to help you pray in an informed way.

Let's pray for one another.

Let's ask other to pray for us and ask them what we can be praying for them.

Let's pray for Christians all around the world.
This is a family prayer.

Let's pray for the missionaries we support as a church.

Let's pray especially for persecuted Christians around the world.

Matthew 5:44-45: "Pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."

We might make use of a resource like *Operation World*.

If you're ever leading prayers in public, by the way, please say "we" and "our" rather than "I" and "my" so that we can all join in!

"Father"

A great lesson of the Lord's prayer is that we should always remember to whom we're speaking.

It would transform our prayers if we stop to think about who God is as we come to pray to him.

Jesus tells us to pray to "Our Father in heaven".

Speaking of the word "Father", Martin Luther once said: "This is indeed a very short word, but it includes everything." (on Galatians 4:6)

In a very weak sense **God is the father of everyone by creation**, because he made everyone.

Acts 17:24-29; Hebrews 12:9; James 1:17

Acts 13:10

But that's not the Bible's characteristic way of speaking.

The Bible says that by nature we are enemies of God, cut off from him, alienated from him.

Jesus can even say to some of the Jewish leaders of his day who claimed to be believers (John 8:44) – "You belong to your father, the devil".

God is our Father in a full sense only by redemption.

We are adopted into God's family when we put our trust in Jesus.

John 1:12 – "to all who received him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

Ephesians 1:5 – we are adopted as God's sons through Jesus Christ

Trusting in Jesus, we have all the rights and privileges of full membership of God's family.

Jim Packer on the high privilege of adoption:

Even better than justification!

Adoption is "*the highest privilege that the gospel offers*" (206).

"In adoption, God takes us into his family and fellowship—he establishes us as his children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the Judge [justification] is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father [adoption] is a greater." (207)

(from *Knowing God*) <https://www.challies.com/resources/the-essential-adoption/>

Our experience of our human fathers

Maybe good or bad, almost always mixed.

Maybe you don't know who your father was, or you never knew him.

Perhaps he died or abandoned the family.

Maybe he was cruel, distant, demanding or abusive.

The Bible is very honest and realistic about that.

Is 49:15 – the LORD says: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she bore?

Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"

God is better than the best parent.

God is the Real, True, Ultimate Father.

God's Fatherhood is the primary thing.

Its not just that God is a bit like human fathers so we call him Father.

God is eternally the Father of the Son he loves.

Eph 3:14-15 – all fatherhood derives from our heavenly Father.

Human fathers are the copy / model; God is the real thing.

All human fathers and their children are supposed to be a little picture of the relationship between God and the believer.

A great challenge to those of us who are fathers.

Everytime we fail as fathers, we're lying about who God is because human fathers are meant to reflect their heavenly Father.

We need to let the Bible tell us what ideal Fatherhood looks like.

Our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

God is all that we could properly long for in a Father.

Some of us will need to un-learn things about Fatherhood that we've picked up along the way.

Jesus tells us God is like the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) who seeks out his son, welcomes the repentant sinner and forgives freely and fully.

Jesus perfectly reveals the Father to us.

"If you knew me, you would know my Father also" (John 8:19)

"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

If we want to know what God the Father is like, we ought to look at the Lord Jesus.

"Father" is a title of personal relationship, closeness, intimacy, approachability.

Think how the prayer might have begun: "Almighty and Eternal God, Judge of the living and the dead, Majestic King of Kings, Sovereign Lord of Lords, Ruler of time and eternity, Creator of all"

All that would be true, and God deserves all the most awesome titles we could think of. But God encourages and welcomes us by choosing to have us call him "Father."

Just as **we are related to our human father and similar to him**, so we are related to and similar to God.

God is the uncreated creator and we are his creatures, of course.

God is morally perfect and utterly holy whereas we are wicked sinners.

But nevertheless, we are made in the image of God.

He is our creator and he made us in his likeness for relationship with him.

He is not entirely incomprehensible to us.

As Paul says in Acts 17:27-28, God "is not far from each of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.... We are his offspring."

Its not as if God were a strange alien from another planet we can't even begin to understand.

In the beginning Adam walked with God in the garden in the cool of the day, because Adam was the Son of God (Luke 3:38).

We have free and open access to our Father.

We can come into his presence in any time and at any place.

Children don't usually have to book an appointment to see their Father.

We don't normally need to be introduced to our Father, or write requesting and audience – we can come and see him whenever we want.

Eph 2:18 – through Jesus "we ... have access to the Father by the one Spirit"

If I wanted to see the Queen it would probably be quite a rigmarole and I might never succeed, but I guess Prince Charles can see Her Majesty pretty much whenever he likes. He has access to the Queen – just as we have access to our Heavenly Father if we're Christians.

Eph 3:12 – In Jesus and "through faith in him we may approach the Father with freedom and confidence"

Perhaps you're quite new as a Christian and you feel your prayers are rather embarrassing and inadequate.

Fathers love to hear what their children say - especially when they're young and just learning to speak.

It may be inarticulate and wrong in all sorts of ways, but Dad loves it just the same!

Fathers provide for and protect their children.

We can expect parental kindness from our heavenly Father.

No seven-year-old says to his parents, "Why are you giving me this meal? Why do you buy me my clothes – I don't deserve this?!" etc.

Fathers give good things to their children – that's how things are meant to be.

Matthew 7:9-10 – our good, loving, heavenly Father **knows how to give us good gifts.**

If we were in our right minds, every day would be like Christmas morning,

God might not always give me "just what I wanted!" but I realise its "just what I needed!"

We would expect a wise father to guide his children.

He would be there for them with wise advice and practical help.

God our Father knows what's best for us and takes care of us.

Mt 6:8 – your Father knows what you need even before you ask him.

Mt 6:32 – Our heavenly Father knows our needs (for food and clothes and all the things the pagans run after and worry about).

The very hairs on our head are numbered.

Not a sparrow falls from the sky without God's say so and we are worth much more to him than many sparrows.

Father and child is also **a permanent relationship** – especially with our unchangeable ever living heavenly Father.

We speak of ex-husbands and ex-wives but we never speak of an ex-father or an ex-child.

Parents will know that they're always your children.

And so it is with us and God the Father.

The Bible especially talks about **God as the Father of Israel.**

The first occurrence of the idea of God as Father in the Bible comes in Exodus 4:22-23.

God's people Israel are slaves in Egypt.

Moses is told to say to Pharaoh: "This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so that he may worship me."

God is going to bring Israel out of slavery in Egypt to live in liberty as his son.

God claims his paternity rights.

(This is the original Father for justice campaign).

God is a Father who stands up for his children.

Mess with the kids and you'll have their Father to deal with!

Jesus is going to bring about a New Exodus.

Jesus is going to set us free.

So to call God our "Father" is a word of hope, of revolution.

When we call God our Father we're identifying with God's people – we're casting our lot in with them.

We're looking to God to defend us, save us, deliver us, set us free, defeat our enemies.

The Bible also particularly talks about **God as Father to the Messianic King.**

2 Samuel 7:14.

When we pray this prayer we're identifying with God's king.

We acknowledge Jesus as our elder brother.

Jesus characteristically calls God "my Father" – we call him "our Father".

We pray this prayer in Christ, united to him by faith.

Jesus brings us into the presence of the Father, introduces us, we stand behind him.

We can pray this prayer only really in and through and with him.

We might reflect on the ethical implications of this prayer.

There are rights to being God's child, but there are responsibilities too.

The Biblical pattern is "like Father, like son".

People will often say of a baby, "Oh, isn't he like his Father".

And there should be a family likeness about us with Jesus and the Father.

Eph 5:1 – "Be imitators of God, as dearly loved children".

In Bible times, **the son was usually apprentice to his Father.**

Jesus says he is a son who does the works he sees his Father doing, and that should be true of us in our own way, according to our circumstances – granted that the position of God the Son is taken!

When we call God Father we are committing ourselves to his work, to the family business – more of which later in this prayer!

The Bible tells us to honour our Father and Mother so as we pray this prayer we commit ourselves to honouring our Father God.

Children are to obey their parents.

As members of God's family and household, we are committed to living according to his rules and standards – his house rules for his church and world.

We may have given or received the "as long as you live under my roof you'll..." or "in this family we..." speech, and it applies just as much in the family of God!

"in heaven"

We've already thought of the intimacy of this prayer, but its also a prayer of and **reverence and respect.**

Isaiah 66:1 – the LORD says, “Heaven is my throne”.
 Our Father is the Almighty king who rules from heaven.
 Our God is almighty God not All-mate-y God.
 God is Our Father not an indulgent grandfather.

Our Father is all powerful.

“Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever pleases him.” (Ps 115:3)

Heaven is God's unique vantage point from which he sees everything.
 “From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind, from his dwelling place he watches over all who live on earth.” (Ps 33:13-14)

Our Father is all knowing.

Its therefore worth praying to this God!
 He's powerful and able to answer.
 He's wise – he knows what the answer should be.
 He's loving – he answers for our good, with kindness and consideration.
 We who are parents get ill and tired and sin and fail our children in all sorts of ways.
 God never does!

Our loving heavenly Father has infinite time, energy, resources.
 His door is always open.
 He is always ready to hear us.

He is always willing and able to help.

Why not Mother God or Parent God?

Mother imagery for God:

Is 49:15 – the LORD says: “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she bore? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!”
 Is 66:13 – the LORD says, “As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you”
 God has revealed himself above all as Father.

God as Father

Is 63:16

Prov 3:11-12; Is 64:8

Jer 3:4, 19

Mal 1:6

Ps 68:5

Ps 103:13

Israel as God's children: Dt 14:1; 32:5; Is 1:4; 30:9; 43:6; 45:11; Jer 31:20; Hos 2:1; Mal 2:10.

Is 63:16 – “you are our Father”

14X in the gospels Jesus speaks of God as our “Father in heaven”

Heaven God's dwelling place – Gen 24:7; Dt 26:15; 1 Kings 8:30; 2 Chron 20:6; 30:27; Job 22:12; Ps 73:25; 123:1; Is 66:1; Jonah 1:9; Acts 7:49

Our Father is merciful – Lk 6:36

Abba Father – Rm 8:15

Heb 12:5-13

**Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven**

What are your concerns? Or worries?

What occupies your thoughts?

What does your mind turn to in an idle moment?

What do you daydream about?

What are your ambitions and hopes?

What do you pray about?

Compare and contrast this prayer!

This is a prayer above all about / dominated by God's glory.

Prayer for God's glory comes first.

Us and our needs come later (v11ff).

This is a prayer that lifts our eyes and expands our vision.

This prayer calls us to a Copernican Revolution.

This prayer puts God and his kingdom, not me and my little world, at the centre.

This prayer gives us a big vision to live by: the greatness of God and his kingdom.

Hallowed be your name

May your name be treated as holy.

May your name be honoured.

God's name stands for who he is – his character and person.

May God be treated as holy.

The root idea of the word “holy” is special, separate, uniquely set apart (both from the ordinary / common and especially from all evil and sin).

God’s purity and perfection.

God is unique and perfect in his love, power, goodness, mercy, truth, wisdom etc.

God is in a category of his own.

This is a prayer for a greater appreciation of who God is and what he’s like.

God reveals his character to Moses in Exodus 34:5-7:

“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

We can seek to be the answer to our own prayer by treating God’s holy name as such in all that we think and say and do.

When we pray this prayer, we commit ourselves to living in a particular way – a way that reflects the holiness of God.

This is a prayer that God would be put first.

A prayer that all God’s rivals would be dishonoured.

A prayer against any rival false gods: Allah or the gods of Hinduism or

The scientific materialism of Richard Dawkins and radical atheism

Or the popular spirituality of “I like to think of God as” / “my God...”

Or the common gods of money, sex and power

All idols whether metal or mental are ruled out.

Not honour for our name, but for God’s.

God’s reputation not ours.

Which are we more concerned about?

If we have a chance to speak up for Christ do we take those evangelistic opportunities or are we more worried about what people think of us and our name rather than what they think about the name of God?

A very necessary prayer when God’s name is so often used only as a swear word.

Pray for this in relation to:

Our national life

Our media

Our education system

Your kingdom come

God's kingdom not a nation state but the saving rule of God.

Jesus said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand".

Jesus is God's king who came to bring in the kingdom (the rule and reign) of God.

Ultimately a prayer for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, when God's kingdom finally and fully realised.

Every knee will bow to him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

A prayer for the spread of God's kingdom here and now on earth.

A prayer that more people might come to acknowledge Jesus as their king, as the world's true king, as King of Kings.

There is, then, no true kingdom of God without the gospel Jesus the King.

So called social justice cannot replace the gospel.

No kingdom of God without the King.

True social justice is a fruit of the kingdom of God.

The Great Commission:

Matthew 28: The risen Lord Jesus says: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me

Heaven and earth doesn't leave much – Jesus is the king of the whole lot

Jesus is the King of all

There is not an inch of the universe over which Jesus doesn't say, "mine"! (Abraham Kuyper)

A prayer for evangelism and conversions.

A prayer that more and more areas of life should come under the Lordship of Christ.

A prayer that we might increasingly live to please King Jesus.

If Jesus is not Lord of all, he's not Lord at all.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Theologians speak of two senses of God's will:

(1) God's secret, sovereign will – the things that God causes to happen

Submitting ourselves to God's will

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, "your will be done"

When we can't make sense of what's happening

Accept it from the hand of our loving heavenly Father who intends it for our good

(2) God's revealed, moral will – the things God tells us to do

May your commandments be obeyed

A prayer that I would stop sinning – that I would be godly

Making earth more like heaven

Affects all of life

How we work

Our bank balance

Our leisure activities

How we bring up our children

Our gardening

Creation mandate (Genesis 1)

Great Commission (Matthew 28)

Order, harmony, maturity

One degree of glory to another

Give Us Today Our Daily Bread

Christmas is approaching – well its still months away but that makes no difference to little Johnny – he’s getting his requests in early.

Johnny says: “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, what I really want for Christmas is a gun – I want to go hunting and shoot lots of stuff – and it would be so cool to have a gun - I’d never be bullied again if I had a gun – a really big one, Daddy, oh, please!”

“Oh, and wouldn’t a chain saw be cool! I’d love a chainsaw, Daddy!”

Father, of course, says no.

But Johnny’s older brother has some wise advice: “Johnny, Dad’s not going to give you a gun or a chainsaw. It wouldn’t be safe at your age - ask for a train – Dad loves trains, he’d love you to have one

“Or a cricket set – Dad’s always wanted you to learn to play”.

In the Lord’s prayer, our older brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, tells us what to ask our Heavenly Father for.

This prayer teaches us how to pray and what to pray for and about.

It tells us the kinds of prayers our Father loves to answer, and the things he delights to give us.

Matthew 7:9 – “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?”

V11: “If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

We pray this prayer, of course, remembering what comes before it:

“Our Father in Heaven” - remember who God is: our loving heavenly father.

“Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

Pray for God’s glory

Seek first his kingdom

“Give us today our daily bread” - bring our needs to God

Next: pray about our need for forgiveness and deliverance from temptation

Vital to remember those 2 halves of the prayer

(1) God’s glory (2) our needs

The order surely is deliberate.

Matthew 6:33 – “Seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things [your food and clothes and all that your heavenly Father knows that you need] will be given to you again.”

First, this prayer calls on us to prioritize God, his glory, honour, will and kingdom. But then it teaches us to pray about our needs too, remembering who God is and the purposes of his kingdom.

It's good to pray about our needs – not wicked selfishness!

Including our practical, material and physical needs.

This is a very down to earth prayer.

There's no need to be (or pretend to be) "super-spiritual": Jesus isn't!

God is interested in our aches and pains and all our ordinary day to day concerns.

Biblical prayer is not a head in the clouds, far away look in the eye, gooey feeling in the heart, sort of business.

Here is a prayer that authorizes us to pray for our specific real needs.

How reassuring to know that our heavenly Father knows our needs even before we ask him (Mt 6:8, 32)!

We needn't worry about diagnosing our needs precisely or outlining them fully.

Good news too that Our Father is almighty God enthroned in heaven.

He is willing and able to answer our prayers as is best for us.

What an incentive to pray!

As the Apostle Peter says, "cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

Mt 7:7 – Jesus said: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;"

Let's look at this prayer a word at a time:

"Give" – we ask God to give us our daily bread

This does not, of course, mean that we don't have to work for our food but it teaches us our needy dependence.

Human beings are hungry creatures.

We have insatiable appetite.

Are you hungry right now?

If not, you will be soon?

When did you last eat and when will you eat again?

How many meals have you eaten in your life?

And what about snacks?!

We are continually dependent.

We almost constantly need to eat.

I guess our well-stocked fridges and supermarkets dull our sense dependence on God.

In Jesus day, most people were paid daily and if they didn't work they couldn't eat. They would have felt this prayer for daily bread very keenly. But its no less true and relevant for us, even if we're inclined to forget it.

We are in fact completely dependent on God:
 For our creation – none of us would be here at all without his say so.
 And for God sustaining us.
 Our next meal comes from God.
 God provided your breakfast this morning.
 Its because of God's laws and habits that our bread nourishes us and does us good.
 More than that, our next breath comes from God.
 Each of us is only ever a heartbeat away from eternity.

Here is a prayer that teaches us our total dependence on **the grace of God**:
 We simply ask God to give to us.
 Grace - a free gift, undeserved kindness.
 "Please give us, not because we deserve it, but out of your kindness and compassion and goodness and generosity."
 God's grace to us is the love of a king for a pauper:
 Grace is love with stoop in it.
 We come to God with no claims or rights.
 We bring an empty hand.
 All we contribute to God are our needs.

Remember that as we come to The Lord's Supper.
 We kneel and hold out our hands – a graphic reminder of our humble, needy dependence on God's grace.

Some people have said the Lord's Supper is about us offering Christ to God, but that's the opposite of what the meal actually fundamentally is.
 God feeds us.
 God says in Psalm 50:12 - "If I were hungry [which, ha ha, he couldn't be] I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it"
 This meal is not first of all about what we do for God but about what God has done and does, and will do for us.
 So come to this table not to offer God some (meritorious) good work, but to receive afresh the Lord Jesus Christ.
 (Its just a little bit of ordinary bread you'll get, of course, but in this meal you can feed on the Lord Jesus Christ spiritually in your heart by faith with thanksgiving)

A couple of practical applications of this prayer:

It banishes all arrogance and pride.

"We are all hungry beggars. Believers are the ones who know where to find bread".

→ No smug self-satisfaction / superior / holier than thou attitudes from Christians.
We all come to God with empty hands.

It is **humbling** that we need to pray this prayer everyday if we're to keep going

The fact that we are needy dependants and undeserving recipients of grace **should also make us generous to others.**

This prayer is an antidote to tightfistedness and meanness.

Mt 10:8 – As Jesus said to his disciples, “Freely you have received, freely give”

“... us ... our”

This is not just a prayer for me and my needs.

But a prayer for all our Christian family.

We speak to “our Father” about our brothers and sisters.

This prayer gives us great things to pray for / about if we don't know what to pray.

The Lord's prayer should be for us an antidote to selfishness and parochialism.

It expands our vision.

We might think too of the striking example of Paul's prayers.

We sometimes find Paul in prison, praying for Christians half way across the world whom he's never met.

Make a point of praying for others, especially your Christian family.

Perhaps use a Prayer Diary & the church Notice Sheet,

Information from Mission Agencies,

(Operation World).

“Daily”

If we really believed Jesus that we ought to pray this prayer – that we need to pray it, then we would pray it every day, asking daily for our daily bread.

As MC Hammer rapped: “We've got to pray just to make it today!”

Do you make it a habit to pray every day?

We need God's help every day, so we ought to ask for it.

He gives us our daily bread every day, so we ought to thank him for it!

We could make a habit of giving thanks at meal times.

Trust God for today – for the next step, even if you can't see around the corner.

Mt 6:34 – “do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

The important thing is trusting Jesus today and going on trusting him – not whether you went forward at a Billy Graham Crusade decades ago or prayed a prayer once upon a time.

Keep trusting every day.

“Lord, keep me a Christian today.”

“Bread”

a necessity, not a luxury.

Give us today our daily bread, not our daily cake.

It’s not wrong to pray for things we want, of course.

But this is no mandate from Jesus for self-indulgent prayer.

Butter and jam are great; but this is a prayer for bread.

Jesus hasn’t promised us health, wealth and prosperity in this life, so my prayers for a new Mercedes might be answered in the negative!

James 4:3 – “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

Bread is almost a synonym for food.

(cf. “Meat” in older English).

“Bread” could stand for all our needs.

Bringing our natural God-given desires and needs to God asking that they’ll be satisfied in God’s way and timing, to his glory and according to his will.

Manna – travelling through the wilderness to the promised land – Ex 16 - daily bread – gather daily

We ask God to supply all we need to get us to the Promised Land.

“Get us to heaven, Lord.

Bring me safe to glory.

Feed me till my work here on earth is done.”

This prayer for daily bread comes immediately after the prayer for God’s purposes.

So it is a prayer that God would give us what we need to serve his kingdom.

The point of bread is that it gives us strength, it empowers us for work and service.

In our church services we’ll be fed with the Word of God and in the Lord’s Supper and its appropriate that we end our service with the words, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

The point of this Sunday service is to equip us for God’s service this week.

Mt 4:4 – “Jesus answered, “It is written: “Man does live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (quoting Dt 8:3).

The Bible is food for our souls.

Just like we need our daily bread, we need daily spiritual food if we are to be healthy.

Just as you make it a habit to eat every day, it's a great habit to feed yourself from the Bible every day.

We pray for our physical needs, but also for our spiritual needs, of course.

Jesus warns us not spend all our time striving for food that perishes:

Jn 6:27: "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man [Jesus] will give you."

Jesus proves he is able to provide God's people with all they need as he feeds the 5000 (Mt 14:13ff).

He takes the five loaves and gives over 5000 people their daily bread.

Jesus our Maker is of course more than able to feed us.

Jesus is the bread of Life. (John 6:35, 48)

Ultimately, it is the Lord Jesus we need.

Jesus is the essentials of life.

He is the one who can satisfy all our deepest needs.

Mt 15:26-28 – Jesus shares his "bread" even with the Gentiles as he heals the Canaanite woman.

Though we are unworthy even to gather up the crumbs under his table, he is the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy.

It will turn out that Gentiles too are invited to Jesus' wedding banquet.

Jesus is throwing a party, putting on a meal, and we're all invited.

Jesus gives us bread in the Lord's Supper as a promise that if we receive him by faith he will feed us in the Great Banquet that he's throwing at the end of time.

The ethical implications of this prayer.

The temptation for Jesus to turn stones into bread – Mt 4:1-4

Seek your bread from God, rather than by compromise with evil.

You can't very well pray this prayer and then steal or cheat or exploit others to get your daily bread.

You need to trust God for your bread.

There's no need to grasp for it in illegitimate ways or trample over others to get it.

Prov 30:8-9 – "give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. ⁹

Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God."

NT Wright – *The Lord and His Prayer*

Mt: “give us *today* our bread for *tomorrow*” – “give us, *here and now*, the bread which is promised for the great Tomorrow” – the blessings of the coming Kingdom now –
 “Matthew, writing his gospel, saw this prayer partially answered in the feedings of the five thousand and the four thousand; more fully in the Last Supper; and, most fully of all, in Jesus’ death and resurrection”

LK: “give us *each day* our daily bread”
 (p40-1)

Might translate: “Give us this day our bread for the coming day.”

Mt 7:7 – “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;”

Mt 7:9 – “Which of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?”

Mt 7:11 – “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him.”

**Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
And deliver us from evil**

Mt 6:12-13 see also vv14-15

Lk 11:4 – Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.

Jesus has taught us to pray about our needs.

Now he teaches us to pray about our needs in the face of sin and temptation: for forgiveness and deliverance.

Forgive us our debts

It's good that we confess our sins every week in church.

It's not just an empty ritual where we go through the motions because that's what we do.

Jesus tells us to pray like this.

We need forgiveness!

Even the most godly Christian constantly stands in need of God's grace and mercy.

When we think of the holiness of God's name – as we prayed in v9, "hallowed be your name", may your holy name be honoured - we realise how far short of God's holiness we fall.

If we think about it for a moment, we realise that our lives haven't matched up to the best of our prayers.

Already in this sermon on the mount, Jesus has just set our God's standards in 5:48, "be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect", and presumably none of us would claim perfection?

All the time our motives are mixed.

It's hard to imagine that there's a second where I ever really loved the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and my neighbour as myself.

In fact, in the original Greek, this line of the prayer begins with an "and".

So it says, "Give us today our daily bread *and* forgive us our debts".

As often as we need our daily bread, so we also need to be forgiven.

Forgiveness is a daily need, as necessary as our daily food.

Yes, we're forgiven once and for all when we trust in Christ.

But only as we continually trust in Jesus.

Real faith continues depending on Jesus for forgiveness.

The Christian life begins in repentance and faith, but it carries on that way too.

There are no perfect Christians this side of heaven.

Story about Spurgeon (all the best sermon illustration stories are! - probably apocryphal)

A man once said to Spurgeon :“the natural man in me is dead, my sinful nature has been killed off”.

Spurgeon invites him round for dinner and half way through the meal pours a jug of cold water over him.

The man goes mad – loses it - swearing like a trooper.

Spurgeon says: “Ah, you see, the natural man in you had not died, he’d merely fallen asleep and needed a drink to revive him!”

This is a prayer all of us need to pray this side of heaven.

Daily we turn from what we know to be wrong and turn to Jesus and seek to go his way, with the help of the Spirit.

Its worth taking some time each day to pause and think about the things we need to turn from.

We ask for the forgiveness of our sins and whilst we don’t have to go through a terrible ordeal of trying to name all our sins, it would do us good to look our chief sins in the face and call them sin and turn from them.

Its good for us to recognise our sins for what they are and not to make excuses.

That was we can become more aware of the battle lines for godliness in our lives.

Where is Satan attacking me?

Where do I need to fight or flee?

So we examine ourselves honestly.

Perhaps there are sins of thought, word or deed to confess.

Things we have done wrong.

Or things that we ought to have done that we’ve left undone.

It could be a great help to us to reflect on the previous 24 hours and be deliberate about our pursuit of godliness.

For example, you might think of a time when you were grumpy or bad tempered yesterday, and pray that God would forgive you and deliver you from that particular temptation.

The next day, you might find that you need to repent of irritability again, but by God’s grace you might just be able to thank him for helping you to do a bit better yesterday than you did the day before.

A little bit of progress in a couple of areas day by day could make a huge difference to our godliness a year from now.

We need a deep diagnosis of our sins.

Jesus says that to look at someone to lust after them is to commit adultery in our heart.

Anger can be murder in our heart.

debts

Jesus tells us here in Matthew's gospel to pray for the forgiveness of our debts.

In Luke's gospel the prayer is for the forgiveness of sins.

Sin is a debt.

We belong to God entirely.

He made us and owns us completely.

We owe God our complete loyalty and total obedience.

Every time we sin, we rob God of his due.

Sin is a huge debt we could never pay back.

In any case, we owe God everything.

We've no resources of our own – no extra.

We're hopelessly in the red.

We're moral bankrupts.

Our only hope is if Jesus takes over our debt and pays the bill for us.

Thankfully, Jesus' credit rating is perfect, his capital infinite.

Gloriously, Jesus has paid the price of sin in full by his death on the cross in our place.

Do you know the first four words you should learn in any foreign language?

This is a very useful expression when you're on holiday, and it'll get you through judgement day too!

"My friend will pay".

Wonderfully, Jesus has already paid the price of sin.

He has discharged all the debts of all those who will put their trust in him.

As we also have forgiven our debtors

Not striking a bargain with God.

Our forgiving of others is not some kind of *quid pro quo*: "you forgive me mine and I'll forgive them theirs."

Our forgiveness of others could never merit or earn our forgiveness.

The reason why Jesus talks about our forgiveness and the forgiveness of others is that when we forgive others, it shows that we've received the grace and mercy of God.

We forgive because we've been forgiven.

If God has written off our massive debts, how can we go round totting up the petty little debts that other people owe us?

Jesus said we should forgive the brother who sins against us 77 times and he told the parable of the unmerciful servant to make the point (Mt 18:21-34).

The King has a servant who owes him millions.
 The Servant can't pay and begs for mercy.
 The King has pity on him and cancels his debt.
 That servant is owed a few pounds by another poor servant.
 The first servant demanded money with menaced and had the debtor thrown into prison.
 The master called that first servant in: "You wicked servant", he said.
 "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow-servant just as I had on you?"
 In anger the master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured until he should pay back all he owed."
 Jesus explains, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from the heart."

By forgiving others we show that we are not depending on merit and justice from God, but mercy and grace: God's undeserved love.

Those who know they're forgiven much, love much – and they'll be able to forgive much (cf. Lk 7:36-50).

We all come to the Lord's table on exactly the same basis: as empty-handed hungry beggars, depending on God's generosity.
 As we share Communion together, we testify to the fact that God accepts and forgives us and that we accept and forgive one another.
 We share fellowship as forgiven people who forgive one another.

Christians should be the most understanding, generous people on the planet.
 There's no room for stuck up, self-righteous, holier than thou attitudes in the church.
 As Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give." (Mt 10:8)
 We could add, Freely you've been forgiven. Freely forgive.

A mean-spirited Christian should question whether they're really a Christian at all.
 If you can't show grace to others, have you really received the grace of God for yourself?
 If you don't forgive, you cut off the branch you're supposed to be sitting on!

As we pray this prayer we commit ourselves to living as forgiven *forgiving* people.

And lead us not into temptation

Oscar Wilde said, "I can resist everything, except temptation".
 In this prayer we acknowledge that we need God's help if we're going to resist temptation.
 When we pray this prayer we admit our weakness, our vulnerability.
 Left to ourselves we're likely to give in and give up.

It's not a sin to be tempted.

After all, Jesus himself was tempted.

Heb 4:15 – Jesus is able “to sympathise with our weaknesses” because he “has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin”.

Heb 2:18 – “Because he [Jesus] himself suffered when being tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

Jesus was led into hard testing, into the great test, the tribulation of the cross.

He was delivered *over to evil*, that we might be *delivered from evil*.

Often we can't help being tempted.

Martin Luther said: you can't stop birds flying over your head, but you don't have to let them nest in your hair!

We mustn't fondle sin, dwelling on it, enjoying the thought of it.

We can cultivate lust, or greed, or envy, or bitterness, or anger or we can curtail them.

We are to watch and pray that we do not fall into temptation (Mt 26:41; Mk 14:38; Lk 22:40).

We can be part of the answer to our own prayer here by avoiding all opportunities of sin.

E.g., Night Club.

Late at night, after a drink or two.

When hungry and tired and... or....

Know yourself and manage yourself.

God doesn't tempt us.

James 1:13-14 “When tempted, no-one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.”

When Satan tempts us he wants us to fail, to bring out the evil.

When God allows us to be tested he wants us to pass, to bring out the good.

God is sovereign even over our temptations.

Cf. Job – Satan has to ask God's permission to test Job.

1 Cor 10:13 – “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

The Bible tells us that “the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials” (2 Peter 2:9).

But deliver us from the evil one

The devil really does exist.

C. S. Lewis famously said that the devil is equally pleased with a magician or a materialist.

Some Christians imagine the devil in every shadow and demons behind every bush (that's the magician's temptation).

We shouldn't be obsessed with the devil, but we shouldn't forget the reality of the devil and his demons (that's the materialist's temptation).

Perhaps one of the devil's best tactics is to encourage us to underestimate him. If we think of the devil as a cartoon character in more or less the same category as the tooth fairy, we're not likely to be on the look-out for his wicked schemes.

God and Satan are not two equal and opposite forces in the universe. Satan is a defeated enemy – he's a lion who's had his teeth knocked out (although he could still give us a pretty nasty sucking!).

Jesus triumphed over the devil by the cross

Satan is a fierce dog, but he's God's dog and God keeps him on a lead.

Though he's the arch-rebel against God, the devil is subject to God's will.

Satan is not all powerful.

God is able to call the devil off us, so it's worth praying this prayer.

If we resist the devil, he'll flee from us (James 4:7).

The devil can't force us to sin.

Its only when we give in to him that he'll triumph over us.

Jesus describes the devil as the evil one.

Its worth us noting that the devil is evil

We can't expect the devil to play fair.

He'll scheme and lie and try to trick us.

He's not interested in us having fun or pleasure.

His only motive is hatred against God and all he's made.

He'd love to ruin us and wreck our lives now if he could.

Most of all the devil longs to see us alienated from God for all eternity.

It does away with the "naughty but nice" view of sin, doesn't it?

All sin stinks of the pit!

A step towards sin is a step away from all that is lovely and good and towards hell itself.

The Bible describes Satan as a ferocious lion who prowls around looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan was a murderer from the beginning, a liar and the Father of lies (John 8:44).

And he masquerades as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14).

Praise God that he has delivered us!

Jesus has defeated Satan, triumphing over him by the cross. (cf. Col 2:15).

Jesus is the stronger man who has bound the strong man, Satan, and plundered his house (Mt 12:29).

We ask all these things of God because his alone is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

Israel tested God in the wilderness

Ex 17:1, 2, 7

Ps 95

Some further reading on The Lord's Prayer

Richard Coekin, *Our Father: Enjoying God in Prayer* (IVP)

Peter Lewis, *The Lord's Prayer: The Greatest Prayer in the World* (Paternoster)

Gerald Bray, *Yours is the Kingdom: A Systematic Theology of the Lord's Prayer* (IVP)

Derek Prime, *The Lord's Prayer for Today* (Day One)

Tom Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer* (Triangle / SPCK)

Peter Masters, *The Lord's Pattern for Prayer* (Wakeman Trust)

Matthew Henry, Ch 7 in *Method for Prayer* online at <http://www.matthewhenry.org/read/esv-corporate/chapter-seven/>

Thomas Watson, *The Lord's Prayer* (Banner of Truth)

John Calvin's in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Book 3 chapter 20 parts 34-49, Ford Battles edition vol. 2 pp897-917

J John, *God's Priorities: Living the Lord's Prayer in the 21st Century* (Kingsway) *Your Kingdom Come* Study Guide