

Orthodoxy: The Lord's Prayer

New City Catechism Question 41: What is the Lord's Prayer?

Answer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Prayer is the Spirit's passion for the glory of Christ in his coming Kingdom, and our Lord's Prayer is the framework which guides our passionate praying in the Spirit. We pray effectively when we aim at the heart of the kingdom of God focusing on the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray that maps out for us the territory of his kingdom.

This prayer begins with a gospel priority - *Our Father in heaven*. Before all other matters we begin with the reality that we are children of God the Father and the rightful heirs of his kingdom. Our boldness in coming near is garnered by the gospel of Jesus Christ. This petition begins with praise and thanksgiving as you recount the gospel in your praying. We should never grow dull to his gospel but as we pray it back to him our hearts are enjoined to him our everlasting joy and the lesser idols of hearts lurking in the darkness flee in the light of his glory.

The prayer continues with a worship priority - *Hallowed be your name*. In this petition we should praise him, but most importantly it is a petition where we are asking him to be praised in us. We are looking to him, his names, his works, his words and all the ways he makes himself known, and we are asking him to glorify himself in us. We are asking him to make himself ultimate to us. We are asking him to be ours and others ultimate meaning and joy. We are asking him that we have no other gods before him, and that we may have no other loves.

The next petition leads us to pray with a gospel movement priority - *Your kingdom come*. His coming kingdom is evidenced by the conversion and transformation of sinners. We are praying for the unlimited rule of God within his people. We are praying that God will expel us and all people from the rule of Satan's kingdom, self rule, fear rule, and the rule of false hopes. We are praying for God to convert sinners from among Jews and Gentiles all around the earth. We are praying they will be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the beloved Son through the preaching of his gospel. We are praying for particular people and peoples to be born again by the Spirit of God. We are praying for God's rule and his church's submission. We are praying for the consummation of God's kingdom in and through the Son.

The next petition leads us in the loving obedience priority - *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. We are praying in the midst of hearts and lives that live one of three ways: to please yourself, to please others, or to please God. This prayer is for the accomplishing of God's will and purpose that the church do, not as we will or for the glory of others, but as he wills. Therefore we are praying that the heart of the church is to be imitators of God with an inclined heart to God's pleasure. We are asking for understanding to know the prescribed will of God, and wisdom to apply it to everyday life. We are asking for Christ's power to do his will, so that God's people give him glory by saying, 'yet it was not I but Christ.'

The next petition leads us in the priority of generosity - *Give us this day our daily bread*. We belong to Christ and everything he gives us is his to meet our needs and to be given through us to others. In this petition we are trusting in God as our provider that we may be content and generous in Christ Jesus. We are trusting him for our 'bare necessities'. We are trusting him as those who are needy. God gives us everything (Acts 17:24-25). Our abundance does not indicate that we are not needy, but that God has abundantly supplied our needs that we may be content in him and generous toward others. Therefore, it must be acknowledged in this petition our abject need of him to supply all things. We pray to God who knows our needs and how he will meet the needs of others through us. We pray to him who cares about our needs and the needs of others through us. We pray to him who knows, cares and shares. Our petition must acknowledge him in his sincere provisions and in his generous heart.

This petition is prayed in the priority for reconciliation - *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*. As Christ bore the burden of our sin on the cross, so we bear one another's burdens fulfilling the law of Christ, and discovering the joy of life together. We come into this petition with contrition because we are sinners in need of mercy, with confidence because God gives mercy for the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus, and with charity because we forgive as we have been forgiven. We

come before the bar of God justice each and every moment of each and everyday. Therefore, our need is the forgiveness of a debt that can never be repaid by ourselves. We look to him who has paid our debt in Christ, and from there we look to those we have the opportunity to forgive as have been relieved of our debts.

The final petition is prayed in the priority of spiritual warfare - *Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.* The Christian life is one of warfare against the enemy of our flesh as it wants to make the way of the world its god, giving obedience to the Devil. In this petition we are not asking, "that we should not be tempted, but that we should not be brought or lead into temptation." (Augustine) We are not praying that we won't be brought into trial, but when we are brought into trials we discover more of Jesus and we walk by faith in his life by his Spirit. We are dependent upon God to support, enable, raise, recover, and free us that he may be glorified in his church. We pray this petition with confidence, a mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing. We pray with watchfulness. We are in this world with Devils filled and we cry to him to keep his church. We pray with earnestness in and by his Spirit, for God to use his means to keep us and triumph through us, and for an end to the struggle in his return.

The Lord's Prayer is an everyday kingdom prayer provided by the Spirit through God's Word to help us to pray. Let us never give up praying that when our Lord returns he may find faith in the earth.

RELIEF, DEVELOPMENT, AND CRISIS

In our series on Practical Christianity from James we have discovered that a true saving faith works (James 2:14-26). In our current crisis many of our brothers and sisters and many outside of the church are in need, and we have an opportunity to express our new life in Christ in deeds of love. The following is a helpful article from the PCA Foundation and a link to opportunities you can participate in by faith in love.

When people are in a crisis, it is appropriate to rush in and do whatever is within your power to help them. We see this when hurricanes, tornadoes, and pandemics strike. There are other moments where rushing in and helping would be inappropriate because it keeps people from solving their own problems using the assets God has given them.

It is important to understand the difference between relief and development. Relief is the urgent and temporary provision of emergency aid to reduce immediate suffering from a natural or man-made crisis, according to Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert in their book *When Helping Hurts*. It is employed to "stop the bleeding" and to halt the freefall of plummeting economic conditions.

On the other hand, development is a process taking place over a period of time that helps people identify, develop, and use their God-given assets and talents. As Corbett and Fikkert describe, it is the process of ongoing change that moves all people involved (both the "helpers" and the "helped") closer to being in right relationship with God, self, others, and the rest of creation.

Here's a simpler way to think about it: Relief occurs when we do things **for** people. Development occurs when we do things **with** people.

In a crisis, it is appropriate to rush into a situation and do things for people. Crises are exceptional moments like pandemics and tornadoes. But for most moments, we need to be focused on development efforts, walking alongside people to help them discover ways to put their God-given talents to use.

As we give resources, it is important to distinguish which response, relief or development, is the appropriate intervention. There are times, as during our current crisis, when immediate relief is the appropriate response. The Good Samaritan in Luke chapter 10 serves as an example of effective relief. He provided effective relief to a victim who was in dire need of material assistance. There are two principles to remember as we consider providing relief.

Relief must be immediate. When a large-scale crisis hits, a timely response is crucial. Victims cannot wait months for material assistance. The body of Christ functions as the human body. When you injure one part of your body, the rest of your body shifts resources to support and restore it. In the midst of a pandemic, the body of Christ will need to shift resources to make sure people harmed physically and economically are supported and restored.

Relief must be temporary. While relief is necessary, it is reserved for situations of great need and crisis. Once the bleeding has stopped, it is important to quickly move to stages of rehabilitation and development, where we work with people to help return the positive elements of their pre-crisis conditions.

In order to facilitate effective relief, the PCA Foundation has identified several COVID-19 giving opportunities on [this webpage](#). Existing donors can recommend grants to one or more by clicking on 'Make a grant.' Anyone can use the "Give" portal to donate funds and specify the "Purpose of Gift" to one or more of these ministries.