



### **The Lord's Prayer**

Jesus taught us to prayer in this way:

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.

It's the prayer everyone says at school.

It can be rattled off without thinking. It's useful to think about what it means.

### **Our Father**

The first two words are revolutionary. Jesus gave us the concept of God as our Father, not as some distant, uninvolved deity. And Jesus shows us that God is not just *his* father – he says *our* father. Jesus invited us to look at God as the father of us all.

### **Who art in heaven**

God's place is heaven, but the more we allow God in our lives, the more heaven comes to our lives.

### **Hallowed be thy name**

Hallowed means blessed, holy. Jesus is inviting us to see the holiness, the goodness of God. When we say and mean those words we are allowing ourselves to recognise the greatness of God.

### **Thy Kingdom Come**

This expresses a wish for the Kingdom of God. Jesus went to some trouble to explain the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that is not about worldly things. God's Kingdom is one of peace and justice, of joy and love and mercy.

### **Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven**

This is a very powerful act of surrender to God's will. Thinking through this part of the prayer lets our minds range over the very best we can be, the best that the world could be if people did God's will.

Just imagine a world where God's world is done as it is in heaven. A world of peace and happiness: no war, no crime, no cruelty, the environment cared for properly, and everyone living joyfully, respectfully and kindly.

### **Give us this day our daily bread**

God is interested in our everyday physical needs. It is OK to pray to God for what we need. Some people feel guilty about praying to God and asking for things all the time. God wants us to pray from where we are in our lives. If we need something, God wants to hear from us about it. Trusting in God

for little things means that we can trust God for all the big things of life as well.

Well, nobody's perfect. Jesus knows that we all do wrong things. We all need to be forgiven. But then the prayer gets tough:

### **As we forgive those who trespass against us**

Wow. That line is confronting. Does that mean that God won't forgive me if I find it impossible to forgive someone else?

If I really can't forgive my friend/enemy/sibling/parents, where does that leave me?

Sometimes there is a lot to forgive. Sometimes people do really dreadful things to us. It's not reasonable to expect us to simply forgive and forget dreadful, hurtful things. What can we do?

The great thing to remember about Jesus is that there is always a lifeline. When we are at sea, sinking, he will walk on water to rescue us. Remember, his infinite love and mercy shows us the way. This way works even if you have been so hurt that you can't bear the thought of the person who wronged you.

The little known fact that rescues us here is God's own mercy and amazing humility. When we can't give perfection, God will take lovingly what we offer, no matter how small, and love us into greater goodness.

This is what you do:

Ask God to help you *want* to forgive.

("God, I don't feel able to forgive this person. I don't even want to want to forgive them.

So please help me to even wish to want to forgive. And help me at least not to behave badly towards them.”)

You can pray that tough line of the Lord’s Prayer with an open heart. God will help you along your journey.

### **And lead us not into temptation**

Some commentators read this line as “save us from the time of trial”, as in saving us from the day of judgement.

What it *doesn’t* mean:

It doesn’t mean that God deliberately puts temptation to do wrong things in front of us.

Sometimes we might feel that life is a bit tough; we have a feeling of being tested. Life can get like that sometimes.

But God isn’t out to trick you. That would be mean and God is never mean. What is actually astonishing about this line of the Lord’s Prayer is that it acknowledges that:

1. Life can be hard, *and*
2. We’re absolutely entitled to ask God to be let off.

Remember, in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he was killed, even Jesus asked God the Father to take away the ordeal he was facing.

### **But deliver us from evil**

Absolutely. Evil sucks. God wants us to ask to be shielded, rescued, saved from anything evil. The more we let God into our lives, the more open we will be to God’s gentle voice in our hearts, prompting us into safety and saving us from evil.

This line in the Lord’s Prayer isn’t just about escaping from bad people or situations (though we

are perfectly entitled to ask for that too). It’s also very much about *ourselves*: avoiding *doing evil*. It’s connected to the previous line about temptation. God can lead us away from temptation and then save us from making wrong or unethical decisions.

### **Amen**

This is an ancient Hebrew word that translates as “so be it”. It means “truthfully” and “faithfully”. It means you affirm and agree with what you have just said.