

## An Adult Study of “The Lord’s Prayer”

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This study guide is based on the book, *Praying the Lord’s Prayer: An Ageless Prayer For Today* by Herman C. Waetjen, published by Trinity Press International, 1999. The guide is divided into ten sessions of study related to the ten chapters of the book.

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Welcome to a course of study on “the Lord’s Prayer”! Ten sessions will be devoted to this topic, exploring the content of this prayer, and to some extent including problems that are generally associated with prayer and praying.

### *Words to the Convener*

The convener of this study group is not expected to be an expert in biblical studies or the Lord’s Prayer. He or she is expected, however, to be prepared to guide the group in this study. In preparation for this responsibility the following suggestions may be helpful.

1. Read through the assignment for each session before your class meets in order to be well prepared to guide the discussion and give it direction corresponding to the material presented in each chapter. Be sure to enter the very first session of the course having read both the Introduction and Chapter One of the book, even though it will be assigned for the second session.
2. Choose a room, if possible, where the class can be divided into small groups for more personal dialogue, whenever that seems to be gainful and advantageous.
3. Encourage class members to prepare the weekly assignments and to bring a Bible to class, perhaps also a notebook.
4. Be sure to provide additional resources whenever they are called for.
5. When two petitions (as in sessions 6 and 9) or two different versions of the same petition (one in Luke and the other in Matthew) are to be discussed in a particular session, it would be very helpful to write them side by side on the chalkboard or on a flip-chart.
6. When difficult words are encountered, like “eschatological” and “aorist,” be sure to check the glossary at the end of the book.

## **Session One**

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### **Prayer and Praying**

The objective of this opening session is to evoke and stimulate general discussion on prayer and praying. Since the content and activity of prayer tend to be private, there may be reticence initially to share something of the why, when, and what of praying. Consequently this session should be exploratory, but easygoing and relaxed.

Questions about prayer and praying may be forthcoming, and, as they are verbalized, they should be recorded on a flip chart and revisited from session to session, or at least at the final session of the course.

At the same time, the following questions may be used to engender thoughtful discussion. Perhaps they should be written on the chalkboard or on a flip chart.

1. Is prayer difficult? Why?
2. Is it difficult to speak to an “Other” whom we don’t know?
3. How much is it necessary to know about God in order to start praying?

#### **Why Do We Pray?**

Habit?

We want something from God?

We are in a crisis and need help?

We have an intimate relationship with God that keep us in communion with God?

#### **When Do We Pray?**

In church on Sundays, or also every day at home and at work?

When we are in trouble?

When we have problems we can’t handle?

Whenever possible because of our intimate relationship with God?

#### **What Do We Pray For? What is the Content of Our Prayer?**

Requests for guidance in our decision-making?

Protection for our loved ones and for ourselves?

For healing?

For things we need: food, clothing, work, passing a test, entrance into a college?

For family, friends, church, neighbors?

For our government leaders and representatives?

For justice and peace in the world, and very concretely for war-torn countries?

*Prayer is uttered, spoken in different contexts:*

Crisis, fear, sickness, thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Sundays in church, decision-making, marriage, birth, death, travel, etc.

But there is a context for prayer that is not an event of any kind.

*The most basic context for prayer is simply a relationship with God.*

From within this context prayer can be spoken at any time, anywhere, for any and every reason.

### **What kind of a relationship with God do we have? What kind do we want?**

Read Psalm 42 in Brandt, Kent, *Psalms Now* for a prayer that struggles to recover a relationship with God that is vital and real in being emotionally experienced.

“As a desert wanderer longs for springs of cool water,  
so my thirsty soul reaches out for You, O God.  
How I long for a deeper sense of Your presence,  
for a faith that will embrace You, without fear or doubt!  
Yet while I weep in longing, people about me say,  
“If God is not dead, where is He?”

I remember so well the faith of my childhood.  
How real God was to me in those days...”

### **Homework**

Please read the Introduction and Chapter 1 for the next class session.

## **Session Two**

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# **Christian Self-Understanding**

### **What forms of address do we use in our prayers?**

Creator, Redeemer, Eternal God, Savior, Father, Mother, etc.?

The forms of address we use imply something of our self-understanding in relation to God.

Addressing God as “Creator” highlights our identity as “creatures”.

Addressing God as “Savior” emphasizes our self-understanding as “saved”.

Addressing God as “Eternal God” reminds us of our finitude.

Addressing God as Parent places us in a family relationship to God.

### **What kind of a relationship with God do we presuppose for ourselves?**

#### *1. A Parent-Child relationship?*

Characterized by a hierarchical relationship to God.

By a total dependence on God as our Creator and Redeemer.

For the benefits of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

### **And how in this kind of relationship do we deal with our insecurities?**

By a purity code that divides the world into the dualistic realms of the clean and the unclean; and we, by associating ourselves with the clean and avoiding contact with the unclean, protect ourselves from contamination?

By a covenant of reciprocity, like that of Deuteronomy, which obliges us to fulfill God's will to ensure God's continued love, faithfulness, and protection for ourselves and our loved ones?

By embracing illusions, fantasies, character defenses and co-dependencies to control life in order to protect ourselves against the terrors of our historical existence: absurdities, accidents and premature death?

### **What kind of prayers do we pray in our parent-child relationship to God?**

Can you recall and share any prayers you prayed in your childhood?

### **2. *A Parent-Adult relationship?***

What are the changes that occur when adults have children who become adults?

What are the expectations of the parents for their adult offspring?

What are the expectations that the adult offspring now have of their parents?

How does this new relationship between them evolve?

Should our relationship to God remain static, when we move out of childhood into adulthood?

Why does it remain static? Why as Christian adults do we consider ourselves to be "children of God"? Is this the kind of relationship God wants to have with us? A hierarchical relationship of dependence?

Is our relationship to God stalled or stonewalled? By what?

How is it recovered or advanced to a Parent-Adult relationship?

Who would God need to be in order for us to enter a serious, long-term relationship with God here and now?

What do we do if the credibility of our Parent-Child relationship with God doesn't work for us anymore?

In **1 Corinthians 13:11** the Apostle Paul registers his own movement from a Parent-Child to a Parent-Adult relationship with God: "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways."

That change implies a horizontal relationship with God and with Jesus Christ, who according to the New Testament witness is co-enthroned with God.

John 15:14-15 and 17:20-26 and 20:17 indicate this change from verticality to horizontality.

In and through Jesus Christ, God has achieved for us the salvation we needed to recover the heritage of our original creation:

We have been reinstated as God's beloved daughters and sons.  
Death has been conquered for us, and therefore we have eternal life.  
We have been healed of the infection of sin and guilt.

We have been given the gift of a new Advocate, the Holy Spirit.  
We have come of age!

**Therefore**, according to the context of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's Gospel, Christians are not to parade their praying before others, nor are they to "heap up empty phrases, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (Matt.6:5-8)

According to the context of the Lord's Prayer in Luke's Gospel, Christians who are in desperate crises can be outrageous and impertinent in making known their needs to God. According to Jesus' parable of the "Friend at Midnight" in Luke 11:5-8, God does not answer prayer on the basis of a friendship that is determined by obligedness. God is free, even to respond to prayers that are bold, – like those Job addressed to God in the Book of Job 7, 10, 16, and 19.

**As ADULTS OF GOD, what is now our purpose in life and how does it evolve out of this new relationship with God?**

### **Homework:**

Please read Chapter 2 for the next class session.  
Also the Gospel according to Matthew, in one sitting, if possible.

## ***Session Three***

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### **Praying the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's Context**

Matthew's Gospel probably originated in the Syrian city of Antioch and seems to have been addressed to Jewish Christians who were being persecuted because they acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. This distinctive context is reflected in the opening genealogy which emphasizes the Jewishness of Jesus ("Son of Abraham") as well as his Davidic descent ("Son of David"). The Gospel, therefore is a unique, self-contained narrative world that should be read independently of the other Gospels. These Jewish Christians appear to have been landowners and business entrepreneurs and therefore belonged to the upper class. Matthew's Gospel, therefore, was addressed to the rich!

What is Christian self-understanding according to Matthew's Gospel that might inform our praying the Lord's Prayer? Perhaps the best answer is found in the last verse of Matthew's Gospel, as it is phrased in the unusual sentence structure of the original Greek text: "I with you **AM** always even to the consummation of the age." Can you find any special meaning in this unique word sequence?

This is the very **I AM** Jesus spoke when he identified himself to his disciples as he approached them on the Sea of Galilee walking on the water (in the Greek text of 14:27). At the beginning of Matthew's Gospel (1:23), Jesus is anticipated as Emmanuel, "God with us." At the end of the Gospel, you and I as Jesus' disciples are located and embraced within Jesus' divine **I AM**.

What would it mean to you to be enclosed in Jesus' divine **I AM**?

That starting point for this particular self-understanding involves us, of course, in a vicarious participation in Jesus' death and resurrection. By dying with Christ we end our participation in

the old moral order of the first creation. By being resurrected with Christ we enter into the new creation of the Kingdom of God. As a result, our old self-understanding dies; and in our rebirth a new self-understanding begins to develop within us.

What does it mean when God starts something new after the death of Jesus and the end of the old creation? (Matt.27:51-53) God creates a new type of human being, a new Adam. So, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:17, “Every one who is in Christ is a new creation all together. Old things passed away; everything has become new.”

Consequently, we can reread Matthew’s Gospel, and wherever we encounter the name of Jesus, we can substitute our own, because we have been embraced in Jesus’ divine I AM. So we identify ourselves with the titles that are attributed to Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. Like Jesus we appropriate our royal identity; we are the daughters and sons of a King. At the same time, we embrace our participation in the community of “the Son of Man.”

After some reflective discussion on these matters, what does it now mean to you to be enclosed in Jesus’ divine **I AM**? It is from within this self-understanding that we acquire from Matthew’s Gospel that we pray the Lord’s Prayer.

### **Homework**

Please read Chapters 3 and 4 for the next class session.  
Also the Gospel according to Luke in one sitting, if possible.

## **Session Four**

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### **Praying the Lord’s Prayer in Luke’s Context**

No one can identify with any certainty the place or precise time in which Luke-Acts originated. What is distinctive about this two volume narrative world is its pronounced knowledge of Mediterranean geography, Roman law and Roman government officials. In contrast to Matthew, Luke has a strong option for the poor and the dispossessed.

#### **What is Christian self-understanding according to Luke-Acts that might inform our praying the Lord’s Prayer?**

Luke-Acts tells the story of Jesus actualizing the Kingdom of God and then conferring it on his disciples (12:32 and 22:29) prior to the beginning of his passion. In the Pentecost event of Acts 2 the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower them in their activity of continuing to actualize and expand the Kingdom of God in other parts of the world. Additionally they were crowned with a flame, a tongue of fire that rested on each one of them, which signified their divine status as God’s beloved sons and daughters.

What would it mean to you to be a bearer of God’s presence by the indwelling of God’s Spirit?  
What would it mean to you to be a bearer of the divine flame?

This self-understanding is based on our participation in the New Exodus Jesus inaugurated. In 9:31 the Greek word for “departure” is “exodus”. It involves us in leaving behind all that is symbolized by the Jerusalem of Jesus’ time: (1) a pollution system based on a purity code that divides the world into the realms of the “clean” and the “unclean” in order to protect us from

contamination; (2) a covenantal relationship with God that is founded on reciprocity and obligedness that demands our obedience to God's laws in exchange for God's protection and faithfulness; (3) By shedding the illusions, fantasies, character defenses and co-dependencies by which we attempt to control life in order to protect ourselves against the terrors of our historical existence: absurdities, accidents and premature death.

Following Jesus into a New Exodus, therefore, is a death experience; and it is like those we have in life when we suffer the loss of a loved one, a life-threatening sickness, divorce, a tornado or hurricane that destroys our home, loss of a job, a major financial set-back, etc.

How can a new self-awareness be generated after such a death experience?

Recovery from such death experiences requires days and months, perhaps years of time, even while resurrection or renewal is taking place. According to Acts 1:3, Jesus remained with his disciples for 40 days after his resurrection from the dead, "speaking about the Kingdom of God." A time of quiet healing may be essential before a new self-awareness is established, and before that new self-awareness can motivate a person into new activity.

Both Gospels, Luke and Matthew, present a genealogy of Jesus. While they differ considerably, they coincide in registering a discontinuity between Jesus and Joseph, between Jesus and his historical past. Both Gospels also attribute a virgin birth to Jesus in order to reinforce this discontinuity. Jesus is the "the son of Man-the Son of God," the Pioneer of a New Humanity, as Paul also indicates in 1 Cor.15:45. Consequently he is the embodiment of a new beginning in the history of Israel.

Because we have followed Jesus into a New Exodus and vicariously participated in his death and resurrection, we also, as members of this New Humanity, are representatives of this great discontinuity with the historical past. We are no long children of God. We have become adults of God

**What thoughts and feelings do you have, as you become more aware of your membership in a New Humanity?**

**As ADULTS OF GOD, what is now our purpose in life and how does it evolve out of this self-understanding of an adult relationship with God?**

In Luke-Acts our new self-awareness leads us into a life of service that is more universally oriented, while in Matthew's Gospel our service is more ethnically oriented. Each of us must choose the direction, the goals and activities that correspond to the gifts with which we have been endowed, to the ethnic and educational heritage we bring with us. That is the continuity of the past that we also embody.

**It is from within this new self-understanding as ADULTS OF GOD, the new goals we pursue and the new activities that we engage in, that we proceed to pray the Lord's Prayer, the prayer, according to Matthew and Luke that Jesus taught his disciples.**

### **Homework**

Please read Chapter 5 for the next class session.

## **Session Five**

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### **The Invocation and the First Petition**

The Gospels according to Matthew and Luke, in which the Lord's Prayer is embedded, extend to us the self-understanding of Adult Daughters and Sons in the household of God. The relationship is now horizontal, for with Jesus we are co-enthroned with God. See Ephesians 4:13!

#### **What invocation will we use when we address God?**

Name some of the invocations encountered in the Old Testament. What metaphors are employed to speak about God in the Hebrew Scriptures?

Name some forms of address used in the New Testament. Discuss the widespread use of God as "Father" in both Testaments. Are there any forms of addressing God that are to be regarded as ultimate and final?

- What invocation do you prefer to express your own intimate relationship with God?
- Does God have a name? If so, why? If not, why not?
- What does it mean to hallow God's name? To hold God's name in awe?

As we move from addressing God intimately as "Pappa" or "Daddy" or "Mamma" or "Mom", and proceed to the first petition, "Hallowed by Thy name!" we find that it is formulated in the third person imperative in the Greek text. In English we do not employ a third person imperative. We use what is called the "jussive" which begins with the imperative "Let". We could translate this first petition into English as "Let your name be hallowed!" But this translation is ambiguous. It could be interpreted to mean, "God, you let your name be hallowed." But that would end up as a second person imperative, and it would mean that God is being entreated to make God's name holy.

This is not what the petition intends to convey. God is not being invoked to hallow God's own name. The community that is praying this petition is acknowledging the holiness of God's name. God's name is God himself or God's being. At the same time the community is summoning God's holiness to be professed by others, indeed, by the world. God used the third person imperative in Gen.1:3 to call light into existence, "Let there be light!" (as it is usually translated into English). In like manner the household of God's adult sons and daughters are issuing the summons, the command, that God's holiness is to be acknowledged.

The movement is from intimacy to apartness, from the fellowship of the household (in which God is seated at the table with all God's offspring of daughters and sons) to the wholly otherness of God as the lord of the universe, from immanence to transcendence, from the horizontal to the vertical. This is the paradoxical character of our relationship with God the Creator, who is eternal, ineffable, nameless, but who is also our Mother giving birth to us and our Father calling us into collaborative activity. In praying this petition we declare God, the One who is Yahweh ("I will be what I will be") to be holy and therefore to be revered, worshiped and glorified.

#### **Homework**

Please read Chapter 6 for the next class session.  
Also: Isaiah 11 and 65:17-25; Daniel 2 and 7.



## **Session Six**

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### **The Second and Third Petitions**

The version of the Lord's Prayer in Luke's Gospel contains only the second petition. Matthew's version includes the third, and it may well have been added by the liturgical activity of Matthew's church. The two are corresponding realities, so they may be considered together.

According to the Gospels and the letters of the Apostle Paul, God's will is directed at the fulfillment of the Kingdom or the Rule of God. It is here especially that biblical eschatology must be considered.

What is eschatology? (See the Glossary, p. 126, of *Praying The Lord's Prayer*, for a definition of "eschatology".) Can you think of some 20th century manifestations of eschatology?

Two prophetic visions emerge from the Hebrew Scriptures; both are eschatological and christological. Both foresee a turning point in history when a radical change will take place. Both include a divine agent or surrogate who will inaugurate this age to come.

Isaiah 9:6 and 11:1-9 introduced the expectation of a messianic Son of David who would lead Israel into a new paradise in which justice and peace would finally prevail. Jeremiah 23:5-6 and Ezekiel 34:23-24 continued this vision, and shortly before Jesus' birth it was elaborated in Psalm of Solomon 17. The focus of this vision is a Davidic Messiah who as king will reestablish Israel as God's unique people and conduct them into a glorious future. This perspective of the future is ethnically oriented and involves a purity code that divides the world into the realms of the clean and the unclean.

The beginnings of the second prophetic vision are found in Isaiah 56-66, a post-exilic text that marks the beginnings of Jewish Apocalypticism. It is specifically in 65:17-25 and 66:22 that the anticipation of a "new heaven and a new earth" is encountered for the very first time. Reforming the old moral order that originated with Adam and Eve has proven to be a fruitless effort. The old creation, therefore, must be terminated. God, who has placed the old under judgment, will originate a new creation in which justice and peace will prevail forever. Daniel 2 and 7 continue this apocalyptic vision, introducing the concepts of "the kingdom of God" and "one like a son of man," which become pivotal in the teaching of Jesus. This vision is universally oriented, and it does not promote any purity code.

Hopefully the figure at the top of p. 65 will contribute to a comprehension of this vision of Jewish Apocalypticism. Attendantly, the figure on p.68 will elucidate the eschatology of the Matthean and Lucan Gospels and facilitate an understanding of the meaning of the phrase, "the Kingdom of God" (or the Rule of God) in this second petition of the Lord's Prayer. In one way or another all four Gospels utilize the eschatological-christological vision that emerges in Jewish apocalypticism.

#### **Spend some time discussing these Old Testament visions.**

Like the first petition, the second and the third are expressed in the third person imperative. God, therefore, is not being invoked to make God's Kingdom come or to fulfill God's will. Jesus inaugurated both during his historical career, transferred their continued fulfillment to his disciples, and they have been in the process of being carried out to one extent or another during the past 2000 years. When the household of God's adult daughters and sons, who are actively

engaged in expanding God's Rule and fulfilling God's will, pray these petitions, they are calling for their final realization.

May your kingdom come once and for all!

The phrase, "the Kingdom of God" should not be understood as a realm in which God governs the world directly. God's Rule is a sovereignty that God awarded to Jesus, and Jesus in turn conferred it on his disciples (Matt. 28:16-20, Lk. 22:29). Now it belongs to us, and it is our response-ability to exercise it on behalf of God. Moreover, by doing so, we are fulfilling the will of God.

This sixth session would end well with a discussion of how we can exercise this sovereignty in our lives and in our daily activities and thereby fulfill our identity and our calling as God's beloved sons and daughters.

The stories of Jesus' calming the wind and the sea or walking on the sea are stories about the exercise of sovereignty, the authority that belongs to the members of God's household. Spend some time discussing them.

Matthew 8:23-27 and especially 14:22-33.

### **Homework**

Please read Chapter 7 for the next class session.  
Also Exodus 16, Matthew 6 and Luke 11.

## ***Session Seven***

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### **The Fourth Petition**

In this fourth petition we employ the second person imperative for the first time. God is being addressed directly! In Luke's version it is, "You keep on giving..." In Matthew's version, "You give..."

The petition in Luke uses a present imperative that denotes continuous action. It implies that the need of those praying these words will continue day after day. This wording is formulated specifically for the poor and marginalized who are always going to be dis-advantaged and destitute. In their poverty and indigence they are more completely dependent on God than the wealthy and the powerful. God, therefore, must not stop providing for their livelihood. It should not be forgotten that Luke's Gospel has a particular option for the poor. In its version of the beatitudes, specifically 6:20, Jesus says, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

Why are some Christians, who participate in God's new creation, marginalized and poor? What does the old moral order have to do with their subjection to the realities of unemployment, sickness, disabilities, war, and death? Why, in spite of the horizontal relationship, which they enjoy with God as the Head of this household, are they dependent on him to sustain them with everything that the word "bread" implies?

Are we, who may belong to the middle class and who may not be poor, equally dependent on God?

While we do everything we can, is it true that apart from Jesus or apart from God we can do nothing? See John 15:1-5.

Matthew's formulation of this petition employs a special verb form, an aorist imperative, that signifies a single and perhaps instantaneous action. Matthew's Gospel was addressed to the rich, that is, to landowners and business people of the upper class. Most, if not all of them, were Jewish Christians.

In what way might the story of God providing the Israelites with manna during their wilderness journey in Exodus 16:4-30 have influenced Matthew's wording. In fact, could it have affected the teaching Jesus handed down in 6:25-34? If Israel relied on God's daily provision of manna, should not those who are members of the New Israel do likewise? Moreover, is this not a valid spiritual exercise for those who are rich: to learn to trust God without using their wealth as security against the possible scarcities of tomorrow? "Don't be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own."

This petition in both Gospels prays for "**our** bread," not "my bread." When we pray these words, we should be mindful that we are commanding God to provide bread for every-body. No one is to go hungry! Neither today nor tomorrow!

Both versions of this petition also employ the uncommon Greek word, *epiousion*. It is not found in Greek literature and texts before its occurrence in this petition of the Lord's Prayer. As pages 75-79 of the book indicate, the interpretation of the word is controversial. The major alternatives are: "for the current day" or daily, and "for being" or necessary for existence. Which of the two would you choose? Why?

What else does the word "bread" connote?

Can you relate it to the Lord's Supper? Jesus took bread, broke it and distributed it among his disciples in order to make them participants of the one loaf that he himself embodied. There is one bread, the Apostle Paul declared in 1 Cor. 10:17, "and we who are many are one body, for we partake of one bread." Jesus used ordinary bread and made it symbolic as well as holy. Does its symbolism and its holiness hold any meaning for us today?

### **Homework**

Please read Chapter 8 for the next class session.  
Also Deuteronomy 11 and 28, and Matthew 18:23-35.

## ***Session Eight***

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### **The Fifth Petition**

#### **Compare the two versions of this petition!**

Matthew's formulation remains within the framework of indebtedness. Luke's fifth petition uses the word "sins" at the outset but then concludes with indebtedness, perhaps because his Greco-

Roman addressees were unfamiliar with the Jewish understanding of debt. Both versions, however, employ the second person imperative.

How might the fourth and fifth petitions be related to each other? The conjunction “and” ties them together? If God provides us with bread, are we then not indebted to God? How are we to deal with this burden of debt?

In what ways can indebtedness be associated with sin?

### **Examples:**

1. An obstetrician, by using excessive force to deliver a baby, causes brain damage. How is this mistake to be forgiven?
2. A university scientist, hired by a pharmaceutical company, who designs studies that are favorable to the company’s product and becomes indirectly involved in various deaths caused by the product.
3. Parents, whose son becomes a racist killer, but who did not spend enough time with him and therefore did not know him well so that they were not aware of the changes that were taking place inside of him.

How do we become indebted to others?

Do we promote indebtedness in our relationship to others?

When are some debts identifiable as sins?

Do we feel indebted to God? What may evoke these feelings?

Do we serve and obey God because of our sense of indebtedness?

Does God want us to relate to him on the basis of this indebtedness?

Please note the location of this petition! It does not stand at the beginning of the Lord’s prayer. It does not even precede the petition entreating God for “bread.” In many services of worship the confession of sins comes first, and everything else follows. In view of the placement of this petition, the questions need to be asked: Are we sinners first and foremost, and someday we’ll be saints? Or are we saints, holy people, first and foremost, and secondarily also sinners? How do we prioritize our Christian identity?

Of course, as Christians we do sin, and forgiveness is always available to us. God’s forgiveness closes the past and opens up the future. According to this petition, however, the extent to which God forgives us depends on the extent to which we forgive others. Like God’s forgiveness, that means we also close the past and open the future for those we forgive. No fishing expeditions into the past are permitted. That would not be true forgiveness.

### **Homework**

Please read Chapter 9 for the next class session.

Also Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.

## **Session Nine**

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### **The Sixth and Seventh Petitions**

These two petitions conclude the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer. The Lucan version ends with the first. Since the second, "But deliver us from evil," (or more correctly, "But deliver us from the evil one") is a natural addition that presupposes the first, it can be assumed that it was added by the Matthean church. Both are formulated in the second person imperative.

The sixth petition is linked to the fifth (as the fifth is linked to the fourth) by the conjunction "and." All three petitions that use the second person imperative are connected. What does this suggest to you?

Do you find the distinction between "temptation" and "put to the test" significant?

Why did God test Israel in Old Testament times? Under a code of reciprocity, God must test Israel's loyalty and obedience.

If God is a tester, can God be fully trusted? Would we not live in anxiety, always struggling like children to please God? Would we not try to be perfectly obedient so that God would not test us?

According to James 1:12-16 God tests no one. Could this be a difference between being "children of God" and "adults of God"? Indeed, we can't be God's adults, if we are still inside this Old Testament circle of being tested by God to determine how loyal and obedient we are. How can we move out of this thinking?

When that circle of reciprocity is broken and sins are forgiven, there is no longer any need for God to test us. We can live as God's adult sons and daughters in trust and confidence.

What then does this petition mean, "Don't put us to the test."

According to Mark 1:12-13, Matthew 4:1, and Luke 4:1-2, Jesus was tested in the wilderness. But not by God! By Satan (or the devil)! Yet it was God who led Jesus into being tested, but the devil did the actual testing.

That is why the seventh petition was added by Matthew: to clarify and make certain that those who prayed this petition would recognize that it was the wicked one, the devil who did the testing.

Discuss the threefold temptation in Matthew 4:1-11 or in Luke 4:1-13.

What kind of testings does God lead us into?

To what extent are we seduced by the security of pattern, sameness, conformity, continuity? How does this relate to the first testing of Jesus by the devil?

Do we have a need to prove our identity as God's daughters and sons by engaging in bold and daring ministry? Do we sometimes feel the necessity of putting God to the test; that is, testing God's reliability and faithfulness? How does this relate to the second testing of Jesus by the devil?

To what extent do we buy into the principle, "The end justifies the means"? How was Jesus challenged by this principle in the third testing?

Why do we pray these two petitions?

### **Homework**

Please read Chapter 10 and the Epilogue for the final class session.

## ***SESSION TEN***

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### **The Doxology and the Epilogue**

As we come to the end of our study, it is a good time to revisit the Lord's Prayer. Of course, we must still discuss the concluding doxology, but that was not attached to the Prayer in either Gospel.

Neither the Lucan nor the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer ends with a doxology or an "Amen." The doxology appears for the first time in the Didache, the church's first catechism. It is possible that the Prayer was always ended with the traditional "Amen," but it was not incorporated into the manuscript tradition of Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer, the version that evidently was most widely prayed, until several centuries later.

It is very significant that the word "kingdom" does not appear in the Didache's version of the Lord's Prayer: "For yours is the power and the glory forever."

On the basis of what was discussed in conjunction with the second petition, "Your kingdom come," why would this word be missing in that earliest form of the doxology?

Do you think that the word "kingdom" should be removed from the doxology? Why?

Why would you find the doxology to be a perfect conclusion to praying the petitions of the Lord's Prayer?

Do you give thanks to God for the power you have? (See Romans 1:20-21)

We acknowledge that also "glory" belongs to God, but do we ever see it? And if we do, where and when? Do we see it in the mirror reflection of Jesus Christ in the Gospels? And do we contemplate that image of Jesus Christ, so that 2 Cor. 3:18 may also be fulfilled in us? So that our growth as Adults of God, who are embraced by Jesus' divine **I AM**, continues until we reach the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ?

What meaning does the final "AMEN" hold for us when we speak it at the conclusion of our praying the Lord's Prayer?

It is very important to close this study with an awareness that the Lord's Prayer presupposes being prayed in a context of two realities:

1. We have shifted the context for praying this prayer from an event (a service of worship, a personal crisis) to the context of a relationship with God in which we belong to God's household as adult daughters and sons.

2. The Lord's Prayer presupposes that it is to be prayed in a context of activity. We who pray these petitions are engaged in some kind of ministry as God's surrogates. It doesn't matter whether it is professional or lay activity. Our calling corresponds to our identity, and therefore we are working for the fulfillment of God's will, the expansion of God's rule, and the reverencing of God's being.

The Lord's Prayer does not allow us to withdraw from the world and simply enjoy a good relationship with God. The Lord's Prayer also does not allow us to remain in contemplative prayer. Jesus prayed in the wilderness and he prayed on mountaintops, but he did not stay there.

Finally, in view of all that has been said and discussed throughout this study, take some time to revise the Lord's Prayer by using new language that would convey the meaning of the individual petitions as you understand them now.

## ***Bibliography***

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There are many books on "Prayer" and on "The Lord's Prayer". Explore them wherever and whenever you can. Add your own to the list! But be sure to ask whether they are oriented toward engaging in God's work to transform the world or whether they advocate a withdrawal from the world in order to enjoy the bliss of God's presence. The two are not mutually exclusive, but prayer should not be used as an escape mechanism from the response-abilities that are now ours as God beloved daughters and sons.