

The Lord's Prayer ~ Discussion Questions

1. The 18 traditional synagogue prayers from early days had openings such as, “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” “holy one,” “builder of Jerusalem,” “mighty one,” and “gracious one.” Why do you think Jesus taught his disciples to pray to “*Abba*” (*our Father*)? What kind of relationship does it affirm?
2. “Hallowed” is not a common word today. Just what does it mean? Can we humans make God’s name holy or unholy? (Ezekiel 36:16-23) Who can make God’s name holy? When we say, “hallowed be thy name,” what are we stating or asking for?
3. There are three paradoxes on Jesus’ teachings about the kingdom of God. This is like three railroad trains moving side by side on three separate tracks. If any rail is removed or if the trains move onto one track, there will be a wreck. Each train must move on its own track of two rails. The three paradoxes are:
 - A) The kingdom of God has come in Christ (Luke 11:20) but that same kingdom is still in the future (Matthew 6:10)
 - B) The kingdom of God and the end of all things is near (1 Peter 4:7, 1 Corinthians 7:29, Romans 13:12) but it is still far off (parables in Luke 19:12-27, Matthew 25:14-30)
 - C) Jesus describes many signs of the coming of the kingdom (Luke 21:5-36) but then says only the father knows the time of the end (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32)Given that in this human life we don’t now know and can never truly understand the kingdom of God, what does it mean when we pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven?”
4. Using the Greek word, the next petition reads, “give us this day our *epiousios* bread,” which can be translated as *today*, *tomorrow*, or [an] *amount*. So the phrase can mean, “the bread of today,” “the bread of tomorrow,” or “the bread we need.” Given this broadened definition, what would be a good translation of this petition?
5. Not only are we admonished to forgive others, but in two verses after the prayer, what does Jesus say will happen if we don’t? (Matthew 6:12-15). Different Bible translations ask God to forgive unfulfilled obligations, i.e., debts [KJV, ESV, NASB, NIV], or forgive doing the wrong thing: sins [LB, NLT, NCV], trespasses [Anglican, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Lutheran], and wrongs [CEV, REB]. Which do you like best? Actually, Jesus said to forgive *kihoba*, an Aramiac word which means *both* debts and sins. How do you like that meaning? How can we best express what forgiveness we are asking for from God?
6. We then must forgive others. Does that mean that injustice will be tolerated by Christians? Is anger necessary to fuel the struggle for justice?
7. The phrase, “lead us not into temptation” can also be translated, “do not bring us to the time of trial.” [NRSV]. Will God tempt you? (James 1:13) Assuming God will not tempt you, what then does this petition mean?

The Lord's Prayer ~ Questions for Small Groups

1. Here are two translations of the Lord's prayer. Which do you like best? Why?

From Book of Common Prayer, 1662:

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.

For thine is the kingdom, [and] the
power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

From Good News Bible (TEV), 1976:

Our Father in heaven:

May your holy name be honored;

may your Kingdom come;

may your will be done on

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need.

Forgive us the wrongs we have done,
as we forgive the wrongs that others

have done to us.

Do not bring us to hard testing,

but keep us safe from the Evil One.

[Ending at left may be optionally added]

2 Why should our heavenly Father's name be held in awe and in the highest honor?

3 How does stealing bring dishonor to the name of our heavenly Father? Would cheating, tax evasion, drunkenness or reckless driving do the same?

4 At present the kingdom of God can be ignored or sneered at. Will it always be so?

5. Can rewards and penalties be rightly used to encourage good and godly ways?

6 It is not popular to think of restraining ourselves. However, as Christians do we have a role in seeing that God's will is done on earth by recognizing our weaknesses and controlling our gossip, lying, cheating, thieving, adultery, anger, and debauchery?

7 Do our prayers have a reforming, lifestyle-changing element about them? Are we willing, at our own expense or effort, to be our heavenly Father's answer to our own prayers?

8 How can the petition for daily bread touch and enlighten the selection of the products we buy?

9. In what particular ways is our church and our whole society in need of repentance, a turning away from wrong thinking and wrong doing, and of the forgiveness of our heavenly Father?

10. Which particular temptations does our own society forcefully present to us? Why are other people's temptations no great problem to us when our own are so difficult?