

TEACHING CHILDREN THE LORD'S PRAYER

INTRODUCTION:

While many children easily learn to recite the words of the Lord's Prayer, at some point in their home or Sunday School classes, it would be helpful for them to consider the meaning behind the words and how to live out their prayer in daily life, which is something Christ Jesus expected of his followers.

We are most familiar with the Lord's Prayer as the one we often say in public settings with others. But it is also a good one to make part of our daily life. Individual prayer, alone and in communion with our heavenly Father, should be spontaneous and a sincere reflection of our desires. The Lord's Prayer gives us a solid structure and a pattern to base our own private prayers upon. It includes affirmations and requests that cover a wide range of human needs and truths about God that offer prompts to deeper exploration. Learning somewhat of the treasures to be mined in this gift from Jesus, a child can be prepared for a lifetime of confident and meaningful prayer.

I will be sharing research on the Lord's Prayer that I have collected from various commentaries, and will also present ideas for class discussions based upon my experience teaching Sunday School and studying the Bible and related books. In today's post is some background material that should help Sunday School teachers and parents to understand a bit of history of the Lord's Prayer. This can also be shared with older students. There are also a few ideas that relate to the Prayer as a whole.

In future posts on this new series, I will go over each line of the Lord's Prayer, offering a few Bible verses or stories, and ideas for class discussion. Most of the sections will be for older children and teens, but will then be followed by a summary written in simpler language for young children, which you can read to them or use as a basis for your own words adjusted to their age and understanding.

I will be using the King James Version of the Lord's Prayer, which is familiar to many. While most modern translations of the Bible no longer use the words *thou, thy, and thine*, children easily accept that these words are Old English versions of "you" and "your." Besides, it will get them prepared for reading Shakespeare in high school! Bible citations will also be from the KJV.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY:

We know that Jesus despised hypocrisy. The opening verses of Matthew, chapter 6, reinforce this. That is where Jesus gives instructions to his followers relating to the motives for our charity, our worship of God, and our prayers:

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have

no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

Here is an analysis taken from *The Interpreter’s Bible, Volume 7*, which helps to explain the situation at that time:

“Christianity and the Way of Private Prayer — *It is important that we see in mind’s eye the background of religion against which Jesus spoke. Too many ‘men of prayer’ in his day were hypocrites — actors — and they went where they could find an audience. In the synagogue they would loudly recite their own prayers instead of being content to share in the accustomed congregational prayers. They ‘made broad their phylacteries.’ At the three times of daily prayer — when the pious workman would quit his work, and the teacher his teaching, to turn toward Jerusalem in acknowledgment of God — the professionally pious would so arrange life as to be caught at a crowded corner; and then they would sometimes stand for three hours in their devotions. Thus the comment of Jesus: nowhere is his hatred of form and cant more clear. He gives by implication certain rules for private prayer. It is essential — the burning center of life. Public or corporate prayer is also essential, for prayer inevitably has its social expression. Jesus enjoined public prayer in both word and act. But corporate prayer will lack sincerity and depth without private prayer — as witness the aridity of much public worship.”* (*The Interpreter’s Bible, Volume 7, Abington Press, Nashville, p. 307*)

Perhaps this is why the prayer Jesus gave to his followers was notable for its brevity and simplicity, while at the same time covering all the important points.

Also to be noted, is that the petitions in the Lord’s Prayer were not totally new to his listeners. *The Interpreter’s Bible* tells us: *“The prayer is thoroughly Jewish and nearly every phrase is paralleled in the Kaddish and the Eighteen Benedictions; thus it is Jesus’ inspired and original summary of his own people’s piety at its best.”* (*ibid. p. 309*)

Two Versions:

There are two versions of the Lord’s Prayer in the Bible. The first one is found in the

book of Matthew (6:9-13) and is included in the Sermon on the Mount. It reads:

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

The second version of the Lord’s Prayer is found in Luke 11, verses 1-4. This is how it is translated in the King James Version:

“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.”

You can point out that in this situation in Luke, the Prayer was given as the result of a question from one of the disciples. You can explain the contradiction by reminding the students that the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew is most likely a collection of the teachings of Jesus that were also given at other times. It is possible that the episode in Luke may reflect the first time Jesus gave the Prayer, and therefore is closer to the original version – that is, it uses the word translated “sins” instead of “debts,” and it does not include the last line that is in Matthew’s version.

The Structure of the Lord’s Prayer:

The Matthew version contains eight lines, but only seven are accepted as original. Because of this, some churches do not include the last line in the versions they use. However, it is a beautiful summary of the prayer.

The Interpreter’s Bible explains to us that the Lord’s Prayer “consists basically of three petitions: for the coming of the kingdom, for daily bread – i.e. all that is needed for earthly existence – and for forgiveness of sins in the past and the future. These sum up all the needs of those who, as in the Beatitudes, await the coming of the kingdom. Matthew’s prayer may have been developed out of this into a sevenfold form designed for public worship; the first three petitions are centered in God, the other four in our needs.” (*ibid*, p. 308)

In William Barclay’s book, *The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1*, there is an interesting analysis of the second set of petitions, which an older student might appreciate:

“The second part of the prayer, the part which deals with our needs and our necessities, is a marvelously wrought unity. It deals with the three essential needs of man, and the three spheres of time within which man moves. First, it asks for bread, for that which is

necessary for the maintenance of life, and thereby brings the needs of the present to the throne of God. Second, it asks for forgiveness and thereby brings the past into the presence of God. Third, it asks for help in temptation and thereby commits all the future into the hands of God. In these three brief petitions, we are taught to lay the present, the past, and the future before the footstool of the grace of God.

“But not only is this a prayer which brings the whole of life to the presence of God; it is also a prayer which brings the whole of God to our lives. When we ask for bread to sustain our earthly lives, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Father, the Creator and the Sustainer of all life. When we ask for forgiveness, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. When we ask for help for future temptation, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Illuminator, the Guide and the Guardian of our way.

*“In the most amazing way this brief second part of the Lord’s Prayer takes the present, the past, and the future, the whole of man’s life, and presents them to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, to God in all his fullness. **In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus teaches us to bring the whole of life to the whole of God and to bring the whole of God to the whole of life.**” (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 1, Rev. Edition, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1974; originally copyrighted 1956, Scotland*)*

The Doxology:

“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.” This is called a *doxology*, which is a hymn of praise to God and His wonderful nature. The Bible has many other doxologies, or statements of praise to God. The book of Psalms is filled with them. One example is: *“And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory.”* (Ps. 72:19) You might have your students search for other examples in the Bible.

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We know that the last line of the Lord’s Prayer found in Matthew was added on at a later time. Because of this, as mentioned earlier, some churches do not use it, and some modern translations of the Bible do not include it. You might want to point out this fact to your children or students, so they can be alert to this when they find themselves having to recite the Lord’s Prayer with other groups.

“Debts” versus “Trespases”

We have already seen that the Matthew and Luke versions of the Lord’s Prayer are different with regard to the line about “forgiveness.” Matthew uses the words that have been translated “debts” and “debtors,” while Luke has instead the terms “sins” and “everyone that is indebted to us.” Most churches use the Matthew version of the Prayer. However, the question that arises is why do some churches substitute the word “trespases” for the word “debts”? The answer takes us back to the year 1526. This is

when William Tyndale published his English translation of the Bible. He used the term “trespasses,” although spelled differently. The first English translation of the Bible had been published by John Wycliffe in 1395, but that version used the term “debts.” However, when the first Book of Common Prayer in English was published in 1549, Tyndale’s version with the word “trespasses” was used. This became the “official” version used in the Anglican (Church of England) congregations. Other churches chose to use “debts” in their version of the Lord’s Prayer.

“The use of the word ‘trespasses’ instead of ‘debts’ as in Matthew 6:12 may be due to the use of the word in the explanation that follows the prayer in Matthew 6:13, 14, ‘For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.’ Even in the third century, Origen used the word trespasses [paraptōmata] in the prayer. However, the Established Presbyterian Church of Scotland uses ‘debts’ and ‘debtors’ in the prayer. Most Evangelical churches associate the use of ‘trespasses’ with Catholic traditions and prefer the use of ‘debts’ and ‘debtors’ instead.”
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord's_Prayer)

Because of this, there is no consistency among the Christian churches today.

IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION:

Point out that the Lord’s Prayer never uses the terms “I,” “me,” or “mine.” It is always about “our” God or “our” needs. This is a universal prayer that includes everyone. When you pray this prayer, it will have to be true for all, even our so-called enemies. The Lord’s Prayer helps to remind us that we are all God’s children. We learn to draw those circles that include everyone, rather than drawing tiny circles to keep others out.

As mentioned above, there are different versions of the Lord’s Prayer used in various Bible translations and church congregations. Students might find it interesting to compare and discuss these differences. These translations can be found on the Internet, such as Biblegateway.com, or a library.

One debate out there, which you can also find on the Internet, is whether or not Jesus prayed the Lord’s Prayer himself, or did he intend it to be for his followers only. You might have older students research and discuss their conclusions.

Summary:

I love how one writer in *The Interpreter’s Bible* described the Lord’s Prayer:

“Above all, it is the prayer of Christ. It is not an excursion into theology; it is rather an adoration from the soul.”

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“Our Father which art in heaven.”

This is the first of our discussions of individual lines of the Lord’s Prayer. The first part will simply be a list of Bible verses or ideas for discussions that probe in-depth the meaning of the line, which will hopefully give the students a basis for better understanding and inspiration for living the prayer in their daily life. Following this section will be a summary written for younger children.

If you have landed on this page first, you might wish to read the [Introduction and Background](#) for Teaching Children the Lord’s Prayer.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:

1. In the Old Testament, God was called the Father of the nation, Israel.

“Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.” (Exodus 4:22)

“Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our Father, for ever and ever.” (I Chronicles 29:10)

Many years later, Christ Jesus came to show mankind that God was the Father of each and every one of us, not just the Israelites. He also explained that God is our only true parent:

“Call no man your father, which is in heaven.” (Matthew 23:9)

But what about our earthly parents? We know from the Ten Commandments that we are to honor our fathers and mothers. They are our special caretakers when we are young and our friends for life. But God is Father of everyone at all times.

2. God is considered our Father because He is the one who created man and the universe, which we read about in the first chapter of Genesis. Throughout the Old Testament, God was praised as the Maker of the whole universe.

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth . . . For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” (Psalm 33: 6, 9)

The prophet Isaiah wrote: *“Thus saith the Lord . . . I have made the earth, and created man upon it.” (Isaiah 45:11-12)*

In Psalms we read: *“Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.” (Psalm 100:3)*

John, the disciple of Jesus, would later write of God: *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:3)*

John also wrote: *“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” (I John 3:1)*

The Apostle Paul travelled beyond Jerusalem to other regions, including Greece and Rome, spreading the message of Christ. At Mars Hill in Athens, Paul announced to the public that gathered to hear him:

“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.” (Acts 17:28)

In a letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote:

“And because ye are sons, God hath set forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Galatians 4:6)

“Abba” is a word from the Aramaic language, which is a tender expression for “father” similar to “daddy.” Jesus used this term when praying to God on the night of his betrayal by Judas. In his darkest hour, Jesus did not forget that God was his ever-present Father and so he was able to put his whole trust in God’s will. He left an example that his followers should not forget: *God is abba, our Father.*

3. Point out the First Commandment, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” When we pray and affirm the first line of the Lord’s Prayer, we are bringing our thought in line with the First Commandment. We base our thinking on the fact that there is only *one* true Creator, and therefore God is our Father. We are at the same time being obedient to the Commandment.
4. When you pray the first line of the Lord’s Prayer, open your heart to all mankind. We are all included in God’s family, for He is “OUR Father”!
5. Some pupils might ask, if God, our Father, is “in heaven,” how could He be the Parent of those of us on earth?” You might explain that the phrase “which art in heaven,” was originally meant to describe God as “heavenly” – that is, He is a divine Being, rather than something earthly, or human. It is not really meant to say that He is in a far away place separate from man on earth. God is everywhere, and as close as our thoughts, since as Paul told us, *“in him we live, and move, and have our being.”*

For Young Children:

Jesus taught us to pray that God is the heavenly Father of all. He is the Maker of heaven and earth and everything. Heaven is God’s kingdom and Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is within us. God is that close to our hearts and minds. We will learn more about heaven when we go over another line of this prayer. Because God is “our Father” everyone is included in God’s family. We are all brothers and sisters. We are taken care of by God, just as our earthly parents take care of us when we are young. But we never grow too old for God to take care of us! He is always our heavenly, divine Father. He will never leave us.

Because God is the Father of us all, He makes sure that everything is good, and that everyone has all they need. No one needs to fight over who is loved the most, or worry about bad things happening. But to see this good in our lives, we have to stay close to

God and trust that His goodness will be coming our way. Prayer helps us do that. When we pray, we must thank Him for all that He has made and for taking care of us. We might say each day: “Good morning, God. Thank you for being our heavenly Father.”

“Hallowed be Thy name.”

A simple explanation and summary of this line of the Lord’s Prayer for **young children** is at the end. For older children and teens, here are a few facts to share, Bible readings, and ideas for classroom or at home discussions:

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:

It is not uncommon to find that young children recite this line of the Lord’s Prayer as “*Halloween* be thy name”! So cute. But eventually, as they get older, it would be helpful to introduce our children and Sunday School pupils to the term “hallowed” and what it means, so that their prayers and lives will not neglect to take it to heart.

1. *Hallowed* comes from a Greek word which means “to treat a person as different or separate.” It is often translated as “holy.” When something is called holy, such as “The Holy Bible,” we are saying that it is very special and unique and is not to be treated as common or ordinary.

2. Jesus tells us in this prayer to hallow the name of our Father, to treat it with reverence and respect. It was God, Himself, who first commanded this:

“Neither shall ye profane my holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the Lord which hallow you, that brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 22:32, 33)

3. We respect God and His name because He is *our* Father and we love and worship Him above all others. We first learn this early in the Bible:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5)

4. One simple way to honor God and His name in our lives and prayers is to *praise* His name, as the Bible teaches us:

“For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised . . . Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.” (I Chronicles 16:25, 29)

“I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” (Psalm 34:1)

When praying the Lord's Prayer, the words "*Hallowed be Thy name,*" can sometimes be easily passed over, but they are representative of the spirit behind this enthusiastic outpouring of love for God:

*"Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. **Glory ye in his holy name:** let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord."* (1 Chronicles 16:8-10)

5. Refer students to the Third Commandment, "*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*" Show how God even made it a *law* to be respectful of His name and not to use it carelessly or for worthless reasons, such as swearing.

6. What exactly is the "name" we are to hallow? The Bible has given us many names for God, which the Hebrews used at various times in their history, such as Jehovah, Elohim, Yahweh, Lord God, Almighty, and, of course, God. Some other world religions have their own name for the Supreme Being. But it is helpful to know that in the Hebrew language, the word "name" is not simply referring to what someone is called. It means *nature* or *character*, and refers to the qualities which make up the essence, or being, of the one named. We often see this when certain Bible characters are given new names when they have gone through some life-changing event or revelation. Have your pupils find these people and perhaps discuss the reasons behind their name change. Bible dictionaries will often have the meaning behind many of the Hebrew names of people and places.

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

Jesus taught us that God is "holy," which is a way of saying that God is very special and not like others. Another word for holy is "hallowed." God is so special that even His name should be "hallowed" or holy. Hallow also means to separate, or keep apart. God is separate from all that is not like Him. There is nothing bad or evil inside of Him. There is nothing else in the world as purely good or wonderful as God, who is Spirit. To prove that we hallow God and His name, we should try, as His children, to be as good and pure as He is and obedient to all His laws.

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever." (Daniel 2:20)

"Thy kingdom come"

A simple explanation and summary of this line of the Lord's Prayer is at the end. For older children and teens, here are a few facts to share, Bible readings, and ideas for classroom or at-home discussions:

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:

1. A kingdom is a place or realm that is governed by a king or ruler. God's kingdom is the place where God *governs*. His "throne" is in heaven, which is actually everywhere, even here and now, even though we may not always see the evidence of it with our eyes. But the Lord's Prayer tells us that God's kingdom has come to us.

"The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heaven; and his kingdom ruleth over all."
(Psalm 103:19)

2. In the New Testament, there are two similar terms that are used: "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God." They mean the same thing. Matthew uses the first term in his Gospel, but the "kingdom of God" is used in the rest of the New Testament.

3. Jesus taught his followers the good news, or gospel, that the kingdom of God was at hand. The realm of God was within reach of man through man's consciousness or thoughts. Jesus taught his disciples to pray "*thy kingdom come*," to remind themselves of this great fact. Otherwise, they – and we today – might tend to forget how close God really is to us.

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20, 21)

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1)

4. Jesus taught his followers a few stories, or parables, about what the kingdom of heaven is like. You can find these in the book of Matthew, chapter 13. It has been said that parables are "earthly stories with heavenly meanings." In your Sunday School class, or at home with your children, spend some time reading and discussing some of these parables, and see if they can discover the "heavenly meaning."

5. How do we see that God's kingdom is come? Jesus gave a clear message about this in one of his beatitudes: "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" The purer our thinking, the more spiritually-minded we become, and this helps our thought become clearer and more aware of this kingdom within that Jesus tells us has come. Christ Jesus came to light the way for us to do this by his words and by his example. He also insisted we humble ourselves and do God's will obediently to experience God's kingdom:

"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

"Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

6. The coming of God's kingdom appears to have been a major theme of Jesus' ministry. Early in the story of Jesus, it is written:

*“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and **preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” (Matthew 9:35)*

Notice that Jesus healed people in addition to preaching the message of God’s kingdom. That certainly got their attention! Jesus told them that this healing was proof that the kingdom of God was here:

“If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt that the kingdom of God is come upon you.” (Luke 11:20)

The Jews had actually been expecting a different kind of kingdom to come on earth. They wanted to see God destroy their enemies, and free them from the Romans who had taken their country and ruled over them unjustly. They did not expect to hear the promised Savior preach love and mercy for all:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:43-45)

In the kingdom of heaven there are no enemies as we are all children of God, and we love each other as brothers and sisters. There are no outsiders.

7. If God is within us, how does He communicate with us? He sends His angels, or messages, to our listening consciousness. See [this page](#) for a list of Bible stories that include angels. You can read and discuss with your pupils some of these stories which should give an idea of how they work with men on behalf of God. We were given this promise:

“For he shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Psalm 91:11)

8. When John was on the Isle of Patmos, receiving the heavenly visions we read about in the Book of Revelations, he received this message which affirms that God is near and dear to us; His Kingdom has indeed come.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Revelation 21:3)

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

Jesus taught that God’s kingdom was “at hand.” That means God’s kingdom is very, very close to us right now. A kingdom is a place where a king, or ruler, lives and governs. He makes all the rules! God’s kingdom is called “heaven.” Jesus wanted us to know that heaven, God’s kingdom, is not far away or in the future, but is right here

with us now. That is why his special prayer tells us to know that God's kingdom has come. It can become real to us in our thinking. We open our hearts in prayer to hear God's angel messages that He sends to His children who are aware of His kingdom. These angels bring a sense of joy and love to all who listen.

God is not just within our hearts. He is everywhere and with everyone all the time, which is good to know when we need Him, or He needs us. It is like having your mom or dad or a best friend with you wherever you go, only better. We pray to see and feel God's ever-presence. If we are faced with something bad during our day, we can remember that God, good, has come and is ever-present. We can feel His love and goodness with us to help us in our need.

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

A simple explanation and summary of this line of the Lord's Prayer for young children is at the end. For older children and teens, here are a few facts to share, Bible readings, and ideas for classroom or at home discussions:

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:

1. The word “*will*” as used in this prayer means a strong and fixed purpose. God's will is His *purpose*, or plan, for His creation, including you! If God's kingdom has come, then His rules and laws would govern those who live here. We should pray daily to see God's will in action. This is not always easy to do with all the chaos in the world, but if we pay close attention and listen, we can see evidence of God's powerful influence in the hearts and minds of His children. The prophet Isaiah said:

“The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” (Isaiah 14:29)

Jesus taught that there is a connection between doing God's will and experiencing the kingdom of heaven, as we learned in a previous lesson:

*“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth the will** of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21)*

2. Starting off our day with the prayerful affirmation that God's “*will be done*,” can help us yield our human will – our own personal wishes – to God's plan for us. We need to learn how to tell the difference. In certain situations or important decisions to make, a strong sense of personal will, showing no regard for the good of others, perhaps, or having no humility to listen for God's direction first, or pride in our own sense of right, are qualities we need to guard against. The first Beatitude indicates this in a measure: *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* The “poor in spirit”

are those who know their need of God, who lose their pride in themselves as know-it-alls or as superior to others.

3. As you read Bible stories, notice how God's power and will is always proven to be supreme, or superior, to the methods of men. You can see how those who obeyed God's will found success in their endeavors, while those who disobeyed God were not.

A good Bible story showing the consequence of going against God's will is that of Jonah, who was swallowed by a whale. Read about this in the book of Jonah in the Old Testament.

4. There is no secret to finding out what God's will is as we begin our spiritual journey. It starts with the Ten Commandments, among other rules spelled out for us in the Old Testament, such as the messages from the prophets. And then we have the rules of conduct and thought as clearly expressed by Christ Jesus. God's laws keep us aligned with His will.

One way to think about this is to consider mathematics. Math, or the science of numbers, has a principle that governs its operation. We come to understand mathematics through the laws that govern it. We practice and prove those laws, which helps us to master the science of it. Just so, God is the divine Principle of the universe, and so we must strive to understand and practice God's laws, so that we can prove that He is the all-powerful, all-loving Supreme Being that governs man and the universe in harmony. We can prove His will on earth by solving the problems that appear to us for healing or correction using the principle behind the laws given in the Bible. Think of it as homework with a heavenly purpose!

In the Bible we can read about two characters, Joseph and Daniel, who found protection in difficult and deadly situations because they lived their lives in obedience to the will of God. This provided them with the deep trust needed to rely on God for their safety. These stories can be read and discussed in class, focusing on their obedience and how it might have protected them and others.

*“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and **perfect, will of God.**”*
(Romans 12:2)

How do we know what God's will is for us in daily life? Often, in the Bible, people in need of help were sent angels who brought specific messages from God. We can have these angel visitors, too. They come in the form of intuitions or some sudden idea that strikes us just at the right time, or even in the form of a helpful person. Isaiah describes these intuitions like this:

“And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. (Isaiah 30:21)

Visit this link for a selection of Bible stories about Angels.

5. Jesus taught that the power he expressed was not personal, but was God's will:

"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." (John 5:30)

Of course, the greatest example of serving God's will instead of one's very justifiable personal desire, is seen in the night Jesus prayed to God as he was facing the fearful ordeal of crucifixion.

*"And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: **nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.** And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him."* (Luke 22:41-43)

Your pupils should not worry that God will be asking them to give up their lives as part of His plan. This was the special mission for Jesus alone. But Jesus did have this message for his followers:

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12, 13)

Laying down our life for our friends can have several meanings, in addition to those times where unselfish people put their lives on the line for the good of others. It can mean laying aside our personal opinions, mad ambitions, stubbornness, harsh judgments, revenge, prejudices, and erroneous beliefs about who we are as God's children. All of these aspects of willfulness are more likely to stand in the way of spiritual progress than rare situations where we have to give up our lives for others.

6. Emphasize to your pupils that when we pray the Lord's Prayer we are praying not just for ourselves, but for all of mankind. So, here, we are praying that God's will is done universally, not just in our personal lives, although we are each responsible for our own thoughts and actions.

This prayer can open our eyes to see that God is truly in control of His whole universe, even if at first it appears otherwise. Our prayers can reach across the earth. We may never know how and where are prayers have an effect, but we should know we are loving and serving others as Jesus did. The most important effect is seen in our own thinking, which colors our view of the world. We must learn to trust God's will is being done in the hearts and minds of all.

7. One reason people may balk at trusting God's will for us is a sense of fear about what He has in store for us. We may not like it at all! One example: we may hear that some people believe that God is responsible for some of the bad things that happen on earth.

If someone dies, for instance, or a neighborhood is destroyed by an earthquake, fire, or hurricane, some may say it was “God’s will,” and that we should accept the event as right. But the Bible says, “*God is love.*” Would divine Love really want to see bad things happen to your family and friends? Of course not. Then why should we believe that God, our good and loving Father, would? We should not! God does not love less than you or anyone. His entire substance is love. There is no reason to fear God or His will. He is “our Father.” We are created in His “image and likeness.” His will for all is perfect.

*“For God hath not given us the **spirit of fear**; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (II Timothy 1:7)*

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

Jesus taught that we must love and obey God. When we follow God’s rules and laws, we are doing His “will.” Your parents ask that you follow their rules at home and elsewhere. These rules are needed to keep you safe, or to make your home a clean and happy place to live. There are rules and laws for public safety, too. For example, when you are older and learn to drive, you must follow the rules of safety by stopping at stop signs and red traffic signals. This keeps everyone safe from running into each other. We also obey the will of our heavenly Father in order to keep us safe wherever we go, and to make the world a happier place for all. In a way, this brings God’s heaven to those of us on earth! We find some of God’s rules in The Ten Commandments. Do you know any of them? Obeying God’s commandments will help prove His will is done in earth.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

A simple explanation and summary of this line of the Lord’s Prayer for young children is at the end. For older children and teens, here are a few facts to share, Bible readings, and ideas for classroom or at home discussions:

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:

1. Bread was a very important food to the people during Bible times, and they needed it to live. They would starve if there was a drought, or something else that caused the crops to fail. Many Bible stories feature bread or the grain it was made from, such as wheat, since the need for enough bread to live on was a very relatable problem for most.

However, the idea of bread represented more than just food. In the Bible, bread is often used as a symbol for God’s Word, or His Truth. We get a glimpse of this when Jesus was led into the wilderness after his baptism. He was tempted by the devil to use his new power to turn a stone into bread to ease his hunger. Jesus forcefully responded:

“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

Jesus also indicates what we should truly hunger for in one of his Beatitudes:

*“Blessed are they which do **hunger and thirst after righteousness**: for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:6)*

“Righteousness” is the quality of doing and thinking rightly, morally, and wisely.

2. What is meant by the term “*daily bread*”? According to Bible commentaries, no one seems to know for sure what the original meaning of the word now translated “daily” meant. But, in this phrase of the Lord’s Prayer it appears to refer to bread that is just enough for one day’s use, especially the day that is *today*. So, when we pray to God to give us our “daily bread,” we are asking for just enough food (or truth!) to be used for our needs today; not tomorrow or next week, but today only.

Normally, when eating a single meal, we do not want any more food than we can digest at one time. No wise parent would do that to a child. Can you imagine your mother forcing you to eat all of one week’s meals in one sitting? Of course not. Neither would God! So, if you are hungry for truth, you ask for and receive only what you can digest, or understand, and put to use today.

The concept of receiving only daily bread is seen in the story of Moses and the Children of Israel after fleeing Egypt. There was no food in the wilderness, but God supplied them with *manna*. It is described as “a fine, flake-like thing” like the frost on the ground. The people were to gather just enough to eat in one day. If they took more, the manna would spoil or become infested with worms. However, they could gather double the amount, or two days’ worth, on the day before the sabbath, so they could rest on the sabbath and not have to gather food. That extra food did not spoil. God provided daily manna for them the entire 40 years that they wandered in the wilderness. You can read about this in Exodus 16.

3. *Grace* is a favor or blessing from God given to His children. Like bread or truth, grace is something we can pray for daily. When we accept the gift of God’s grace and live it, we let our light shine:

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:7)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8)

4. This line of the Lord’s Prayer implies we can ask God for whatever we need, not just bread, or food. We see this in many Bible verses, such as these:

“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth me with benefits, even the God of our salvation.” (Psalm 68:19)

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

“Thou openest thine hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing.” (Psalm 145:16)

We can trust that God will give us what is best for us in any situation. It may not be exactly what we wished for or prayed for, but it will be what we most *need* at the moment. God is wiser and more generous than any human parent, or organization, or charity, or neighbor, though it can be through these avenues that our good from God will appear.

5. Read and discuss the story of Elijah, who was fed by a raven during his time in the wilderness, when he was too despondent to carry on. Read about him in I Kings, chapter 17.

6. Jesus demonstrated God’s grace and abundance by providing food to thousands of people who had come to him to be fed God’s truth. He met the human need for food as well as feeding them with the heavenly bread of truth. You can read about those events in Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, or John 6.

Jesus used the concept of bread as a symbol for the truth that was the Christ. He told his followers:

“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (John 6:35)

7. Discuss with your students the understandable feeling and concern that in today’s world there are just so many things we need or desire to have. It may be hard to trust God with all that. How can we develop that trust, or believe that God will supply our needs?

It helps to remember what we have learned from the Bible about God’s nature. He is “our Father.” He is not cheap, stingy, petty or poor! We read at the beginning that God gave “abundantly” to the earth (see Genesis 1:20-23). He continues to give to His children abundantly. We just have to develop a sense to see rightly, as well as be content with what He does provide.

The Apostle Paul wrote: *“Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” (I Timothy 6:6-8)*

Of course, daily life in Paul’s time was much simpler than now, so sufficient food and clothing would have made most everyone satisfied. But God can be petitioned for whatever we feel we rightly need and deserve. If our desires need purifying, we can trust He will guide us toward what we need to do to improve our thoughts about a situation. We do not have to worry whether or not God will supply us with all we need, including good opportunities to earn money and have a useful career or home life.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)

One more point, if we see people around us or in the news who seem to need help with their basic needs, including food, we can seek God’s guidance for ways to pray for them or offer practical help when it is in our power to do so. Remember, we pray *“Give US this day our daily bread”!* We include everyone in our earnest request.

“Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” (Psalm 107:8,9)

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

Jesus taught that God gives us everything we need to live. He proved this in many ways. Have you read about the times Jesus fed thousands of people when there was only a little bit of fish and bread to share? Other people in the Bible were fed by God in great times of need. We all need food to live. However, God also feeds us in different ways. While we may become hungry for food to feed our bodies, sometimes we also have what might be called a spiritual hunger. We might be hungry for love or for happiness. We may wish to feel closer to God and His goodness. God feeds us with good thoughts that make us strong, wise, loving, and happy. He gives us what we need each day. We just have to ask Him for it when we pray!

God is able to bless us and feed us with *grace* every day. Grace is a word for God’s blessing or help, even when we feel we do not deserve it. Again, we must ask Him for this grace when we pray. In fact, many people say a short prayer at mealtimes thanking God for their food and all His blessings. This is called “saying grace.” We will feel a happy sense of Life when we are fed grace and truth from God. Just like we have to go out and use the energy food gives us, we must go out and live Life by sharing God’s grace, and being helpful to others. We will all be fed by love.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

A simple explanation and summary of this line of the Lord’s Prayer for young children is at the end. For older children and teens, here are a few facts to share, Bible readings, and ideas for classroom or at home discussions:

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:

1. Forgiveness is an important teaching of many religions, including Christianity. Jesus once instructed his disciples:

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25, 26)

2. Ask your pupils what forgiveness means to them. Ask about any times they may have had to forgive someone, or have asked to be forgiven, if they are willing to share.

Some meanings of “forgiveness” according to dictionary.com include 1) to cease to blame or hold resentment against (someone or something); 2) to grant pardon for (a mistake, wrongdoing, etc.); 3) to free or pardon (someone) from penalty; 4) to free from the obligation of (a debt, payment, etc.).

When the word forgive is used with the term “debt” it means to cancel something that is *owed*. For instance, if you borrow money from someone, you are a *debtor*. If you are unable to pay back the money, you might ask that the debt be forgiven. In addition to owing debts of money or other things of monetary value, there are other types of debt. You may have heard the term “owe” in phrases such as “owing a favor,” “owing an apology,” or just plain “you owe me!”. These all indicate that something owed is expected in return for something given.

In our lives, no matter what kind of debt is owed, forgiveness means to let go of something we think is owed to us. It is showing *mercy*.

For older students who may be interested, here is a section from the Background material on the subject of the terms “debts” and “trespasses.”

“Debts” versus “Trespasses”

We have already seen that the Matthew and Luke versions of the Lord’s Prayer are different with regard to the line about “forgiveness.” Matthew uses the words that have been translated “debts” and “debtors,” while Luke has instead the terms “sins” and “everyone that is indebted to us.” Most churches use the Matthew version of the Prayer. However, the question that arises is why do some churches substitute the word “trespasses” for the word “debts”? The answer takes us back to the year 1526. This is when William Tyndale published his English translation of the Bible. He used the term “trespasses,” although spelled differently. The first English translation of the Bible had been published by John Wycliffe in 1395, but that version used the term “debts.” However, when the first Book of Common Prayer in English was published in 1549, Tyndale’s version with the word “trespasses” was used. This became the “official” version used in the Anglican (Church of England) congregations. Other churches chose to use “debts” in their version of the Lord’s Prayer.

“The use of the word ‘trespasses’ instead of ‘debts’ as in Matthew 6:12 may be due to the use of the word in the explanation that follows the prayer in Matthew 6:13, 14, ‘For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.’ Even

in the third century, Origen used the word trespasses [paraptômata] in the prayer. However, the Established Presbyterian Church of Scotland uses 'debts' and 'debtors' in the prayer. Most Evangelical churches associate the use of 'trespasses' with Catholic traditions and prefer the use of 'debts' and 'debtors' instead."
 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord's_Prayer)

Because of this, there is no consistency among the Christian churches today.

3. In the Bible, the term "debt" is a Jewish figure for *sins*. It represents those things that people *should have done*, but did not, rather than those sins that were simply immoral or illegal. Maybe your pupils have had such an experience. Ask if they have ever been angry with a friend who said they would contact or see them by a certain time, and then did not. They might feel disappointed by this lack of courtesy or a broken promise. This becomes a "debt" in their mind, and their friend has now become a "debtor." They need to be willing to forgive, just as Jesus is telling us in this line of the Lord's Prayer. Discuss how they might reach this point of forgiveness. This doesn't mean that they should put up with continual behavior from a friend. We can forgive, yet be wise about how we should expect to be treated from a friend.

4. A good Bible story to read and discuss is found in Matthew 18:23-25. It is a parable about a servant who was forgiven a debt, but then refused to forgive another's debt owed him. The story does not end well for the unmerciful servant.

5. When we ask in the Lord's Prayer for God to forgive our debts (or trespasses), what are those debts Jesus referred to? What is it we owe God? What does he expect of us? For one thing, would it not be obedience to God's commandments and instructions found in the Bible? If we are grateful for God's many blessings in our life, don't we owe God our respect and obedience?

One important message from Jesus is what we call the Golden Rule:

"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." (Luke 6:30)

This rule is often heard simply as *"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."* Therefore, if you wish to be forgiven for your mistakes, consider treating everyone the way God and His son Jesus asks us to do, which is with mercy. If we neglect to put this Golden Rule into action at the right time, we may be said to have a "debt" owed to God and our fellow man.

6. When we pray *"forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,"* we are perhaps asking God to forgive our debts to Him in *the proportion or same manner* that we forgive others for their debts to us. So, if we want God's complete forgiveness, we must forgive others completely, with no residual grudge against them.

7. There is a lot of injustice and prejudice in the world, so forgiveness can be a big challenge in many cases. Jesus tells us to forgive *anyway*:

*“Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: **forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.**” (Luke 6:36, 37)*

8. We know from the Bible that God is most willing to forgive. It is part of His nature as divine Love.

*“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who **forgiveth all thine iniquities**; who health all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with **lovingkindness and tender mercies.**” (Psalm 103:2-4)*

*“The Lord is **gracious, and full of compassion**; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all: and his **tender mercies** are over all his works.” (Psalms 145:8, 9)*

Shouldn't we, God's children made in His “image and likeness,” also have it in our spiritual nature to be merciful and compassionate?

9. One discussion for class is the question, “Do we have to forgive *everything* that others do to us or people we care about? Aren't some actions unforgiveable?” There is very little, if anything, that cannot be forgiven in a Christian manner, as Jesus proved when he asked God to forgive those who crucified him. In less drastic situations, if someone hurts our feelings, lies to us about something important, cheats us, steals from us, or harms us or our family, we may feel deep anger and self-justification. We may feel they owe us something, even if it is only an apology. Often apologies do not come; the debts are not paid. But, if we call forth in ourselves the forgiving spirit of Jesus, we will not have to carry the mental weight of these unpaid debts, and make our hearts feel heavy. What an unnecessary burden! As the Bible assures us:

*“Great peace have they which **love they law**: and nothing shall offend the.” (Psalm 119:165)*

One law is the “law of love,” that forgives debts.

Something else to consider is the idea that perhaps there has been a miscommunication or misunderstanding or an innocent mistake on the part of the person we feel has wronged us. It may be best to withhold a rash judgment until we know the whole truth, but still be willing to forgive the offence.

10. How do we go about forgiving when it does not feel so easy to do so. We must **MAKE THE CHOICE** to forgive. That is a helpful first step, and may be all you need, but at least it points you in the right direction with the right motive.

Even before that situation arises where we have a tough situation needing forgiveness, it helps to develop the attitude that Jesus taught us in the Beatitudes:

“Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)

Do you see there how closely this Beatitude is aligned with this line of the Lord’s Prayer, in that our receiving mercy may depend upon our being merciful first.

If there is a lingering sense that the wrongdoer needs to be punished, we can humbly hand the situation over to God for His administration of divine justice. Jesus urged us toward this:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (Matthew 5:44)

And how many times do we have to forgive someone who keeps hurting us? Is there not a limit to our tolerance? Here is how Jesus answered this:

“Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18: 21,22)

Before your students start calculating this (490), explain that this is Jesus’ way of telling Peter we should always forgive. Jewish law had at one point designated three as the number of times to forgive someone before punishing them. But Jesus wanted his followers to do much better than that by always seeking to forgive.

11. One important point: what if the person needing our forgiveness is our self? Perhaps we feel guilty or remorseful over some thought or deed on our part that hurts another or our self. Here again we can choose to forgive. It is, of course, right to acknowledge where we might have done wrong and express regret. Jesus tells us in the Beatitudes:

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

We need not linger in this mourning about some regretful or sinful or thoughtless act, but know that God can guide us through the steps we can take to erase this debt and seek His mercy. We can begin by forgiving ourself and resolving to do better or making amends. The Bible assures us:

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

12. When we study the life of Jesus and all the cruelties he had to forgive, we see that forgiveness sometimes requires great sacrifice of self. To reach that level of selfless love we have to work at developing a loving attitude that fills our heart all the time. The Apostle Paul advocates this approach:

*“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, **forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.**” (Ephesians 4:31, 32)*

“Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” (Romans 13:8)

The English poet Alexander Pope has a nice summary of this topic:

“To err is human; to forgive divine.”

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

Jesus taught us to forgive others for the wrongs they may have done to us. What is “forgiveness”? If somebody says “I’m sorry” for something wrong they have done to you, and then you say something like “That’s okay,” and you really mean it — that is forgiveness! We are also to forgive people when they do *not* do something good that we think they should have done. Have you ever been angry with a parent if they did not give you something or do something they promised? If you think they owe you something, that something is called a “debt.” Jesus told us to pray to forgive our debtors. Why? Because that is what love always does, and because we want others and God to forgive us when we goof up and do something wrong!

We are able to forgive others because God made us to be loving, just as He is pure Love. We pray to see love everywhere and in everyone, and not to make a big deal about mistakes that are made. We pray to forgive and forget the wrongs done. We will then be happy to know that God forgives us, too!

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

A simple explanation and summary of this line of the Lord’s Prayer for young children is at the end. For older children and teens, here are a few facts to share, Bible readings, and ideas for classroom or at home discussions:

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:

1. A “temptation” is something that has a very strong attraction for us, but is usually off-limits. Ask your class to offer suggestions of things or actions that might be temptations. Certain foods or sweets can be tempting, but more serious allurements such as alcohol, drugs, cheating, and stealing, are the type we should want to be protected from.

As the word is used in the Bible, it means “a testing.” We are really put to the test when we have to resist temptation. But, is God responsible for these testing times? If we are

told by Jesus to ask God not to lead us into temptation, could He also be the one doing the tempting? No, is the answer, as we read in the book of James:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” (James 1:13, 14)

2. Other Bible translations use a more specific phrase: “*deliver us from the **evil one**.*” Who or what is this “evil one”? The Bible calls it *Satan* or *devil*. It is not a real person, or animal, or a thing. The Hebrew word for *Satan* means an “adversary or opponent.” The word for *devil* means “slanderer.” From the various stories in the Bible in which the devil plays a role, it appears to be a liar, a voice or whisperer of evil suggestions and temptations in opposition to God and His goodness. But, that is all it really is: suggestion. Its only power depends upon being accepted as real, as truth, and something to be afraid of. It can only suggest; it cannot push.

3. Can we really trust God to deliver from evil? What does the Bible record? Think of the stories of God rescuing Moses and the Children of Israel at the Red Sea (Exodus 14); delivering Daniel from the lion’s den (Daniel 6); saving the Hebrew boys from the fiery furnace (Daniel 3); and David winning the combat against Goliath (I Samuel 17)

“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever.” (II Timothy 4:18)

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.” (II Peter 2:9)

4. Have a class discussion on how to handle situations where their friends are tempted to do something wrong and try to influence others to go along. How do your students protect themselves? We need to be careful about what we allow to influence us, whether it is peer pressure, television, social media, or a person close to us. For instance, ask your pupils if a friend tries to tempt you into shoplifting, you would not want to follow him or her. Unless you can encourage your friend to do right, it is best to keep away from such bad influences. This is where prayer to God can help, by reminding us that He is there to deliver us from temptation:

“My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not . . . walk not thou in the way with them.” (Proverbs 1:10, 15)

There are certainly more serious temptations than a friend’s mischievous behavior. Sometimes we are targeted by evil or cruel forces that aim to harm. But God is there to hear our prayer and deliver us from evil. We can pray:

*“**Deliver me**, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.” (Psalm 71:4)*

“Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” (Psalm 119:113)

By spending time daily learning more about God and communing with Him, you will be arming yourself against enemies that may try to tempt you. Remember that the shepherd-boy David had proved his courage by defending his sheep against a lion and a bear, giving him the confidence and skill needed, before he had to defend the armies of Israel against their enemy’s Goliath (See I Samuel 17:33-37). David later wrote in one of his Psalms:

*“I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and **delivered** me from all my fears.” (Psalm 34:4)*

5. Jesus had to deal with aggressive temptation. We read in Hebrews that Jesus *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)*

There is a story in Luke, chapter 4, that tells of Jesus being tempted by the devil in the wilderness during his forty days of isolation and fasting. You can read this to see how Jesus handled the suggestions of the devil. In each case he responded with the Word of God from the scriptures.

While temptation may have been less terrifying to Jesus because he was the Son of God, he expected his followers to be alert to temptation. For example, when his disciples fell asleep in the garden of Gethsemane just when Jesus needed help before his arrest, he said to them:

“Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” (Luke 22:46)

So let us rise and pray the Lord’s Prayer, asking God to deliver us from the temptations of the day.

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

Did you ever have a strong feeling that you really wanted something very badly that you were not supposed to have? For instance, if you see a plate of warm cookies just out of the oven, and your mom says not to touch them just yet, but you cannot wait because the cookies smell so good? That is a temptation! The cookies are “tempting” you. There are everyday temptations we have to learn to resist, or stop. These are things that are not right for us to have or do because they are not good for us, or because they are forbidden. But there are also the kinds of temptations that the Bible warns us about. These are called “sins.” We first learned about some of these sins from the Ten Commandments, such as telling lies, or stealing, or killing, or disrespecting our parents.

We are also warned in the Bible about the temptations of the devil. The “devil” is just a Bible name for bad or evil thoughts that come to us. Because these bad thoughts are not from God, good, we do not want to listen to them, or be tricked into doing anything

wrong. If we do listen to evil thoughts and words, we are being “tempted.” This “temptation” is something we want to turn from fast! We pray to God in the Lord’s Prayer to lead us away from the temptations of evil. We only want to listen to the voice of God. These messages of God can come to us through angel thoughts. You will want to be still, and listen for them. Angels help lead us away from temptation to safety, and keep us from doing the wrong things that might harm ourselves or others.

“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.”

A simple explanation and summary of this line of the Lord’s Prayer for young children is at the end. For older children and teens, here are a few facts to share, Bible readings, and ideas for classroom or at home discussions:

FOR OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:

1. God is THE power! Absolute, supreme power. If you look up the word “power” in the dictionary you will find many descriptions of what power is: the ability to rule and govern others; strength; endurance; influence, and so on. These are the qualities that describe God’s power, which the Bible tells us is *great*:

“Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” (Psalm 147:5)

His power is not in strong muscles, or weapons of war, but in His substance of Spirit. Man, his spiritual “image and likeness,” also possesses a degree of spiritual power, which is a gift from God:

*“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of **power**, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (II Timothy 1:7)*

Power and love. The power of Love! Nothing to be fearful of when we exude the power of love which God has given us.

The Bible contains numerous examples of God’s power in action. Every miracle, every character changed for the better, every sin defeated, is the power of Christ, God’s power on earth demonstrated. Have your class search the Bible to identify some of these instances of God’s power.

2. God’s power is not always the obvious kind of power we think about. Have your class consider the story of the great prophet Elijah in I Kings. He was on the run for his life and hid in a cave, feeling alone and scared. But God spoke to him, as follows:

“ And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an

earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire **a still small voice.**" (I Kings 19:11,12)

"A still small voice." That is where we find God. God's power was not in the earthquake, wind, or fire. He is divine Love and does not channel His power in destructive forces. We have a right to challenge the effect of such violence, knowing God's power and glory is not there, but in His Truth and Love. God's kingdom is come, as the Lord's Prayer tells us.

3. God is "**the glory.**" *Glory* has several meanings. When speaking of God, glory is the great praise and honor due to God, as well as being His awesome beauty, splendor, magnificence, and majesty. We could say that glory is the radiant light of God's attributes, or qualities, which causes His children to praise and adore Him. This emphasizes the second line of the Lord's Prayer, "*Hallowed be thy name.*"

The Bible tells us:

*"Give unto the Lord the **glory** due unto his **name**; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."* (Psalm 29:2)

*"I am the Lord: that is my **name**: and my **glory** will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."* (Isaiah 42:8)

4. When Jesus was born the shepherds saw angels in the sky glorifying God:

*"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, **Glory to God** in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* (Luke 2:13, 14)

5. We are to remember that true glory belongs to God, our Father, our source of all good. Our talents He gives us. Our wisdom is His. So, when we let our light shine, or receive praise for something we did, or we achieve some worthy goal, we should remember to humble ourselves and give the glory to God:

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (II Corinthians 3:5)

*"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and **glorify your Father** which is in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16)

*"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the **glory** of God."* (I Corinthians 10:31)

*"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man **glory** in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man **glory** in his might, let not the rich man **glory** in his riches: But let him that **glorieth glory** in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me."* (Jeremiah 9:23, 24)

This last verse is showing us that it is the understanding of God that is a worthy accomplishment. As God's child, we do reflect His glory in our activities and successes, but God is its source.

6. Forever. The kingdom, power, and glory of God are *forever!* Forever usually means for something to go on and on without stopping. With regards to God's kingdom, it means *timeless eternity* – without beginning or ending. Because God's kingdom is forever, or eternal, it never stops being what God has created it to be. There is no sense of human or clock time in eternity, where we will only experience a sense of the present when we fully realize that God's kingdom has come.

*“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the **glory** of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14)*

“And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” (Isaiah 40:5)

FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:

The Bible teaches us that God is all-powerful. That means that God is stronger than any one or any thing. He can do anything He wants to do, and no one can stop Him. That is real power! God rules the world, and His light shines everywhere. This powerful light is the “glory” of God, that will always be with us, forever and ever. We end our daily prayer with a reminder of these truths about our heavenly Father, God. Thanks to the Lord's Prayer that Jesus gave us, we know more about God. When we pray, we become aware of God's kingdom, and power, and glory. We let God's light shine through us, so others will see God's Love in action. See how brightly you can shine right now!

Because God is everywhere, or infinite, “there is no spot where God is not!” Because God is all-powerful He does not share His power with the devil, or evil. We can be brave in the face of troubles such as sickness, because our Father will protect us. Even if we cannot see Him with our eyes, God is there with us to keep us safe and happy. Our prayers will bring us closer to God and we can feel God's power and glory. We thank God for all that He is.

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