

The Lord's Prayer
Enduring Elements of Public Worship
by Jerry Nelson

In Luke 11:2 Jesus' disciples said to him, "Teach us to pray." Jesus' response was what we call "The Lord's Prayer." While there are many other prayers in the Bible from which we can learn much about prayer, none other is **explicitly a model** for our prayer. Both because it came in response to the specific request to "teach" us to pray and also because it is a relatively comprehensive prayer, we do well to model our own prayers on it.

A couple of weeks ago I prefaced an article about the Apostles' Creed with this reminder: Thomas Aquinas said we must know:

- What to believe (The Apostles' Creed)
- What to pray for (The Lord's Prayer)
- How to live (The Ten Commandments)

These are the core issues of life and they are answered in the Creed (What to believe), the Prayer (What to pray for) and the Commandments (How to live). Peter Kreeft in Knowing the Truth of God's Love 1988 p44-47 We serve people (including our children) a great service by incorporating these three elements in worship frequently that they know them from memory and can recall them in many other life-situations.

Today I wish to address the issue of The Lord's Prayer. The Protestant churches of the Reformation found the Lord's Prayer to be essential teaching, including it in the Westminster and Heidelberg Catechisms and Luther's Catechism. For centuries the church has prayed the Lord's Prayer when gathered together. Teaching and praying this prayer together in our corporate worship services gives Christians a ready reminder of the God-ordained core subjects of our prayers. Michael Brown has written a helpful article on the reason for often including the Lord's Prayer in our public worship. You will find it at: http://www.christurc.org/articles/why_pray_lords_prayer.pdf

In our private prayers also we would do well to take the time to pray often as our Lord taught us. Meditate on each petition and put the prayer in your own words. Come to the Father; he is ready and able to respond. My own example follows:

“Our Father who art in heaven”

You are not just my Father, but “Our” Father, and not just the transcendent, sovereign, creator Deity but our ever-present, intimate “Father” who truly exists and is the sustainer and lover of our souls. To you we pray because on you we are dependent.

“Hallowed be your name”

Make your name holy, give your name the highest place and honor, and make your name known and experienced by everyone. Be God, in all your glory, power and sufficiency, so we may be your children.

“Your kingdom come”

Father, make your kingdom come. We need you to act. Revive your people, save us from ourselves. Bring in the full authority, power and presence of your kingdom rule and let it begin with me! Father, break down my “kingdoms”, show me how bankrupt they are, and let me see my desperate need for you to act.

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”

Father, do what you have planned and promised. Work your gracious will in such ways that we will be saved and that history will move to the end that you have in mind — a total transformation of this world. Do it God! Do it! And make me open and responsive to your will in my life today.

“Give us this day our daily bread”

Father, meet our physical needs today. We are dependent on you in every detail of life, and content with and grateful for what you provide.

“And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us”

We ask your forgiveness of us even as we ask you to enable us to

forgive those who have sinned against us. We know that only our openness to forgive others opens our own hearts to receive your forgiveness. Help us, Father.

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

Father, keep us today from succumbing to subtle but evil temptations that wage war on our souls and Father, keep the evil one from overpowering us today.

***“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever,
Amen”***

You are the One who is worthy (it's your kingdom), and able (it's your power) to do what we have requested, and to you alone (not us) belongs the praise (glory) forever. To you we pray because on you we are dependent.