

The Lord's Prayer



FOUNDATIONS IN FAITH

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INTRODUCTION

The Foundations in Faith series is an introduction to the truths of God's Word as presented in Luther's Small Catechism.

Why Study the Catechism?

In the Early Christian Church, God's people confessed their faith and witnessed to the world in brief creeds. "Jesus is Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:3). "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:16). These passages from the New Testament, along with others, gave believers short, concise statements of faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. In time, the Church wrote and adopted new creeds to explain more fully the basics of the Christian faith.

The Church also wrote and adopted catechisms as summaries of the major doctrines of Holy Scripture. At first, catechisms were tools for teachers. With the invention of the printing press, catechisms were printed for pastors, teachers of the faith, and parents to use within the congregation and at home.

Luther's Small Catechism, published in 1529, covers the "Six Chief Parts" of Christian doctrine. In Luther's words, the catechism "is a short summary and epitome of the entire Holy Scripture" (Large Catechism, Preface). It is a summary and guide for believers as they learn and reflect on the truths of God's Word.

The Foundations in Faith series explores Luther's Small Catechism in four parts: The Ten Commandments, The Apostles' Creed, The Lord's Prayer, and The Sacraments. The study guides may be used in any order (although the sequence in the catechism is preferred), and are designed as an *introduction* or *refresher* course for congregational or personal use. Ideally, participants will learn how the catechism presents God's Word in a clear, understandable way, in order to bring God's people to faith in Christ and to a daily life shaped and empowered by Word and Sacrament.

May God bless your study of His Word in the catechism!

1

THE MYSTERY OF PRAYER

Pray Together

My God and my love,
You are mine, and I am Yours.
Deepen Your love in me, O Lord,
that I may learn how joyful it is to serve You.
Let Your love take hold of me
that I may be filled with devotion
because of Your goodness.
Then I will sing to You the song of love.
I will follow You,
and my soul will never grow tired of praising You.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discover

God commands and invites His people to pray. For believers, prayer is a heart-to-heart conversation with the heavenly Father, who shows His love in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Introduction

It's a simple truth: God wants His people to pray. He promises to hear and answer our prayers.

For many people, though, prayer is not simple. They ask, "What should I pray? How should I pray?" They think of prayer as a mystery.

When detectives solve mysteries, they ask fundamental questions: Who? What? When? Where? How? As we study God's Word and the catechism, we will, as Luther notes, "value prayer as something great and precious" [LC III 33].

- What questions do you have about prayer?
- How has prayer been a part of your life in the past?
- In what ways do you want to deepen your prayer life?

Who?

God alone is God. The God revealed in the Bible is the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Only prayers addressed to the triune God are acceptable to God.

God's Word

Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. . . .

Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. (Daniel 6:3-4, 6-11)

1. In what ways do Daniel’s accusers represent the temptations and pressures God’s people face in the world?
2. How does Daniel demonstrate His faith in the true God?
3. How does God’s love and power encourage His people in difficult, often dangerous, circumstances?

Greeting Card

Gift shops, drug stores, and supermarkets carry an assortment of greeting cards. Some of the more popular categories are “Missing You,” “Friendship,” and “Keep in Touch.”

Imagine for a moment that God is sending you a greeting card. It shares what God wants to say to you as His child.

- What picture is on the cover?

- What words are written inside?

Through His Word, God invites us to pray. He also promises to answer our prayers. Jesus said, “Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it” (John 14:13–14). In Christ, we have confidence to offer our prayers to the heavenly Father.

What?

Through His Word, God encourages us to ask for everything that we need in life. We may pray for material blessings: for health, for a steady income, for success in our work. We may pray for spiritual blessings: forgiveness, wisdom to know God's will, patience during an illness. We may offer prayers of thanks, of praise, of anguish, and of sorrow.

4. What prayers have you spoken recently?

5. What would you like to pray about in your life?

6. What would you like to pray about for your family and friends?

God's Word

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in Me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:4–9)

7. What encouragement about prayer does St. Paul share with his fellow Christians?

8. How do believers know God's peace as they pray?

When?

Luther included prayers for morning, evening, and before and after a meal in his Small Catechism. "We should pray regularly and frequently, especially in time of trouble" (Question 203).

9. When, in your words, should Christians pray?

10. Reflect on your routines and schedule. When are you most free to spend time with God in His Word and in prayer?

Where?

God's people can pray *anywhere*! The Civil War general Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson wrote about the times and places he prayed:

I have so fixed the habit [of prayer] in my own mind that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without lifting my heart to God in thanks and prayer for the water of life. Then, when we take our meals, there is grace. Whenever I drop a letter in the post office, I send a petition along with it for God's blessing upon its mission and the person to whom it is sent. When I break the seal of a letter just received, I stop to ask God to prepare me for its contents and make it a messenger of good. When I go to my classroom and await the arrangement of the cadets in their places, that is the time to intercede with God for them. And so in every act of the day I have made the practice of prayer habitual.

11. What situations throughout an average day prompt you to pray?
12. In what way is corporate prayer—at church or with other believers—meaningful to you? in your family?
13. “Christians need a half hour in prayer each day, except when they are busy; then they need an hour.” Agree or disagree? Share your answer.

How?

Even Jesus’ disciples needed guidance in praying: “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1).

How do I pray? Through His Word, God teaches us to pray

- in the name of Jesus, trusting in Him as Savior and Lord;
- with confidence, believing that in Christ God will hear our prayers and answer us; and
- according to God’s revealed will.

God’s Word

And [Jesus] said to them, “When you pray, say:

“Father, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread,

and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation.”

And He said to them, “Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves, for

a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." (Luke 11:2-10)

14. What does Jesus teach His disciples about prayer?

15. Describe a time you have "asked" in prayer like the man in the parable.

16. What comfort do you have in knowing that God will answer your prayers for His glory, for your good, for Jesus' sake?

God's People Pray

Heavenly Father, God of all grace, govern our hearts that we may never forget Your blessings but steadfastly thank and praise You for all Your goodness in this life until, with all Your saints, we praise You eternally in Your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 448)

A Verse a Day

Sunday: Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)

Monday: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

Tuesday: If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15:7)

Wednesday: Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever. (Psalm 136:1)

Thursday: And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith. (Matthew 21:22)

Friday: Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. (Isaiah 65:24)

Saturday: But He would withdraw to desolate places and pray. (Luke 5:16)

2

THE INTRODUCTION AND THE FIRST PETITION

Pray Together

Lord, You know what is best for me.
Give me what You will and when You will
and as much as You will.
Do with me as You know best and as it pleases You
and brings You the most honor.
Place me where You will
and guide me according to Your wisdom.
I am in Your hand as Your servant
ready to do all that You command.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discover

In the Lord's Prayer, God invites us to call on Him as our loving, gracious Father through Christ. Forgiven in Jesus, we grow in knowledge of His Word and live to His glory.

Introduction

Christian poet F. D. Maurice once wrote: "The Lord's Prayer may be committed to memory quickly, but it is slowly learned by heart."

- What did the poet mean?

- When did you first hear and memorize the Lord’s Prayer?
- In what ways have you “learned” the Lord’s Prayer throughout your life?

The Catechism

THE INTRODUCTION

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean? With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

In faith, we pray “Our Father.”

Martin Luther said in his devotional writings on the Lord’s Prayer, “The best way to begin or introduce the prayer is to know how to address, honor, and treat the person . . . how to conduct ourselves in His presence, so that He will be gracious toward us and willing to listen to us. Now, of all names there is none that gains us more favor with God than that of ‘Father’” (LW 42:22)

1. What images come to mind when you call God *Father*?
2. In general, what privileges do children enjoy from a loving father?

3. Describe how God's children may call on Him with "all boldness and confidence."

God's Word

And [Jesus] said, "There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my

friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’” (Luke 15:11–32)

4. What characteristics do you admire in the father in the parable?

5. What characteristics do the sons demonstrate by their words and actions?

6. How does the father in the parable remind you of the heavenly Father?

God Our Father

God is *our* Father. In the Introduction, we pray that God will be recognized by everyone in the world as the perfect Father: almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing, always present for His children.

- Why did Jesus begin His prayer with *our* Father rather than *my* Father?

- What comfort do you have in knowing that you pray together with all believers, “Our Father”?

Who Art in Heaven

The phrase “who art in heaven” reminds us that God is Lord of all. God’s power is not restricted to heaven or earth. His power is immeasurable.

God’s Word

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet He is actually not far from each one of us, for

“‘In Him we live and move and have our being’;
as even some of your own poets have said,
“‘For we are indeed His offspring.’”

Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. (Acts 17:24–29)

7. How does St. Paul describe God in this speech at Mars Hill?

8. In what way is God’s power intimidating to people? In what way is God’s power reassuring to you?

9. The perfect relationship between the Creator and His creation was broken by the sin of Adam and Eve. But God had a plan.

a. What was God’s plan to bring us back to His family?

b. How did God accomplish His plan?

10. Not only did God restore our broken relationship with Him, He also made us dear children. The apostle Paul writes: “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Romans 8:15). What blessings have you received as a child of God through faith in Jesus?

We have the privilege of approaching God in prayer because of our faith in Christ. We are forgiven, and as forgiven children of God we can pray to Him as “our Father.”

At times, however, we may not feel forgiven. We may not feel like praying. Our hearts are overwhelmed with the demands of the day. Our minds cannot fathom all the responsibilities we face at home or work. We do not know what to pray.

Good news! God has provided for our needs!

God’s Word

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who

died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (Romans 8:26–34)

11. Who prays and pleads for us?

12. The Spirit “helps us in our weakness.” What types of weakness do God’s people face? When might our weakness discourage us from praying?

13. When the words will not come, what comfort does God’s promise offer us?

The Catechism

THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed be Thy name.

What does this mean? God’s name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

How is God’s name kept holy? God’s name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God’s Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father!

To hallow God’s name means to keep it holy. The name by which God revealed Himself to Moses was I AM WHO I AM, or Yahweh, which means “He is” (see Exodus 3:14–15). In Old Testament times, God’s name was considered so sacred that people would not speak it or write it for fear of inadvertently misusing it. In most modern Bible translations, Yahweh is not used, but is instead translated as LORD.

God's name describes who He is and what He does. Throughout the Bible, God is described by His actions and attributes: Everlasting God (Genesis 21:33); God Almighty (Genesis 17:1); Lord (Genesis 18:27); Yahweh (Exodus 3:14); Yahweh of hosts (1 Samuel 1:3); the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 3:15); Creator (Deuteronomy 32:6).

14. How has God impacted your life? What names would you use to describe His power and love?

15. How does worship and Bible study strengthen you as you trust and live in Christ?

God's People Pray

Almighty God, since You have granted us the favor to call on You with one accord and have promised that where two or three are gathered together in Your name You are in the midst of them, fulfill now the prayers of Your servants, granting us in this world knowledge of Your truth and in the world to come life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 452)

A Verse a Day

Sunday: See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. (1 John 3:1)

Monday: Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

Tuesday: As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. (Psalm 103:13)

Wednesday: For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (Galatians 3:26)

Thursday: Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 124:8)

Friday: “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)

Saturday: Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! (Psalm 103:1)

3

THE SECOND AND THIRD PETITIONS

Pray Together

O Lord God, heavenly Father,
blessed be Your name now and forever.
As You will, so it is done,
and what You do is always good.
Let me, Your servant, rejoice in You
and not in myself or any other thing.
You alone, O Lord, are my joy,
my hope, and my crown,
my gladness, and my honor.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discover

In the Lord's Prayer, God invites us to pray for the Kingdom: His blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation in Christ. As we trust in Jesus, He leads us and strengthens us to know and live according to His Word.

Introduction

Nebuchadnezzar. Alexander. Elizabeth I. Once great monarchs, their names are seldom spoken except in history lectures. The empires they ruled are long gone, their power and authority have vanished as the morning dew.

Today, too, as royal families and empires are plagued by scandal and political weakness, kingdoms are in decline. Yet one Kingdom remains strong—the kingdom of God.

- What images come to mind in the word *kingdom*?

- If you were king or queen, what type of kingdom would you want to rule?

The Catechism

THE SECOND PETITION

Thy kingdom come.

What does this mean? The kingdom of God certainly comes by itself without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may come to us also.

How does God’s kingdom come? God’s kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and there in eternity.

What is God’s kingdom? God rules over His kingdom in three ways.

- God’s kingdom *has come*. It is a kingdom of power: God rules over the whole universe through nature and His chosen representatives.
- God’s kingdom *comes*. It is a kingdom of grace: God rules over His Church on earth through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.
- God’s kingdom *will come*. It is a kingdom of glory: God rules over His Church in heaven, where saints and angels praise Him forever.

“Thy kingdom come.” God already rules as the eternal and exalted Maker of heaven and earth; He has established His kingdom of power.

“Thy kingdom come.” Through Christ, God’s people pray that the kingdoms of grace and of glory will come into our world and into our lives.

1. In what ways do you see God’s rule over the universe? in history?

2. How would you describe the Lord Jesus' rule over His Church?

3. What new, rich blessings do you look forward to in the kingdom of glory?

God's Word

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3:1-7)

4. When God created the universe, all His work was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). What happened to the good and perfect kingdom?

5. God's kingdom was opposed by evil. Who, in truth, was the serpent? How does the "old, evil foe" work in our world today?

6. How did God bring His kingdom of grace into our world?

The Kingdom of Grace

The kingdom of grace has come in Christ. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Christ has broken the power of sin, death, and Satan. He has reconciled us to the heavenly Father, taking away our guilt and shame. Through faith in Jesus, we belong to God's kingdom of grace. The Holy Spirit keeps us in faith and brings us to the kingdom of glory—life eternal with Christ.

How does God's kingdom of grace come to us?

When we are baptized, the heavenly Father gives us the Holy Spirit, who works faith in our hearts.

By God's grace, we trust in Christ for our salvation.

By Christ's strength, we believe God's Word and live as His forgiven, renewed people.

- How did the heavenly Father bring you into His kingdom of grace?
- What comfort and encouragement do you have in knowing that Christ lives in you and guides and strengthens you through His Word?

The Catechism

THE THIRD PETITION

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done? God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come;

and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die.

This is His good and gracious will.

What is God's will? How can I know God's will for my life?

The Lord's Prayer presents the answer: God desires that His name be kept holy and that His kingdom come. By praying "Thy will be done," God's people are asking the heavenly Father to fulfill His promise to save because of Christ.

7. In what ways have you seen God “break and hinder” evil in our world?

8. In what ways are God’s people vulnerable when we rely on our strength and resources?

9. “The center of God’s will is our only safety.” (Betsie ten Boom) What comfort do you have in knowing “the center” is in Christ?

The Heavenly Father’s Will

In *Armed and Dangerous*, Jane Fryar writes that our heavenly Father wants us

to bring our every need and concern to Him. He gave His only Son into death for us. He *wants* the best for us, and He *will do* the very best things for us and for those whom we bring to Him in prayer. . . .

We need not drown in doubt. We need not struggle to remake ourselves into the image of some kind of spiritual supermen or wonderwomen. We need not grope around in the murky waters of our circumstances trying to find our own spiritual bootstraps so that we can yank ourselves out of the swamp and away from the jaws of the alligators. Instead, we can call out to Christ. We can confess our weakness and ask for His strength. We can keep looking to His Word of truth. We can trust Him to work through that Word even when, at the time, it seems dry as sawdust. (pp. 71–72)

- What joy do you have in knowing God wants the best for your life?

God’s Word

And He told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path,

and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.” . . .

“Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.” (Matthew 13:3–9, 18–23)

10. In what ways does the seed represent the Word of God?

11. In what ways do the soils represent our experiences today?

12. How does the parable show that God’s kingdom comes and God’s will is done through His Word?

God’s People Pray

Almighty God, You have promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in Your Son’s name. Mercifully incline Your ears to us who have now made our prayers and supplications to You, and grant that those things that we have faithfully asked according to Your will we may receive to meet our needs and bring glory to You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 452)

A Verse a Day

Sunday: The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all. (Psalm 103:19)

Monday: Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)

Tuesday: The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:18)

Wednesday: Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. (Matthew 9:38)

Thursday: For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:40)

Friday: [God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)

Saturday: Which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. (2 Timothy 1:12)

4

THE FOURTH PETITION

Pray Together

O Lord, my God,
You are all my riches,
and everything I have is from You.
You alone are good, just, and holy.
You put all things in order,
You give all things,
and fill all things with Your goodness.
Remember Your mercies, Lord,
and fill my heart with Your grace.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discover

In the Lord's Prayer, God invites us to pray for all our needs. Because of His mercy in Christ, our Father provides for us, body and soul, and blesses us with His love.

Introduction

“When the heart is full, the lips are silent” (Honoré de Balzac).

It's easy, in times of prosperity, to take God's blessings for granted. The abundance we see and experience all around us too often leads to “an attitude of ingratitude.”

- How do we take for granted the material blessings of our world?

- Why does prosperity sometimes lead to self-satisfaction?

The Catechism

THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean? God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread? Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

In his book *Great Prayers*, Harry Huxhold has written of the Lord's Prayer: "The first three petitions center in the person of God. The fourth petition governs all that we need for our earthly existence. The last three petitions cover all our spiritual needs for the past, present, and future" (p. 66).

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we acknowledge our dependence on God for everything that supports our life.

1. How does Luther's explanation of "daily bread" describe our many needs? What other needs would you add?

2. Describe the various ways God gives us daily bread.

3. How do you show thankfulness for the "little blessings" of God in your life?

God's Word

Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." And the word of the LORD came to him: "Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." So he went and did according to the word of the LORD. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'" And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that He spoke by Elijah. (1 Kings 17:1–16).

4. Which words describe Elijah's situation? the widow's situation?

5. How did God provide for Elijah? for the widow?

6. What does the story reveal about God's concern and provision for His people?

Daily Bread

God invites us to pray for our daily bread. As we regularly pray for our physical needs, we recognize that our entire life depends on God: nothing happens apart from His fatherly, divine goodness and mercy. In faith, we look to God for all blessings, and we receive His gifts with thankful hearts and lives.

- Respond to the statement, "I work hard for everything I have! Why should I be thankful?"

- How does knowing God as the gracious Giver encourage you to share His gifts with others?

This Day

"Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:34).

Jesus' words are as timely today as they were 2,000 years ago. Clothes for the children. Transportation. Job security. The list goes on and on. Anxiety over life is a universal experience.

7. What urgent needs and concerns are you facing *today*?

8. How has God provided for you *today*?

9. What assurance do you have from God's Word about the future?

God's Word

"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you

will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:25–34)

10. What does Jesus mean, “Life is more important than food . . . the body more important than clothes?”

11. In what ways do we doubt God’s goodness and provision by worrying?

12. What does Jesus reveal about God’s goodness in the words “all these things will be given to you as well”?

God’s People Pray

Almighty God, heavenly Father, Your mercies are new to us every morning and, and though we in no wise deserve Your goodness, You abundantly provide for all our wants of body and soul. Give us we humbly pray, Your Holy Spirit that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness toward us, give thanks for all Your benefits, and cheerfully serve You; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 469)

A Verse a Day

Sunday: The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand; You satisfy the desire of every living thing. (Psalm 145:15–16)

Monday: “In Him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed His offspring.” (Acts 17:28)

Tuesday: Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever! (Psalm 106:1)

Wednesday: Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:19–20)

Thursday: When he calls to Me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. (Psalm 91:15)

Friday: Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:16)

Saturday: Casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7)

5

THE FIFTH PETITION

Pray Together

O Lord of love,
You know my many weaknesses and needs,
the many sins that afflict me,
and how often I am discouraged, tempted,
troubled, and defiled.
I come to You for healing,
and I pray for Your strength.
Lord, You know all things,
to You my inward thoughts are open.
You alone can perfectly guide and help me.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discover

In the Lord's Prayer, God invites us to ask for His rich mercy. Because of Christ, our heavenly Father forgives our sins and strengthens us to forgive our fellow sinners.

Introduction

"In Lake Wobegon," Garrison Keillor remarks, "we don't forget mistakes."

Should we forgive and forget? Most people would nod their head yes—in *theory*. Real life is often a different story.

- Why is it difficult to forgive and forget *in real life*?

- What would life be like without forgiveness?

The Catechism

THE FIFTH PETITION

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look at our sins, or deny our prayer because of them. We are neither worthy of the things for which we pray, nor have we deserved them, but we ask that He would give them all to us by grace, for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will sincerely forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

The last three petitions of the Lord's Prayer deal with matters of the heart: God's heart toward us.

"Forgive us our trespasses." By praying these words, we confess we are sinners. We sin every day and always stand in need of forgiveness. We ask the heavenly Father to forgive our sins through His mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. Which words from the explanation describe our natural, sinful condition?

2. How does sin affect our daily life? our relationships? our communities?

3. In what way does God "look beyond" our sin to see perfect goodness?

God's Word

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of His glory!”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” (Isaiah 6:1–8)

4. Describe the prophet Isaiah's response to the holy, majestic God.

5. What does God, through the seraph (angel), do for Isaiah?

6. What is Isaiah's response to the goodness and mercy of God?

Grace Lake

How can we picture God's grace? In *Living the Lord's Prayer*, Richard Andersen notes,

Grace is like that vast lake in the mountains, crystal clear, shimmering in the golden sunshine, and as pure as melted snow can be, unadulterated and uncontaminated. Grace Lake, however, is oceanic in size; it is unlimited, for no drought can empty it, nor can any thirst dry it up. . . .

This vast sea of grace came into being because Jesus, lifted upon the towering cross of Calvary, lovingly gave His life for you and me and everyone everywhere for all time. . . . It is not a hidden sea, this ocean of forgiveness. We know where it is and how to receive its life-giving waters. All we need do is ask for it; and, in Christ's name and because of Jesus' triumph, it is ours. (pp. 90–91)

- How is Christ's forgiveness toward you like an "oceanic lake"?

- How can you point others to the limitless forgiveness of Christ?

As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

A sign on the property line warns "No Trespassing." A trespass is a "step across." We walk across the boundary. We go where we should not go.

At root, sin is trespass. We step across the boundaries God has established. We go where God has forbidden us to go. Ultimately, all sin is a trespass against God. But sin also affects people around us.

7. Think about a time when you have forgiven someone. Was it easy or difficult to forgive? If possible, share your answer.

8. Think about a time when someone forgave you. Was it easy or difficult to accept forgiveness? If possible, share your answer.

9. How has Christ's forgiveness restored broken relationships in your life?

God's Word

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him." So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you."' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. (Genesis 50:15–21)

10. What was Joseph's attitude toward the hurt his brothers inflicted on him?

11. What was Joseph's attitude toward his brothers?

12. In what way is Joseph a “picture” of Jesus and His attitude toward us?

God wants—and invites—us to forgive one another through the grace and strength of Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, a forgiven heart forgives. When we forgive others, we show in our lives that we *truly* believe God has forgiven us.

In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther writes:

Just as daily as we sin much against God, and yet He forgives everything through grace, so we, too, must ever forgive our neighbor who does us injury, violence, and wrong, shows malice toward us, and so on. If, therefore, you do not forgive, then do not think that God forgives you [Matthew 18:23–25]. But if you forgive, you have this comfort and assurance, that you are forgiven in heaven. This is not because of your forgiving. For God forgives freely and without condition, out of pure grace, because He has so promised, as the Gospel teaches. But God says this in order that He may establish forgiveness as our confirmation and assurance, as a sign alongside of the promise. (LC III 94–96)

God’s Word

Then Peter came up and said to Him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and

reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” (Matthew 18:21–35)

13. How does the wicked servant demonstrate an *unforgiven* and *unforgiving* heart?

14. Is the king justified in punishing the wicked servant? Why or why not?

15. How does Christ’s limitless love and forgiveness toward you strengthen you to live in love and forgiveness toward others?

God’s People Pray

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, because of Your tender love toward us sinners You have given us Your Son that, believing in Him, we might have everlasting life. Continue to grant us Your Holy Spirit that we might remain steadfast in this faith to the end and finally come to life everlasting; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (*LSB Altar Book*, p. 450)

A Verse a Day

Sunday: Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

Monday: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! (Psalm 51:1–2)

Tuesday: I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. (Psalm 32:5)

Wednesday: Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Thursday: If You, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared. (Psalm 130:3–4)

Friday: And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

Saturday: But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

6

THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH PETITIONS AND THE CONCLUSION

Pray Together

Most kind Lord Jesus,
grant me Your grace.
Let it be always with me and work in me
and preserve me to the end.
Grant that I may always desire and will
whatever is most pleasing and acceptable
to You.
Let Your will be mine,
and let my will always follow Yours and
conform to it.
Grant me, above all else,
to find in You perfect peace and rest
for my body and soul.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Discover

In the Lord's Prayer, God invites us to ask Him for power and protection against all danger. As our loving Father in Christ, God guides us and keeps us safe as we serve Him throughout our life.

Introduction

Oscar Wilde wrote: "I can resist everything except temptation."
In many respects, modern life welcomes temptations. From "harmless" pleasures to dangerous adventures, the message is the same: Don't resist! Give in!

- From your experience, how do people generally view temptation?
- “No Fear.” Why is the phrase a deceptive—even dangerous—slogan for life?

The Catechism

THE SIXTH PETITION

And lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean? God tempts no one. We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.

The Scriptures use the word *temptation* in two ways:

- The testing of our faith, which God allows and uses to bring us closer to Him.
- The efforts of our enemies to entice us from Christ and faith and to bring us to despair and spiritual ruin.

In the Lord’s Prayer, we pray that God will not let us “fall and yield to trials and temptations.”

1. Which three enemies deceive God’s people and lead us toward doubt and sin?
2. What temptations do we face today at home? at work? in our communities and nation?
3. How do God’s people “overcome” temptation and “win the victory”?

God's Word

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But He answered, "It is written,

"'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it is written,

"'He will command his angels concerning you,'

and

"'On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these I will give You, if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

"'You shall worship the Lord your God
and Him only shall you serve.'"

Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him. (Matthew 4:1-11)

4. In what ways do Jesus' temptations reflect the kinds of temptations we face today?

5. How does Jesus answer the devil? In what way are His responses a model for believers?

6. How does God's Word strengthen you to resist Satan's temptations?

Leading Us Not into Temptation

Martin Luther writes in his Large Catechism:

This, then, is what “lead us not into temptation” means. It refers to times when God gives us power and strength to resist the temptation [1 Corinthians 10:13]. However, the temptation is not taken away or removed. While we live in the flesh and have the devil around us, no one can escape his temptation and lures. It can only mean that we must endure trials—indeed, be engulfed in them [2 Timothy 2:3]. But we say this prayer so that we might not fall and be drowned in them. (LC III 106)

In Christ, God’s people stand firm in faith together!

- To whom do you turn for support and encouragement in temptation?

- How can your congregation and fellow believers help others in their temptations?

The Catechism

THE SEVENTH PETITION

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean? We pray in this petition, in summary, that our Father in heaven would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation, and finally, when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven.

Richard Andersen, in *Living the Lord’s Prayer*, offers a striking portrait of “the tempests of life.”

Satan is his name; temptation is his game. His intention is so to engage us in the terror of a tempest that we deny the very one who quiets swirling seas and storm-force winds with the word “peace” (Mark 4:35–41).

Our journey in life is not always a peaceful drive along shaded lanes with a cloudless sky and a bright sun. We’re

often caught in emotional gusty squalls or spiritual drenching downpours. Life is not free of storms; blizzard conditions seem to immobilize us. Yet we can have sunshine in the soul. . . .

Here is certainty on which to depend regardless of the gale force winds and the deluge. In Christ the storm is stilled. (p. 109)

7. What types of evils are prevalent today? In what ways is evil like a tempest in our world?

8. How has God rescued us from the greatest evil?

9. In what ways does the heavenly Father *rescue* you from daily evils and keep you in His love and care?

Our world is spoiled by sin. Life is often filled with hardship and sorrow. Yet in Christ God will keep us from harm or bring us safely through harm to His eternal kingdom.

God's Word

And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. And embarking in a ship . . . we put to sea. . . .

But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land. And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along. . . . Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jet-

tison the cargo. And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. . . .

Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.' So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. . . ."

Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore. . . . The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape. But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land, and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land. After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. . . . They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed. (Acts 27:1–28:10)

10. How did God rescue Paul and his companions during their journey to Rome? How did God provide for their needs?

11. What word of encouragement did Paul speak to his companions in their anxiety?

12. In what ways does God "open doors" for His people to share the Gospel around the world?

The Catechism

THE CONCLUSION

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.* Amen.

What does this mean? This means that I should be certain that these petitions are pleasing to our Father in heaven, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen means “yes, yes, it shall be so.”

*These words were not in Luther’s Small Catechism.

Kingdom. Power. Glory. God gives us His kingdom through Christ. In His power, God rules the universe, the world, and His Church through His love in Christ. All glory belongs to God alone, for He has created us, redeemed us in Christ, and sanctifies us through the Holy Spirit.

- God is King, who shares all His good gifts with us!
- God is the almighty Savior, with power to answer our prayers!
- God is Lord, who is worthy of our praise!

13. How would you respond to the question “Does God really answer our prayers?”

14. In what way is the Lord’s Prayer a blessing in your prayer life?

God’s People Pray

Lord God, heavenly Father, from Your hand we receive all good gifts and by Your grace we are guarded from all evil. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that, acknowledging with our whole heart Your boundless goodness, we may now and evermore thank and praise You for Your loving-kindness and tender mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.
(LSB Altar Book, p. 450)

A Verse a Day

Sunday: Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. (James 1:2–3)

Monday: Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Peter 5:8–9)

Tuesday: But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (Romans 13:14)

Wednesday: But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

Thursday: The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:18)

Friday: And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me. (Psalm 50:15)

Saturday: To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)

LEADERS NOTES

The format for each session is similar. For notes on how to guide participants through the parts of the Study Guide, see session 1.

As you prepare to lead the session,

- read the Study Guide and answer the questions as fully as possible.

As you prepare for your time together,

- arrive early to make sure the setting is comfortable.
- greet participants by name.
- introduce participants to one another.
- thank participants for their time and commitment.
- keep in mind that sometimes participants may be reluctant to share their thoughts about some issues. Help participants see that God's solid Word guides us as we apply Law and Gospel to our lives. In Christian love, we can discuss difficult issues, even though at times we may differ on how God's Word can be applied to our lives.

1 THE MYSTERY OF PRAYER

Pray Together

Use the prayer as you begin the session.

Discover

Read aloud the session theme.

Introduction

Read aloud, or invite a participant to read aloud, the brief introduction to the session. In general, spend 5–10 minutes on the Introduction questions.

- Allow participants to write down and share aloud their questions.
- Answers will vary.
- Answers will vary. Encourage participant discussion.

Read the paragraph “Who?”

God’s Word

1. Daniel’s accusers represent the various ways people may reject the true God, deny His Word, and pressure His people to compromise or abandon their faith.

2. Daniel believed in God. He entrusted His life to God. He prayed, “giving thanks to God, *just as he had done before.*” The threat of personal harm and deprivation did not shake Daniel’s confidence in the grace and power of God.

3. Accept participant responses. God’s love and power encourage His people to remain steadfast in faith despite opposition and persecution, to continue to worship God, to pray, to serve others, etc.

Greeting Card

Invite a participant to read the paragraph on greeting cards. Allow participants to reflect on and answer the questions.

- Cover pictures will vary.
- The inside text (words) will vary.

What?

Invite a participant to read the paragraph in this section.

4. Answers will vary. Encourage participant discussion.
5. Answers will vary.
6. Answers will vary.

God's Word

Invite a participant to read aloud this portion from Holy Scripture. Use the questions for reflection and discussion on the text.

7. St. Paul encourages his fellow Christians to rejoice in the Lord. Believers can know God's peace and be anxiety-free because of Christ's promises. In faith, we can approach God in prayer with every request.

8. Accept participant responses. Believers know God's peace as they pray because they know God will hear their prayers and answer according to His mercy in Christ.

When?

Ask a participant to read the Small Catechism quotation. Use the questions for discussion.

9. God invites us, His chosen people in Christ, to pray at all times. Luther encouraged Christians to pray throughout the day, and especially in times of trouble.

10. Answers will vary. If time permits, allow participants to share their responses.

Where?

Invite a participant to read aloud Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's remarks. Then use the questions for discussion.

11. Answers will vary.

12. Encourage participants to share how corporate prayer has been meaningful in their lives.

13. Allow participants to share their answers and explanations. Although we may be busy, quiet time with God in study of His Word and prayer is the most important use of time.

How?

Invite a participant to read the paragraphs on how to pray.

God's Word

Read aloud, or invite a participant to read aloud this portion of Holy Scripture. Then answer the questions and share your answers together.

14. Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray by giving them a model: the Lord's Prayer. He also demonstrates in His parable that God's people can call on Him in their need; He encourages persistence in prayer; and He gives His promise to answer our prayers according to His goodness and mercy.

15. Allow participants to share their experience with persistence in prayer.

16. Encourage participants to share their comfort in knowing God will answer their prayers.

God's People Pray

Use the prayer as a closing devotion. If you wish, include special prayers for needs of participants, your congregation, your community, the nation or world.

A Verse a Day

Encourage participants to read and memorize the Bible verse for each day. You may want to discuss practical ways to achieve this objective.

2 THE INTRODUCTION AND THE FIRST PETITION

Note: The format for each session is similar. For leader notes on how to guide participants through the parts of the Study Guide, see session 1.

Introduction

- Encourage participants to reflect on the poet's words. It is easy, in one sense, to learn the words of the Lord's Prayer. It takes a lifetime to understand *with the heart* their meaning and application to our lives.
- Answers will vary.
- Allow participants to share their experiences with praying the Lord's Prayer.

The Catechism

Read the selection from Luther's Small Catechism and the following paragraph.

1. Answers will vary. They may include that children enjoy the blessings of shelter, protection, nourishment, teaching, modeling, and support from fathers (and mothers too!)

2. Answers will vary. Images may include protection, strength, goodness, kindness, gentleness, firmness, help, encouragement, etc. For some individuals, *father* may not carry such positive associations. Allow participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

3. God’s children may call on Him with “all boldness and confidence” because God has promised to be *our* Father. Most children would never ask another father or person for what they need or want; they would, rather, ask their own father. Since God is our Father, we can in faith ask often, repeatedly, and boldly, that is, with the assurance God will hear and answer us in His mercy.

God’s Word

4. Answers may vary on the characteristics of the father in the parable of the lost son. They may include his patience, understanding, concern, joy over his son’s return, patience with his older son, compassion, love, etc.

5. Answers will vary about the sons. They may include recklessness, hostility, disregard for the family, jealousy, hatred, etc.

6. Allow participants to make the connection between the father in the parable and God our heavenly Father.

God Our Father

- Jesus began His prayer with *our* rather than *my* because in Jesus all believers are children of the heavenly Father. We pray together as His people—with and for one another.
- Allow participants to share their comfort in knowing all believers pray together “Our Father.”

God’s Word

7. St. Paul proclaims God as Creator of the world, who does not live in temples built by mortal human beings. God is self-existent, that is, does not require anything from His creation for His existence. He gives life to all people. He determines the course of history and nations and peoples. All life has its origin in God, and nothing happens apart from His knowledge or will. We are, by grace, His children through our creation and adopted children by our redemption in Christ.

8. Answers may vary. God’s power may appear overwhelming to people when they consider the grandeur of the universe, God’s design in creation, and His control over history. God’s power is a comfort to His forgiven people in Christ as we consider that He rules over the universe and our lives as a loving Father.

9. God’s plan was to save the world through His Son. The “Gospel in a nutshell” summarizes how God accomplished His plan: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Share additional passages that describe God’s plan to redeem all people through Christ.

10. Allow participants to share their blessings through faith in Jesus.

God's Word

11. The Holy Spirit prays for us. The Lord Jesus also prays—intercedes—for us.

12. Allow participants to describe the types of weaknesses we face in life (e.g., anger, addiction, health problems, broken relationships, etc.). Our weaknesses can, in fact, discourage us from praying.

13. When words do not come, we can trust that Christ is still present in our lives, working to draw us closer to Him through His Word, and praying for our faith and endurance.

The Catechism

14. Allow participants to share how God's love and strength have impacted their lives. As time permits, share the various names we use to call on God (Lord, Helper, Savior, Rock, Redeemer, etc.).

15. Worship and Bible study bring us to Christ. True worship is centered on Jesus. The Scriptures center on Jesus too. As we are connected to His Word, baptized into the saving name of God, and nourished in the Lord's Supper, we grow in faith and service.

3

THE SECOND AND THIRD PETITIONS

Introduction

- Encourage participants to reflect on the word *kingdom* in our day and location.
- Answers will vary.

The Catechism

1. Allow participants to share evidence of God’s rule over the universe and human history. Examples may include the consistency and order in the universe, the beauty of creation, and His ongoing protection of humankind.

2. The Lord Jesus rules His Church in love, and through His Gospel He calls people to faith, equips and strengthens them for service, and grows His kingdom. Encourage participants to reflect on Christ’s rule in their lives and in His Church.

3. Accept participant responses. Blessings may include no sickness, pain, hunger, or thirst; a glorified body; reunion with loved ones.

God’s Word

4. Sin destroyed the “good and perfect” world God had created for human beings.

5. The serpent was, in fact, the devil. Satan brought sin into the world by tempting Adam and Eve, who yielded of their own free will. Satan, the “old, evil foe,” continues to tempt all people today and to work against God’s kingdom and purpose in the Gospel.

6. God brought His kingdom of grace into the world through Christ. St. Paul writes: “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13–14).

The Kingdom of Grace

- The heavenly Father brought us into the kingdom of grace through Baptism, and through His Word when we heard and believed the Gospel.
- Allow participants to share their comfort and encouragement as Christ leads them through His Word.

The Catechism

7. Allow participants to share examples of God's activity in our world.

8. Answers will vary. They may include assaults from the world beyond our human ability, pride, substituting our plans and goals for God's purposes, etc.

9. Because Christ is at the heart and center of the Father's plan, we rest content in knowing that what God wills in Christ is our heart's desire.

The Heavenly Father's Will

- Allow participants to share their joy in knowing God wants the best for His people.

God's Word

10. The seed represents the Word of God, the Good News of the Kingdom, at work in different soils, that is, in human lives.

11. The soils represent the different attitudes toward God's Word. Some people hear and do not understand; they refuse to believe, or perhaps have no interest in the coming of the Kingdom. In both cases, Satan quickly "snatches away" the good seed. Some people hear and receive the Good News of the kingdom for "a short time." The joy of salvation, however, quickly dissolves, as the fire of "trouble and persecution" burns up the seeds of trust and personal devotion. Still others hear the message, understand, and believe the Good News, but they soon are overwhelmed by the concerns and snares of everyday life. But in the mystery of God, some hear, understand, believe, and bring forth a crop, a rich harvest of the Spirit's fruit.

12. The parable serves to illustrate God's gracious work among His people through His Gospel. In Christ, God desires the salvation of every person: He wants His kingdom to come and His will to be done in every life. Yet not everyone will hear and believe the Good News.

4 THE FOURTH PETITION

Introduction

- Encourage participants to reflect on the different ways that people—ourselves included—take material blessings for granted.
- Answers will vary. They may include that we soon think and feel that we are responsible for our successes and wealth.

The Catechism

1. Encourage participants to reflect on Luther’s explanation of “daily bread” and add any particular needs for our day.
2. God gives His blessings both *immediately* and *mediately*, that is, directly and indirectly, through His appointed means and representatives.
3. Allow participants to share their gratitude for God’s “little blessings” in life.

God’s Word

4. Answers will vary. They may include “desperate,” “hopeless,” “extreme,” at least, that is, from a human perspective.
5. God provided basic necessities for both Elijah and the widow out of His mercy and His love.
6. The story reveals that God truly cares for His people and will at times use extraordinary measures to provide for their physical well-being.

Daily Bread

- Allow participants to respond to the statement “I work hard for everything I have! Why should I be thankful?” As you can, share that God is really the giver of all good gifts—to

believers and unbelievers alike. He gives us talents to use to earn a living and manage our resources, but ultimately everything we have comes through His grace.

- Accept participant responses. The gracious Giver's blessings move His people to share with others in need.

This Day

7. Answers will vary. Permit participants to share their needs.
8. Answers will vary. They may include life itself, good health, good news from a neighbor or friend, etc.
9. God gives us the assurance that He will take care of us because of His love in Christ.

God's Word

10. At root, life is a gift from God the Creator, and true life centers on God's relationship with us. Our bodies are gifts from God, and God calls us to serve one another in love.
11. Accept participant responses on worry and anxiety.
12. Jesus promises that the heavenly Father will, out of His goodness and mercy, provide what we need along with His greatest gift in the kingdom of God: forgiveness, life, and salvation in Christ.

5

THE FIFTH PETITION

Introduction

- Encourage participants to share their thoughts on the difficulty of forgiving others *in real life*.
- Answers will vary but will focus on brutality, revenge, hatred, etc. *Hell* is an accurate description.

The Catechism

1. The words that describe our natural, sinful condition are: sins, neither worthy, nor deserving, daily sin much, deserve nothing but punishment.
2. Answers will vary. They may include addictions, suffering, broken relationships, violence, antagonism, etc.
3. God “looks beyond” our sin to see the perfect goodness of Christ. Through faith in Him, we stand before God as forgiven, righteous in His sight.

God’s Word

4. Isaiah is terrified: “Woe to me! I am ruined!” The prophet knew that he was a sinner and that he lived among a sinful people.
5. God, through the seraph, takes away Isaiah’s sin and guilt. The “live coal” is a picture of God’s means to cleanse His people and bring them forgiveness—that is, through Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, His means of grace.
6. Isaiah’s response is, “Here I am. Send me on Your mission, Lord.”

Grace Lake

- Answers will vary. Allow participants to reflect on the imagery of Christ's forgiveness as an "oceanic lake," forgiveness for *any* and all sins.
- Answers will vary. Encourage participants to share how they can bring Christ's love to others.

As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

7. Accept participant responses. Be sensitive to their difficult experiences.

8. Accept participant responses. Again, be sensitive to the diversity of experiences.

9. Encourage participants to focus on the healing power of Christ's forgiveness in their relationships.

Martin Luther's advice is hard to put into practice. Forgiveness has healing power. If we do not forgive, we remain the prisoner. Forgiveness sets *us* free. At times we may have to forgive even though the offender does not ask for forgiveness. Perhaps the offender (because of sinful nature, lack of information, lack of courage, etc.) cannot reach the point of asking for forgiveness. Nevertheless, we can forgive because punishment is God's business. ("Vengeance is Mine," the Lord says [see Hebrews 10:30].)

God's Word

10. Joseph's attitude is forgiveness and understanding; he recognizes God's larger purpose and plan in his own suffering.

11. Joseph's attitude again is love, forgiveness, and concern for their future.

12. Joseph provides a picture or "type" of Christ in His rich forgiveness toward sinful, rebellious brothers.

God's Word

13. The wicked servant demonstrates an *unforgiven* and *unforgiving* heart by refusing to forgive his fellow servant a pittance compared with the amount he himself owed the master.

14. Accept participant responses, but point out that refusal to forgive shows a complete rejection of God's love and forgiveness to us.

15. Encourage participants to share how Christ's limitless love and forgiveness are active in their lives.

6

THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH PETITIONS AND THE CONCLUSION

Introduction

- Encourage participants to share their thoughts on how people view temptation.
- Answers will vary. They may focus on the fact that adolescents and young adults may not realize their own mortality. “No fear” deceives and endangers human life, because we have many reasons to fear in different circumstances.

The Catechism

1. The three enemies that deceive us and lead us toward sin are “the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.”
2. Answers will vary, but may include financial and sexual temptations, abuses of power, apathy, selfishness, etc.
3. God’s people overcome temptation and win the victory through Christ, who defeated Satan and redeemed us.

God’s Word

4. Answers will vary. They may include the temptation to satisfy our appetites and desires above all else, to test God, to worship something other than the true God.
5. Jesus answers the devil with God’s Word. Each time the Lord trusts in God’s promise to save and protect His children. As believers, our strength and hope is found only in God’s Word, as Christ speaks His Gospel and makes us stand firm in faith.
6. Accept participant responses.

Leading Us Not into Temptation

- Encourage participants to name the people they turn to for support and encouragement in temptation.
- Answers will vary, but help participants to see their congregation and fellow believers as a valuable source of comfort for all people in need.

The Catechism

7. Answers will vary. They may include violence, lies, drugs, idolatry, immorality, etc. At times, evil can seem to overwhelm people as a storm overwhelms the land.

8. God has rescued us from the greatest evil—Satan, death, and hell—in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, for the sins of the world and our sins individually.

9. Accept participant responses on the love and care of God in our daily lives.

God's Word

10. God rescued Paul and his companions by bringing them safely through a tremendous storm. After they landed on the island of Malta, Paul and his fellow travelers were refreshed by the local population.

11. In His mercy, God gave Paul a special message through His angel. Paul could speak confidently to his shipmates because He knew God's purpose for his life: to testify to the Gospel before the Roman emperor. Today God speaks to us in His Word, and He encourages us in our moments of anxiety and despair.

12. Allow participants to explore how God is opening doors around their community and the world to bring the Gospel to all people.

The Catechism

13. Accept participant responses, but focus on the assurance we have in His Word that God does answer our prayers according to His good purpose in Christ.

14. Encourage participants to share how the Lord's Prayer is a blessing in their prayer life.

6

THE THIRD ARTICLE: FORGIVENESS AND ETERNAL LIFE

