



Unit 4

THE MESSIAH'S GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

Prayer

Loving, caring, and forgiving Lord, we thank and praise You for going to death on a cross so that we might have life—abundant and eternal. We thank You for granting us the wondrous privilege of intimately addressing Your Father as our Father, Your Daddy as our Daddy. And we thank You for sharing with us Your guidelines for prayer. Grant us the help of Your Holy Spirit to pray regularly, fervently, and with understanding. Inspire us to practice what we pray. Remind us at all times that the kingship, the power, and the glory belong to You—and to You alone. In Your precious Name we pray. Amen.

Some introductory comments:

The Gospels contain two versions of the Lord's Prayer. Luke's version is shorter than Matthew's.

Matthew 6:9–13 (NRSV)

Our Father in Heaven,
hallowed be Your name.
Your Kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

Luke 11:2–4 (NRSV)

Father,
Hallowed by Your name.
Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive
everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.

In the Old Testament, God is referred to as “father” fourteen times—not as procreator or ancestor, but as the one who elected, delivered, and saved His people by mighty deeds in history. Some examples follow.

Deuteronomy 32:6

Do you thus repay the Lord, O foolish and senseless people?
Is not He your father, who created you, who made you and established you?

Isaiah 63:15–16

Look down from heaven and see,
from Your holy and glorious habitation.
Where are Your zeal and Your might?
The yearning of Your heart and Your compassion?
They are withheld from me.
For You are our father,
though Abraham does not know us,
and Israel does not acknowledge us,
You, O Lord, are our father;
our Redeemer from of old is Your name.

Isaiah 64:7,8

There is no one who calls on Your name,
or attempts to take hold of You;
for You have hidden Your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hands of our iniquity.

Yet, O Lord, You are our father,
we are the clay, and You are the potter;
we are all the work of Your hand.

Jeremiah 3:3–5

Therefore the showers have been withheld,
and the spring rain has not come;
yet you have the forehead of a whore,
you refuse to be ashamed.
Have you not just now called to Me,
“My father, You are the friend of my youth—
will He be angry forever,
will He be indignant to the end?”
This is how you have spoken,
but you have done all the evil that you could.

Jeremiah 3:19–20

I thought how I would set you among My children,
and give you a pleasant land,
the most beautiful heritage of all the nations.
And I thought you would call Me, my father,
and would not turn from following Me.
Instead, as a faithless wife leaves her husband,
so you have been faithless to Me, O house of Israel,
says the Lord.

Hosea 11:1

When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called My son.

Malachi 1:6

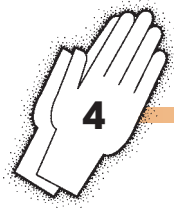
A son honors his father, and servants their master.
If then I am a father, where is the respect due Me?
And if I am a master, where is the respect due Me,
O priests, who despise My name?

Jesus proceeds beyond the above examples, and invites His brothers and sisters to address the Creator and Owner of the universe as “Abba, Father” (Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6).



- Study **ILLUSTRATION 4A** carefully, and be ready to explain it to others—including family and friends.
- Why is it important that God's people read the Bible regularly and avidly?

God the Holy Spirit uses God's written Word to reveal to us God's eternal truth and wisdom, revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. We need to remember that there is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch is claimed by God, and counter-claimed by Satan! If God has not captured our attention and heart, Satan has.



- b. How seriously does society-at-large take the concept of the demonic? Why?

A minority of people in today's world take seriously the concept of the demonic. They dismiss the notion of the demonic as a leftover from ancient mythology or medieval superstition. Many do not understand that God calls humanity not merely to avoid evil, but to devote life to doing good. It is easy to be harmless but useless.

- c. How seriously do you take it?

Each person must answer for himself/herself. If Jesus adopted a totally serious attitude toward the existence and strategies of the demonic, how wise are we to do otherwise?

- d. Why is Satan delighted when Christians entrust the work of the church to salaried professional church workers?

Because it allows Christians to delegate their own responsibilities and discipleship to others. While there is certainly a need for professional church workers, they are to be seen as "equippers," rather than "replacement workers."

2

Members of the Christian community join in praying the Lord's Prayer quite regularly.

- Some pray the Lord's Prayer as though it were a mantra to ensure that they will get whatever they ask for.
- Some see the Lord's Prayer as renewing commitment to a life-long, non-stop mission.

What difference is there in these two approaches?

Those who see the Lord's Prayer as a mantra look on it as a lucky charm to guarantee that they will get what they ask for.

Those who see praying the Lord's Prayer as renewing commitment to a life-long, non-stop mission see life as a "becoming process" rather than as a "getting process."

3

What difference is there between *saying* the Lord's prayer, and *praying* the Lord's Prayer?

It is possible to say the Lord's Prayer merely as a religious ritual that needs to be observed from time to time. However, to pray the Lord's Prayer as Jesus would have us pray it is to commit ourselves to practice in life what we say with our lips.

4

The opening words of the Lord's Prayer are radical.

- a. What obligation does praying *Our Father* have for those who pray these words?

We pray with a communal concern for the spiritual awareness and needs of all people, and pledge ourselves to do something about what we pray about.

- b. What joy does praying *Our Father* create in our hearts and lives?

We can speak to the almighty Creator and Owner of the majestic universe in which we reside as tenants, and address Him intimately as "Father, Daddy."

5

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, what are the implications of praying:

- a. The first three petitions?

We confess that although all is well in the divine realm beyond our sight, all is not well in the human realm on Planet Earth. We pray to God to put things right within us, and to use us to put things right around us. We commit ourselves:

- to learn more about God's Person, greatness, and grace, and to share what we have learned with others;
- to understand, believe in, and reflect the nature of God's Kingdom revealed in Jesus the Servant Messiah, and to share with others what God has taught us to believe and empowered us to become within that Kingdom;
- to grow in our understanding and practice of the servant life to which Jesus the Messiah calls us, and to encourage and inspire others to do the same.

- b. The fourth petition?

- We confess that God is the One who provides our daily needs.
- We express our gratitude for what God provides.
- We commit ourselves to have a Christlike concern for the needs of all people.
- We declare our trust in God—that He will continue to provide as He has provided.
- We express our desire to free ourselves from entanglement in worldly goals, and to devote ourselves to reflecting Jesus' heavenly lifestyle in all we think, say, and do.

- c. Its final three (some would say *two*) petitions?

- As people seek to wear appropriate dress when approaching royal persons or famous people, we declare our desire to approach God as He desires us to approach Him—having forgiven all who have sinned against us in any way. God forgives what we have been and done, and encourages us to become what He wants. We are to act in a similar way in our dealings with others.
- Although God never tempts us to sin, we often find ourselves in tempting situations. Hence, we ask God to grant us discernment to detect evil, and power to deal with it when ensnared by it.
- We ask God to make us aware of the existence of the demonic and its subtle seductions and strategies—and for power to resist the "Evil One."