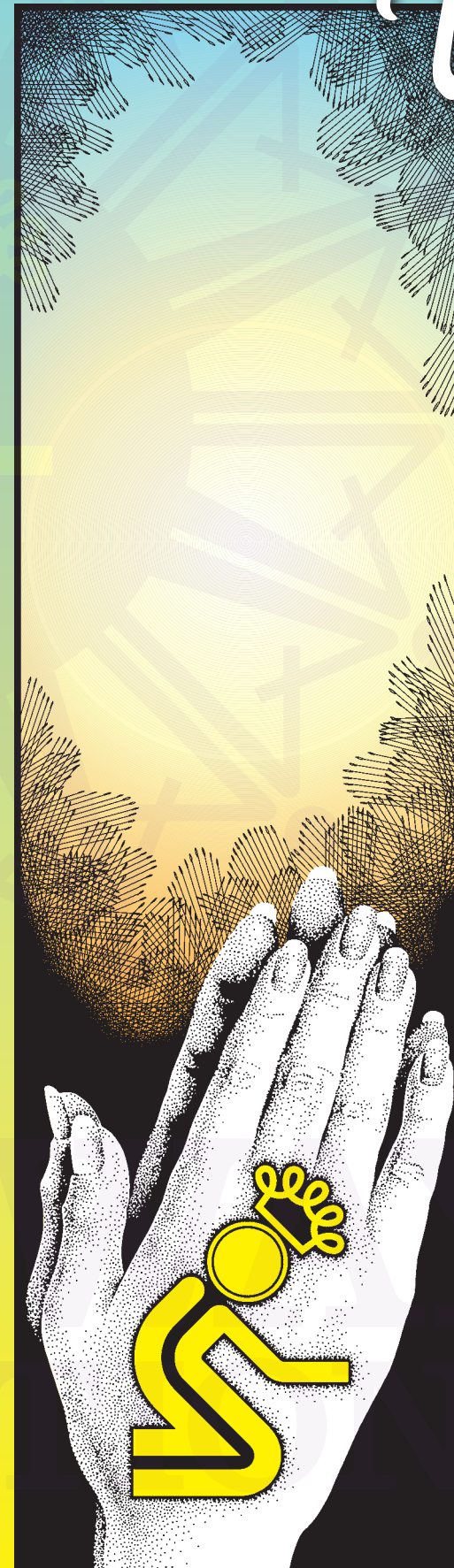


Unit 4

THE MESSIAH'S GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

Although the New Testament contains two examples of what is referred to as the Lord's Prayer, these examples constitute *guidelines for prayer* rather than a prayer to be offered *verbatim* (i.e., *word for word*). The first three petitions of Matthew's version focus on the believer's faith-walk in relation to God, the fourth on trust in—and gratitude to—God as provider, and the final three on the believer's faith-walk in relation to humanity-at-large.





The Christian's Spiritual War

ILLUSTRATION 4A depicts the two realms or kingdoms that seek to control our lives.

Upper section

The Kingdom of God

Our citizenship in God's Kingdom is brought about by Jesus the Messiah (*left segment, glorified Jesus the Messiah with hands raised*). Jesus works through His Holy Spirit (*dove*) who in turn uses God's Word and sacraments (*Bible, symbols for Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper*) to bring us to saving faith in Jesus as forgiving Savior and Servant Lord, and so to membership in God's eternal family. **The entry point in God's Kingdom is Jesus' redeeming cross and victory over death (*arrow pointing from left segment to right segment; cross and open tomb*).**

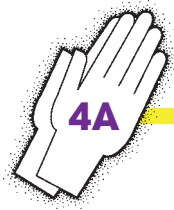
The Kingdom of God does not have geographical borders. It consists of people who live in faith and obedience under God as King (*right segment, symbol for God, crown, servant figure*). These people serve God and others in thought, word, and deed.

Lower section

The Kingdom of the Devil, the World, and our Flesh

- The Bible, in particular the New Testament, frequently refers to Satan, 1 Chronicles 21:1; Matthew 4:1–11; 1 Peter 5:8,9; Revelation 12:9 (*left segment, satanic face*). *The demonic is every spirit, person, power, institution, and pressure that would sidetrack us from living to serve God and others into living to serve ourselves.*
- Satan works through the world order (*Planet Earth with words superimposed*) and the sinful human heart (*symbol for sin on law-codes in human heart*) to persuade people to live for themselves—which is really for Satan. Satan suggests all that matters is **POWER** for self, **POSITION** for self, **PROFIT** for self, and **PLEASURE** for self.
- Those who live under Satan reject God as King of their lives, and adopt an indifferent or arrogant attitude toward God (*right segment, crown and symbols for God canceled out; person in posture of indifference beneath symbol for sin*).
- Note the **arrow** at the bottom of this section pointing from the *left segment to the right segment*. In the *left segment* are symbols of the “deadly trio” (*Satan, world order, sinful human heart*). In the *right segment* are symbols of the influence the deadly trio want to have on human life. Satan is quite happy to have people live *decent* lives as the world understands *decency*—as long as they think their “good deeds” make them acceptable to God.

Both kingdoms depicted in ILLUSTRATION 4A struggle for control of the lives of Christians. **The Kingdom of God is present imperfectly in Christians in this life; it will be present perfectly only in heaven.**



The Lord's Prayer

The Christian's War Cry

BACKGROUND

In Jesus' day, and during the first centuries of the Christian era, the Gentiles (non-Jews) used long introductions when they addressed their gods and their rulers. When doing so, they took care to make sure they got all the titles correct, lest the god (often identified with their political ruler, e.g. Caesar) get upset. Names and titles mattered.

The early church historian Eusebius, reports that when, in about A.D. 300, Galerius Caesar issued a decree to ease the persecution of Christians, the opening section read as follows:

The Emperor Caesar, Galerius, Valerius, Maximianus, Invictus, Augustus, Pontifex Maximus, Germanicus Maximus, Egyptian Maximus, Phoebicus Maximus, Sarmenticus Maximus (five times), Persecus Maximus (twice), Carpicus Maximus (six times), Armenicus Maximus, Medicus Maximus, Abendicu Maximus, Holder of Tribunical Authority for the 20th time, Emperor for the 19th, consul for the 8th, Pater Patriae Pro-Consul.

In Exodus 4:22, God refers to His people, the Israelites, as "His son"; see also Hosea 11:1. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, especially in the latter chapters of Isaiah, the term is used in an adjectival manner to describe God's feelings toward His people. However, *the word "Father" was never used by people in direct address to God.*

There is reason to believe that *Jesus was the first person to address God in this way.*

Although Jesus and the disciples spoke *Aramaic*, the New Testament writings are in *Greek*. However, there are traces of Aramaic within those Greek writings. For example, when Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before His crucifixion (Mark 14:36), He began with the words, "*Abba*, Father." Each time *Abba* is used in the New Testament (Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6), the Greek word for "Father" immediately follows.

In Jesus' day, *Abba* was the Aramaic word that children would use when addressing their father. Still today in some parts of the Middle East, the first word that children learn is *Abba*. The "a" at the end is the definite article. *Abba* really means "the father." But "*the father*" can also mean "*my father*," or "*our father*." This Aramaic term became the defining word for the new relationship that believers have with God through Jesus the Messiah.

When we recall the linking of the words *Abba Father* in Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, and Galatians 4:6, and the use of the Aramaic language by Jesus and the disciples, we can conclude that Jesus endorsed the use of *everyday language* in praying to God. Prayers do not have to be offered in any *specific language*, such as Hebrew or, say, Latin. And just as children could talk to their father at any time of the day or night, members of God's family can talk to their heavenly Father at any time of the day or night.

The significance of the new relationship expressed by the word "Father" was reflected in worship practices in the early Christian community. Churches were built in two sections, one section for believers, and another section for The significance of the new relationship expressed by the word "Father" was reflected in worship practices in the early Christian community. Churches were built in two sections, one section for believers, and another section for catechumens—people receiving instruction, but who had not as yet professed faith in Jesus and been baptized into His family. The catechumens were permitted to listen to the sermon and instruction sessions, but were then politely ushered out of the building. Those who had completed their course of instruction, expressed faith in Jesus, and been baptized, would remain and celebrate Holy Communion. It was considered inappropriate for those not yet baptized to take part in this sacred meal.

Furthermore, the Lord's Prayer was never recited with anyone except the baptized. Joachim Jeremias suggests that the reason for this practice was that because *Abba* is the first word in that prayer, those who had not yet come to faith in Jesus were not able to address God in the Spirit as "Daddy." They did not as yet have the kind of relationship with God established only through faith in Jesus the Messiah as forgiving Savior and servant Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- Two Gospels tell of the origin of the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:9–13, Luke 11:1–4. In Matthew, Jesus gives it as a pattern for prayer rather than as words to be repeated verbatim ("Pray then *like this*," 6:9). In giving His prayer, Jesus urges the disciples to avoid display, wordiness, and pointless requests in their prayer life. In Luke, Jesus gives the prayer as His guideline for prayer when the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray, as John had taught his disciples, 11:1,2.
- Some suggest that while the first three and the last three petitions ask for *spiritual* things, the fourth petition ("Give us this day our daily bread") asks for *material* things. However, all petitions ask for *Spirit-ual* things, namely, that God the Holy Spirit might empower us to reflect Jesus' attitudes and actions in all we think, say, and do. We pray that our lives will demonstrate Jesus' attitude towards His Father, the created order, and other people.
- **In the Lord's Prayer, we do not instruct God, but rather we ask God to instruct us. We do not pray to inform God, but we pray that God might reform us. We ask God to teach and empower us to serve God and others—in the spirit of Jesus the Messiah, our forgiving Savior and Servant Lord.**
- Each petition uses few words to express profound truths about what God wants to happen in *our lives*, and how God wants to use us to influence *the lives of others*.

THE CONTENTS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

The traditional version of the Lord's Prayer is:

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever.
Amen.*

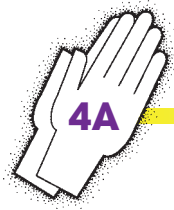
In what follows, the wording is from the NRSV translation of Matthew 6:9–13.

INTRODUCTION: *Our Father in Heaven*

- 1 We pray, "*Our Father*"—not, "*My Father*." We bring before God the needs of *all* people, as well as our own, 1 John 3:14–18.
- 2 We approach God with confidence as "*Our Father*," rejoicing in the fact that God, the Sustainer of all, wants only what is best for us, Psalm 100.
- 3 We pray with trust "*in heaven*," not to suggest that God is *distant*, but to confess that God is *different* from earthly fathers. God's power and wisdom know no limits, and God's loving concern for our welfare never varies, Psalm 103:1–5.

PETITION 1: *Hallowed be Your name*

- 1 To *hallow* is to treat as holy, to respect and hold in awe, to revere a person as that person deserves to



be treated. In this petition, *name* does not refer to one of God's titles or *name tags*, but to God as God is, Leviticus 24:16; John 17:6.

- 2 In the first petition we pray that, through His *written Word* (the Bible) and *Living Word* (Jesus the Messiah), God will:
 - a. Teach us to know God as maker, owner, sustainer, and Lord of creation, and to give God the respect, gratitude, and obedience due to Him.
 - b. Enlighten us to detect and reject every satanic lie.
 - c. Use us to influence others to hallow and honor God.

PETITION 2: *Your kingdom come*

- 1 If God's Kingdom prevailed everywhere on earth, there would be no point in praying these words. However, on earth the kingdom of the *deadly trio* holds many in its power.
- 2 We pray that, through His written and Living Word, God might enlighten us—and others through us—to understand the nature of the two kingdoms, to flee Satan's kingdom, and submit to God's Kingdom. Furthermore, we commit ourselves to work toward drawing other people into God's Kingdom.

PETITION 3: *Your will be done*

- 1 We ask God to help us, through His written and living Word, to know and distinguish between *God's will*, and the will of the deadly trio.
- 2 We ask God to equip us—and others through us—to know and submit to God's will for our lives.
- 3 We also commit ourselves to work toward helping others know and do God's will.

REFRAIN: *on earth as it is in heaven*

- 1 These words apply to each of the first three petitions, whose messages then are:

Hallowed be Your Name *on earth as it is in heaven*.
Your kingdom come *on earth as it is in heaven*.
Your will be done *on earth as it is in heaven*.
- 2 These words remind us that where God is in complete control (“in heaven”), all is well. There God's name is hallowed, God's kingdom prevails, and God's will is done. However, “on earth” the deadly trio of Satan, the world order, and sinful flesh (corrupt human nature) strive to mislead humanity. (ILLUSTRATION 4A depicts the two realms, the struggle between them, and the goal that each seeks.) We pray, then, that things *on earth* may become increasingly more as they are *in heaven*.

PETITION 4: *Give us this day our daily bread*

- 1 The term *daily bread* means all we need each day to sustain and support life.
- 2 God gives (*supplies*) our daily bread (*needs*) whether we ask or not, and whether we thank God or not. God will continue to do so.
- 3 In the fourth petition, we ask God to give us awareness and gratitude: *awareness* of the origin of our daily bread, and *gratitude* to the Giver (supplier). God supplies our needs as a by-product of our daily work, which God also provides and empowers.
- 4 Because God assures us that God is the *quartermaster* (ILLUSTRATION 3C) who supplies our needs, our trust in God frees us from unnecessary earthly concerns. We can devote ourselves to the service of others—and therefore to the service of God!
- 5 In praying *us* and *our*—rather than *me* and *my*—we commit ourselves to be God's instruments to supply the needs of all who live on this global village called Planet Earth.

PETITION 5: *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*

- 1 It is important for God's people to understand that the original Greek text states: “Forgive us our debts, as we also *have forgiven* our debtors.” The term “debts” points to the fact that we have failed to serve others as we should have. We are in debt to them in that we owe them acts of loving service. The petition stresses that we are to forgive *others* their sins and failures *before* we ask God to forgive us *our* sins and failures. Those who refuse to forgive others forfeit the right to claim God's forgiveness for themselves, Matthew 18:23–35. That others sin against us is the *first sin*. To refuse to forgive them is the *second sin*, which in turn leads to the *third sin*—the failure to serve them.
- 2 In Jesus, God has already forgiven us. God has removed our sins as far from us as east is from west, Psalm 103:12. God's goal is now to help us become more what God wants us to be—like Jesus. Our motivation for obedience is our gratitude to God for His forgiving grace and providing care.
- 3 Similarly, we are to forgive others the wrong they do to us, and devote ourselves to helping them become what *God* wants them to be—not what *they* want to be!

PETITION 6: *Lead us not into temptation*

- 1 God tempts no one to sin, James 1:13–15. However, God permits us to encounter many situations and difficulties designed to strengthen our spiritual muscles and keep them strong. For example, when sickness and adversity strike others, God gives us an opportunity to be a *little Jesus* to the hurting and helpless. When sickness and adversity strike us, God gives us an opportunity to be the *helpless, suffering Jesus* whom others can serve, Matthew 25:31–40.
- 2 In this petition, we pray that God will help us deal with every situation in life in a way that is in keeping with God's will for us. We pray that, in our attitudes and actions, God might help us reflect the mind of Jesus in every situation, and use us to help others do the same.

PETITION 7: *But deliver us from evil*

better: ***But rescue us from the Evil One***

- 1 The Greek text of this passage (Matthew 6:13) permits either translation. The first views evil broadly, and may be construed as merely undesirable experiences. The second asks for deliverance from Satan's realm at work in the world. On the basis of Jesus' ministry, there is good reason to believe that the second translation expresses what Jesus intended.
- 2 If the second translation is accepted, the sixth and seventh petitions form a unit that says, “In the tests that come to us throughout life, help us to know and do God's will, and deliver us from Satan's temptations to do his will.”
- 3 “Deliver us from the Evil One” forms a fitting conclusion to the Lord's Prayer. Jesus looks back over all the noble things He asks us to pray about, and urges us to remember that our walk through life will never be easy. The enemy is around. Although society often treats Satan as a comic-strip character, Jesus exhorts us to view Satan very differently (John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8,9), and to urge others to do so also.

CONCLUSION: *For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

The closing words of the Lord's Prayer (“For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever”) reflect 1 Chronicles 29:11. They are found in *some* ancient New Testament manuscripts. We should understand them as, “For Your is the *kingship*, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.”

Amen is a Hebrew word meaning *truly, truly, or certainly, certainly*. It denotes that God gladly hears the kinds of petitions we offer in the Lord's Prayer. Furthermore, God earnestly desires to bring them to pass in our lives—and, through us, in the lives of others.



UNIT 4

Questions for Reflection

1 Study **ILLUSTRATION 4A** carefully, and be ready to explain it to others—including family and friends.

- a. Why is it important that God's people read the Bible regularly and avidly?

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

- c. How seriously do you take it?

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

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

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?

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

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

- a. The first three petitions?

- b. The fourth petition?

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

CROSSWAYS
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