

Introduction: "Our Father, who art in heaven"

First Petition: "Hallowed be thy name"

This phrase reminds us to look upon God's name as holy, as something that inspires awe and reverence. It reminds us that we are not to trivialize God's name by using it to put others down. When using God's name, we are to understand what we are saying and implying by what we say.

Second Petition: "Thy kingdom come"

Jesus speaks frequently of God's kingdom, but never defines the concept: He assumed this was a concept so familiar that it did not require definition. This petition looks to the perfect establishment of God's rule in the world in the future, an act of God resulting in the eschatological order of the new age.

The request for God's kingdom to come is commonly interpreted at the most literal level: as a reference to the belief, common at the time, that a Messiah figure would bring about a kingdom of God.

Third Petition: "Thy will be done"

Many people think our job is to get our afterlife destination taken care of, then tread water until we go to heaven. But Jesus never told anybody to pray, 'Get me out of here so I can go up there.' Instead, we pray that we are able to do God's will while we are here on earth. The request that "thy will be done" is God's invitation to "join him in making things down here the way they are up there." When we are able to do this, then God's kingdom is here among us as well.

Fourth Petition: "Give us this day our daily bread"

The more personal requests begin with the request for daily bread. Throughout history, there has been some confusion as to what daily bread actually means. Some feel that it is in reference to transubstantiation which talks about the bread and wine used in Holy Communion changing to the actual body and blood of Christ during the Words of Institution. The main problem with this thought is that Holy Communion and the doctrine of transubstantiation were both developed after we were taught this prayer by Jesus.

The other understanding is that bread refers to that which is needed for survival since Jesus is seen as caring for everyday needs of his followers.

Fifth Petition: "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"

The Presbyterian and other Reformed churches tend to use "debts ... debtors". Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and Methodists are more likely to say "trespasses ... those who trespass against us".

After the request for bread, Matthew and Luke differ slightly. Matthew continues with a request for debts to be forgiven in the same manner as people have forgiven those who

have debts against them. Luke, on the other hand, makes a similar request about sins being forgiven in the manner of debts being forgiven between people.

The Aramaic word *ḥôbâ* can mean "debt" or "sin". This difference between Luke's and Matthew's wording could be explained by the original form of the prayer having been in Aramaic. The generally accepted interpretation is that the request is for forgiveness of sin, not of supposed loans granted by God. Asking for forgiveness from God was a staple of Jewish prayers. They offered sacrifices to God in order to receive forgiveness. Because it was important to ask God for forgiveness, it was also considered proper for people to be forgiving of others just as God granted forgiveness.

The verses immediately following the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:14-15 show Jesus teaching that the forgiveness of our sin by God is contingent on how we forgive others. Later, Matthew elaborates with Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-35 where the forgiveness from the king who is God is conditional on the servant's forgiveness of a small debt owed to him.

**Sixth Petition: "And lead us not into temptation"**

Interpretations of this petition varies. The Greek word *πειρασμός* can mean temptation, testing, trial, experiment. Most of the traditional English translations uses the word temptation. It is also clear when talking about being tempted that it is not God who is tempting us, but rather we are tempted when we are lured and enticed by our own desire. Others see it as a plea against hard tests described elsewhere in scripture, such as those of Job. It is also read as: "Do not let us be led by ourselves, by others, or by Satan into temptations".

**Seventh Petition:"But deliver us from evil"**

Translations and scholars are divided over whether the evil mentioned in the final petition refers to evil in general or the devil in particular. The original Greek, as well as the Latin version, could be either of neuter evil in general or masculine gender which would be reference to the devil. There is little real difference between the two interpretations, the question is of no real consequence.

**Doxology: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen"**

The doxology of the prayer is not contained in Luke's version, nor is it present in the earliest manuscripts of Matthew. Most scholars do not consider it part of the original text of Matthew modern translations generally omit it. The doxology was originally sung by the priest following the last line of the prayer.