

# LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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## LORD TEACH US TO PRAY

Dr. Elva McAllaster, professor of "English at Greenville (Ill.) College, published the following poem in *Eternity Magazine* in June 1970, entitled: *Prayer Meeting Wednesday Night*:

"Lord, bless Mrs. Jones whose son is ill," We prayed.

"Help Susie as she makes her trip...

"Old Elder Tompkins in the hospital; Bless him, Lord, Amen.

"We rustled our feet. We told each other it was a fine rain last night, a very fine rain. And I felt like banging my head on the altar rail. Like flinging myself prone in the isle. Like pounding the floor with clenched fists.

"Dear God, how can you stand our trivial, petty, piety, our parish-bound minutiae, our picayune provincialities? No wonder the Ezra's, Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's put ashes on their heads and wore sackcloth.

"Bless Mrs. Jones...and Vietcong mothers, Arab mothers, Israeli mothers, whose sons are poisoned-ill with havoc hate, whose sons were turned to carrion when the bold bombs fell.

"Bless Susie...and uncounted ghetto kids in Harlem, Watts, the Delta, who have no trips for taking except to asphalt jungles and to jail.

"Old Elder Thompkins, let him rest in peace...but, O dear God, the hordes without hospitals, Korea, India. The homeless hungers in Hong Kong. The diggers into garbage for their fare.

"We change the water in our fishbowls very carefully, fill our birdbaths, and count all waters placid. While the typhoon gales are battering continents; while the hurricanes roar unimpeded. Not so suavely, not so calmly...Let us pray."

There is a direct relationship between Jesus' unusual ministry and his devout life of prayer. He considered prayer more important than food. We are told that hours before breakfast, "...in the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was there praying" (Mark 1:35). To him prayer was more important than the assembling of great crowds. The Bible says, "...and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed" (Luke 5:15, 16). Prayer meant more to him than sleep, for we read, "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12). He prayed at funerals, and the dead were raised. He prayed over five loaves and two fish, and a multitude were fed with a boy's lunch. He prayed, "Not my will, but Thine," and provided sinful man access to a holy God. God has related His work in the world to the prayers of His people.

"And it came about while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him. 'Lord teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.'" They did not say, "Lord teach us to preach; Lord, teach us to do miracles; or Lord teach us to be wise"...they said, "Lord teach us to pray." The prayer Jesus gave his disciples is recorded in Matthew and Luke. It is a revolutionary prayer. To pray "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" will change our lives, our homes and our churches. We say this petition many times, but do we really pray it? The prayer is not just a prayer to be repeated, but a pattern to enable us to include everything we are required to pray when we talk to God. We call this "The Lord's Prayer" but a better term might be "The Model Prayer", or "Disciples' prayer".

John Dominic Crosian, professor at De Paul University, in his book entitled *The Greatest Prayer* begins with this comment: "The Lord's prayer is prayed by all Christians but never mentions Christ; it is prayed by all churches but never mentions the church; it is prayed on all Sundays but never mentions Sunday; it is called "the Lord's Prayer" but never mentions the Lord; it is prayed by fundamentalists Christians but never mentions the inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth, the miracles or His death and resurrection; it is prayed by Evangelical Christians but never mentions evangelism or the gospel, it is prayed by Pentecostals and never mentions the Holy Spirit; it is prayed by Christians who focus on the next life but never mentions Heaven or Hell."

**OUR FATHER:** The Fatherhood of God fills the gospel of Christ. He continually spoke of God as his Father and taught us to pray "our Father". In the sermon on the mount he uses the word "God" five times and "Father" sixteen times. In the Gospel of John he uses the word "God" eleven times and "Father sixty-six times. In speaking of God he always says "Father" (except in the quotation from Psalm 22:1 on the cross, Matthew 27:46) and teaches us that God is also "our Father". In all his prayers he addresses God as his Father and now he says we are to address Him as our Father. In his book *Knowing God* J.I. Packer states: "You sum up the whole of New Testament teaching in a single phrase if you speak of it as a revelation of the Fatherhood of the Holy Creator. In the same way, you sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's Holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity find how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers, and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well."

**WHICH ART IN HEAVEN:** (Literally: "The Father of us, the One in the heavens"). A quote from the November 2011 issue of *Living Waters Newsletter* explains the importance of translating "heaven" in the plural when it is plural and not singular in the Greek, something the translators have neglected to do: "The incalculable difference this makes is it limits heaven to a place in distant or outer space, or beyond space. Of course God is everywhere, but to put Him in a city beyond the sky is to alienate

Him from being close at hand and not view God as being present with us, as Jesus shows Him to be. We inevitably take Him to be located far away and at a much later time, not here and now—in the ‘third heaven’ perhaps, but not in the ‘first’ heaven, that is the atmosphere around us.” When we pray “Our Father, who art in heaven” we are addressing Him as One who is present with us.

**HALLOWED BE THY NAME:** The word *hallowed* comes from the word “*holy*” and is only translated “hallowed” two times in the New Testament: in the two records of this prayer (Matt. 6:9 and Luke 11:2). It is translated “sanctify” twenty-three times. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* states that it means “moral purity” and refers to “God’s incomparable majesty”. Therefore when we pray we should come before God in reverence and awe, and never take the name of God in vain. We live in a fallen world that defiles and degrades the holy name of God. When we pray this prayer we are praying that God will be regarded as holy in an unholy world, and we pray this prayer as worship we are affirming the truth in opposition to all that is unholy. To worship an idol, or to worship without regarding God’s name as holy involves calling something holy that is not holy. Many of our churches have reduced worship to the level of entertainment. Our culture is a “culture of the casual” and this has been brought into the church. As Dale Holzbauer wrote in *The Restoration Herald*: “Our casual approach to our clothes, our music, and our buildings has caused us to lose a great deal regarding the majesty of the Christian faith.” Hallowing the name of God is not something to be taken in a casual manner.

**THY KINGDOM COME:** To pray “Thy Kingdom come” is to acknowledge the kingdom as reality here and now as well as in the future. When the Jews accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, his reply was: “If I cast out demons by the finger of God then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20). When he instructed the Apostles to wipe off from their feet the dust of the city that rejected them to “know that the kingdom of God has come near” (Lk. 10:11). This shows that when the presence and power of Jesus was made known the Kingdom or rule of God was being demonstrated. When we pray this prayer we are asking God to demonstrate his power and presence through us.

**THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN:**

It is only by doing the will of God that we can see His kingdom “come” in us and by the reign of God being manifested in our lives can we say, as Jesus said, “The kingdom is in your midst”. Jesus states that entering the kingdom is based upon doing the will of his Father who is in heaven (Matt.7:21). Then he speaks of those who hear his words and acts upon them (Matt. 7:26). Doing God’s will, then, is not only hearing God’s word but acting upon it. When we speak of God’s will being done on earth we might say it expresses the idea that men should turn from their wicked ways and act in accordance with God’s will as it has been revealed in His word. Rather it is a plea that God will act in such a way as to realize his purpose that he intended for the world when He created it. It is only when the kingdom fully comes and Christ reigns upon the earth with his people (I Cor. 15:25; Rev. 5:10; II Tim. 2:12) that His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven

**GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD:** The word “bread” refers to everything we need for our earthly existence. Matthew 6:25-34 shows us that God cares about our every need. We are not to be anxious (worry) about the future (ver. 34). This is the reason Paul exhorted us to “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). Paul further states: “And my God shall supply all your needs (literally: ‘every need of yours’) according to the riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). “Give us this day our daily bread” does not focus on luxuries. We are not to ask for cake but for bread, the necessity of life. N. T. Wright in *The Lord and His Prayer* states: “the prayer for daily bread must be understood in the context of the Messianic banquet and the festive meals Jesus shared as a deliberate sign of the kingdom’s presence. This prayer is a request to our Father to continue to provide us with daily sustenance for our lives in the kingdom.”

**FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS:**

This petition is contingent upon Jesus’ statement in Matt. 6:14: “For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” Luke’s account reads: “Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us” (Luke 11:4). This is not simply a request for forgiveness of trivial matters that daily occur in our lives, but has to do with the life of fellowship in the kingdom. There is to be no ill-will or animosity in the kingdom. We experience kingdom life because God has forgiven us. Human forgiveness and divine forgiveness are inseparable, and divine forgiveness is conditioned by human forgiveness. This is emphatically stated by Jesus in the parable of forgiveness recorded in Matthew 18:23-35. If we are unwilling to forgive our fellowmen we deny divine forgiveness.

**DO NOT LEAD US INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL:**

Jesus has dealt with evil for us. Temptation in this case cannot mean seduce into sin, for that is something God will not do (James 1:13-15). The word translated “temptation” has the idea of “testing”. The word is “trials” in Acts 20:19, James 1:2 and I Peter 1:6. It is used to describe Paul’s bodily infirmity (Gal. 4:14), and also in the temptation of Christ by Satan (Luke 4:13). This shows that the New Testament usage is not so much to seek to seduce into sin as it is to test strength and loyalty in our service. This is illustrated when Jesus “tested” Philip at the feeding of the multitudes (John 6:6). An example in the Old Testament is the story of how God tested Abraham by seeming to demand the sacrifice of his only son, Isaac (Gen. 22:1).

This prayer calls us to be involved with others. It can never be prayed selfishly. We do not pray, “Give me” or “I want this” or “Meet My need”. We always pray, “Our Father” “Give us” “Lead us” “Forgive us.” The following poem found in a mailing from *The Omaha Home for Boys* says it well.

You cannot pray the Lord’s prayer and even once say “I.”  
You cannot pray the Lord’s prayer and even once say “My.”  
Nor can you pray the Lord’s prayer and not pray for one another  
When you ask daily bread you must include your brother.  
For others are included in each and every plea.  
From beginning to end, it does not once say “Me.”

