

# Lessons from the Lord's Prayers

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*Our prayers follow patterns and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught us how to pray.*



With you, my dear brothers and sisters, I express love and admiration for Elder Neil L. Andersen. His call to the holy apostleship has come from the Lord as revealed to His prophet, President Thomas S. Monson. Throughout his life, President Monson has refined his ability to hearken to the will of the Lord. As the Savior submitted His will to Heavenly Father, so the prophet submits his will to the Lord. Thank you, President Monson, for developing and using that power. We congratulate you, Elder Andersen, and we pray for you!

## The Lord's Prayer

Our prayers follow patterns and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught us how to pray. From His prayers we can learn many important lessons. We can begin with the Lord's Prayer and add lessons from other prayers He has given.<sup>1</sup>

As I recite the Lord's Prayer, listen for lessons:

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."<sup>2</sup>

The Lord's Prayer is recorded twice in the New Testament and once in the Book of Mormon.<sup>3</sup> It is also included in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible,<sup>4</sup> where clarification is provided by these two phrases:

1. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,"<sup>5</sup> and
2. "Suffer us not to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil."<sup>6</sup>

The clarification on forgiveness is supported by other statements of the Master. He said to His servants, "Inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you."<sup>7</sup> In other words, if one is to be forgiven, one must first forgive.<sup>8</sup> The clarification on temptation is helpful, for surely we would *not* be led into temptation by Deity. The Lord said, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."<sup>9</sup>

Though the four versions of the Lord's Prayer are not identical, they all open with a salutation to "Our Father," signifying a close relationship between God and His children. The phrase "hallowed be thy name" reflects the respect and worshipful attitude that we should feel as we pray. "Thy will be done" expresses a concept that we will discuss later.

His request for "daily bread" includes a need for spiritual nourishment as well. Jesus, who called Himself "the bread of life," gave a promise: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger."<sup>10</sup> And as we partake of sacramental emblems worthily, we are further promised that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.<sup>11</sup> That is spiritual sustenance that cannot be obtained in any other way.

As the Lord closes His prayer, He acknowledges God's great power and glory, ending with "Amen." Our prayers also close with *amen*. Though it is pronounced differently in various languages, its meaning is the same. It means "truly" or "verily."<sup>12</sup> Adding *amen* solemnly affirms a sermon or a prayer.<sup>13</sup> Those who concur should each add an audible *amen*<sup>14</sup> to signify "that is my solemn declaration too."<sup>15</sup>

The Lord prefaced His prayer by first asking His followers to avoid "vain repetitions"<sup>16</sup> and to pray "after this manner."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the Lord's Prayer serves as a pattern to follow and not as a piece to memorize and recite repetitively. The Master simply wants us to pray for God's help while



we strive constantly to resist evil and live righteously.

### **Intercessory Prayers**

Other prayers of the Lord are also instructive, especially His intercessory prayers. They are so named because the Lord prayerfully interceded with His Father for the benefit of His disciples. Picture in your mind the Savior of the world kneeling in prayer, as I quote from John chapter 17:

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, . . . glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. . . .

“ . . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . .

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

“I pray for them.”<sup>18</sup>

From this prayer of the Lord we learn how keenly He feels His responsibility as our Mediator and Advocate with the Father.<sup>19</sup> Just as keenly, we should feel our responsibility to keep His commandments and endure to the end.<sup>20</sup>

An intercessory prayer was also given by Jesus for the people of ancient America. The record states that “no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father.”<sup>21</sup> Then Jesus added: “Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.”<sup>22</sup>

In a later prayer, Jesus included a plea for unity. “Father,” He said, “I pray unto thee for them, . . . that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one.”<sup>23</sup> We too can pray for unity. We can pray to be of one heart and one mind with the Lord’s anointed and with our loved ones. We can pray

for mutual understanding and respect between ourselves and our neighbors. If we really care for others, we should pray for them.<sup>24</sup> “Pray one for another . . .,” taught James, for “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Lessons from Other Prayers**

Other lessons about prayer were taught by the Lord. He told His disciples that “ye must always pray unto the Father in my name.”<sup>26</sup> The Savior further emphasized, “Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name.”<sup>27</sup> Obediently, we apply that lesson when we pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>28</sup>

Another of the Lord’s prayers teaches a lesson repeated in three consecutive verses:

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen. . . .

“Father, I pray thee that thou wilt

give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.

“Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me.”<sup>29</sup>

If companionship of the Holy Ghost is that important, we should pray for it too. We should likewise help all converts and our children cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost. As we so pray, the Holy Ghost can become a vital force for good in our lives.<sup>30</sup>

### Enhancing Our Prayers

The Lord has taught ways by which our prayers can be enhanced. For example, He said that “the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads.”<sup>31</sup>

Prayer can also be enhanced by fasting.<sup>32</sup> The Lord said, “I give unto you a commandment that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.”<sup>33</sup> A plea for wisdom in fasting was offered by President Joseph F. Smith, who cautioned that “there is such a thing as overdoing. A man may fast and pray till he kills himself; and there isn’t any necessity for it; nor wisdom in it. . . . The Lord can hear a simple prayer, offered in faith, in half a dozen words, and he will recognize fasting that may not continue more than twenty-four hours, just as readily and as effectually as He will answer a prayer of a thousand words and fasting for a month. . . . The Lord will accept that which is enough, with a good deal more pleasure and satisfaction than that which is too much and unnecessary.”<sup>34</sup>

The concept of “too much and unnecessary” could also apply to the length of our prayers. A closing prayer in a Church meeting need not include a summary of each message and should not become an unscheduled sermon. Private prayers can be as long as we want, but public prayers ought to be short supplications for the Spirit of the Lord to be with us or

brief declarations of gratitude for what has transpired.

Our prayers can be enhanced in other ways. We can use “right words”<sup>35</sup>—special pronouns—in reference to Deity. While worldly manners of daily dress and speech are becoming more casual, we have been asked to protect the formal, proper language of prayer. In our prayers we use the respectful pronouns *Thee, Thou, Thy, and Thine* instead of *You, Your, and Yours*.<sup>36</sup> Doing so helps us to be humble. That can also enhance our prayers. Scripture so declares, “Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.”<sup>37</sup>

Prayer begins with individual initiative. “Behold,” saith the Lord, “I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”<sup>38</sup> That door is opened when we pray to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup>

When should we pray? Whenever we desire! Alma taught, “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, . . . and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”<sup>40</sup> Jesus reminded His disciples “that they should not cease to pray in their hearts.”<sup>41</sup>

The practice of Church members is to kneel in family prayer each morning and evening, plus having daily personal prayers and blessings on our food.<sup>42</sup> President Monson said, “As we offer unto the Lord our family and our personal prayers, let us do so with faith and trust in Him.”<sup>43</sup> And so, in praying for temporal and spiritual blessings, we should all plead, as did Jesus in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done.”<sup>44</sup>

Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world—He who ransomed us with His blood—is our Redeemer and our

Exemplar.<sup>45</sup> At the close of His mortal mission, He prayed that His will—as the Beloved Son—might be swallowed up in the will of the Father.<sup>46</sup> In that crucial hour the Savior cried, “Father, . . . not as I will, but as thou wilt.”<sup>47</sup> So we should pray to God, “Thy will be done.”

And let us ever pray “that [the Lord’s] kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants . . . may . . . be prepared for the days . . . [when] the Son of Man shall come down . . . in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.”<sup>48</sup>

In our daily lives and in our own crucial hours, may we fervently apply these precious lessons from the Lord, I pray in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

### NOTES

1. The January 1976 issue of the *Ensign* was published as a “Special Issue on Prayer.” The sincere student of prayer will gain much from a study of those articles.
2. Matthew 6:9–13.
3. See Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4; 3 Nephi 13:9–13.
4. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:9–15.
5. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:13.
6. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:14.
7. D&C 82:1.
8. See Matthew 18:23–35; D&C 64:10.
9. Matthew 26:41.
10. John 6:35; see also John 6:48, 51.



11. See Moroni 4:3; 5:2; D&C 20:77, 79.
12. In the Hebrew and Greek languages, *amen* means “truly,” “surely,” “verily,” or “so be it.”
13. See Revelation 1:18; 22:20–21. It is also used in confirming agreements (see 1 Kings 1:36).
14. See 1 Corinthians 14:16.
15. See Psalm 106:48; Revelation 5:13–14; 19:4; D&C 88:135.
16. Matthew 6:7; 3 Nephi 13:7.
17. Matthew 6:9; 3 Nephi 13:9.
18. John 17:1, 4, 8–9.
19. See 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1; D&C 29:5; 45:3; 110:4.
20. See D&C 14:7.
21. 3 Nephi 17:17.
22. 3 Nephi 17:20.
23. 3 Nephi 19:23.
24. See Matthew 5:44; Alma 34:27; 3 Nephi 18:21.
25. James 5:16.
26. 3 Nephi 18:19.
27. 3 Nephi 18:21.
28. See 2 Nephi 32:9; 33:12; 3 Nephi 18:23, 30; 19:6–7; 20:31; 28:30.
29. 3 Nephi 19:20–22.
30. See John 10:27–28 (compare D&C 84:43–47); 2 Nephi 31:17–20; Alma 5:38. And we may invite the companionship of the Spirit, who will intercede and help us know what to pray about (see Romans 8:26).
31. D&C 25:12.
32. See Acts 14:23; 1 Corinthians 7:5; Omni 1:26; Alma 5:46; 6:6; 17:3; 17:9; 28:6; 45:1; 3 Nephi 27:1; 4 Nephi 1:12; Moroni 6:5.
33. D&C 88:76.
34. Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, Oct. 1912, 133–34.
35. Joseph Smith Translation, Psalm 17:1.
36. See Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 201; Stephen L. Richards, in Conference Report, Oct. 1951, 175; Bruce R. McConkie, “Why the Lord Ordained Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 12; L. Tom Perry, “Our Father Which Art in Heaven,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 13; and Dallin H. Oaks, “The Language of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 15–18. Details of that language are explained by Don E. Norton Jr., “The Language of Formal Prayer,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 44–47.
37. D&C 112:10; see also Psalm 24:3–4; Matthew 6:12; Helaman 3:35; D&C 64:8–10.
38. Revelation 3:20.
39. See 3 Nephi 18:20; D&C 88:64.
40. Alma 37:37; see also Philippians 4:6; Alma 34:18–27; D&C 10:5; 93:49.
41. 3 Nephi 20:1.
42. See *Ensign*, Jan. 1976, 11.
43. Thomas S. Monson, “A Royal Priesthood,” *Liabona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2007, 61.
44. See Matthew 26:42; Jacob 7:14; Ether 12:29; D&C 109:44; Moses 4:2.
45. See 3 Nephi 27:13–15, 21–22.
46. See Mosiah 15:7.
47. Matthew 26:39; see also Moses 4:2, which indicates the humble attitude of our Savior from the beginning.
48. D&C 65:5.