

Teach Us To Pray

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(Matthew 6:7)

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Scripture on the cover

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TEACH US TO PRAY

Introduction

We Have Found The Messiah

When chosen by Jesus, the apostles had very little grasp of the religious knowledge we often take for granted today. When they were asked by Christ to "*Come, follow Me,*" they understood less about "Christianity" than even a novice being called into the Faith today. The apostles did not know how to pray correctly. For three and a half years, Jesus would teach them, train them, and reveal the Father to them. This booklet will address the aspects of personal prayer. How do we know if our prayers are being heard? What is the correct way to pray? What is the purpose of prayer?

The Biblical lands of Jesus Christ's day were not the tranquil, agrarian and pastoral communities often pictured by modern religion. Neither was that society to which Jesus came one of religious harmony. Neighboring peoples and invading foreign powers alike had for centuries influenced the Israelites. Although God had clearly warned His people "*Learn not the way of the heathen,*" they were easily enticed by attractive pagan practices. Contact with those foreign nations, which did not worship the true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, gradually brought about a weakened mixture in the faith originally held by the patriarchs.

By the time of Christ's birth, the occupants of the promised land found themselves vassals to the brutal Roman Empire as a result of the idolatry and Sabbath violations of their forefathers. The Romans, who feared sedition, were good at putting down revolt and staying in power. Executions, for the purpose of maintaining the *Pax Romana*, the "Peace of Rome," were not uncommon.

Roman occupation of the promised land was fairly new. Less than a century before the birth of our Savior, the Roman general Pompey had entered Jerusalem. After him, Herod the Great, the Idumean, who had spent 46 years "beautifying" the Temple, would still be on his throne at the time of the birth of Jesus. Matthew 2:1:

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king..."

God the Father could have picked any time or any place in history to send His Son, and yet He chose Judea while it was subjugated and occupied by the most powerful empire that had ever existed to that day. Why did the Father place Jesus in such a hostile environment as that one? Wasn't it to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and build His church? God demonstrated to us that He is not threatened by malicious powers. Jesus would overcome the world – setting an example for us.

More than anything, the Jews of Christ's day hated the Roman occupation. They fully expected two things to happen: first, that God would send them a promised deliverer, Who, secondly, would bring about the restoration of Israel. They expected to see their country, once again, rise to national prominence as we see in Acts 1:6.

"Therefore, when they [the apostles] had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'"

Will Durant, on page 534 in his third volume of *The Story of Civilization – Caesar And Christ*, wrote, "But the Jews lived by their religion, by their faith that Yahveh would someday rescue them from bondage and oppression."

Today, religious Jews, in the nation of Israel and around the world, are still looking for the prophesied Messiah to come. Just like the Samaritan woman of Jesus' day, the Jews, some twenty centuries later, are still awaiting the Messiah to come and restore their people and their nation to greatness. We read of this expectation in John 4:25:

“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things.”

The Greek *Christos* means “Anointed One,” the same as *Messiah* in the Hebrew language. The name *Jesus* means “Savior.”

When He was about thirty years old, Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee and chose His disciples. *Disciple* is a word which simply means “pupil or student.” He did so with much forethought, very carefully, and after serious prayer and contemplation. The men He chose to become the apostles and to ultimately rule over the twelve tribes of Israel were the following: Peter and Andrew, brothers; James and John, also brothers; Philip; Thomas; Bartholomew; Matthew; James, the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; Judas, the son of James; and Judas Iscariot, who would become disqualified and be replaced with Matthias, who was among those who accompanied the disciples all the time Jesus was among them.

These men were not yet saints. They were not converted. Certainly, they were men of character, intelligence, and good standing. Jesus had observed and scrutinized their reputations within their families and communities. But they were carnal men who knew next to nothing about “Christian living,” let alone anything about becoming spirit-born members of the God Family. They had heard the Old Testament Scriptures read each Sabbath, and they kept the Feast of Tabernacles each year, but these men had grown up under the tutelage of the Scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees. Except for the repentance that John the Baptist was teaching, Jesus had to start virtually from “scratch” when it came to the proper religious training they would receive.

The expectations of Christ’s disciples were very much like those of the Jews today. They, too, were looking for the Messiah to come, as we see in John 1:41, where Andrew is excitedly telling his brother Peter,

“We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.”

The disciples were being called out of the world in much the same way as we are called out of the world today. In time God would grant these men repentance. He would give them faith. They would be baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit. If they completed the process of conversion by being "called, chosen, and faithful" until the end, they would become resurrected spirit beings in the God Family at the return of Jesus Christ. The same process is required for Christians today.

Jesus would build His church – a formidable task. It would be an endeavor so all encompassing that, without the direct intervention of God, it could not come to fruition. The "revolt" Christ would usher in, would not only be against Roman occupation, but against all principality and rule. What Jesus would do was totally contrary to what the disciples expected. Rather than becoming the victorious King they wanted, Jesus was destined to die a disgraceful death, in seemingly shameful failure. Hebrews 12:2:

"[Jesus]... endured the cross, despising the shame..."

These handpicked disciples would have to be so well grounded in Christ's doctrines that their hopes would survive the death of their Leader. Their selection, therefore, was of the utmost importance. Jesus would include these men as a part of the foundation of the church He was building. Earlier, as God of the Old Testament, Jesus had worked with the Prophets, who are also a part of the foundation of the church as we know from Ephesians 2:20.

"Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,"

Without the sure foundation of the Plan of God, a belief in Christ and His doctrines, Jesus knew His disciples would be tossed and turned with every wind of doctrine that came along.

They came from a diversity of backgrounds as we see in a few examples.

Matthew 9:9: "As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him."

Mark 1:16-17: "And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.'"

There was so much that the disciples didn't know about God and His plan for mankind. They didn't yet understand their need for salvation, or how Jesus Christ would bring it about. They understood almost nothing about overcoming or any of the principles of Christianity that they themselves would come to teach to a new church.

It would be a long time before the disciples understood that Jesus was not coming to bring about the physical deliverance of their country, but as a spiritual Savior who would ultimately deliver mankind from death itself. Their focus was on the "here and now." They counted themselves as sons of Abraham, but the realization that they would become literal sons of God would be slow in coming.

When first called, the disciples knew next to nothing about the Father, Who He was, His character, His plans, and His expectations. They had no relationship with, or special affinity for the Father. That would come as Jesus, for more than three years, would teach them about "your Father."

"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:45)

Jesus knew His Father and would reveal the heavenly Father to them. It would be a long, slow and difficult process for the disciples to grasp the truth of a personal Father. We see in John 14:7 that, even some three years later, at the very end of Jesus' public ministry, they would still be trying to grasp the bold new concept.

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

'Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

Contrary to popular belief, the teachings of Jesus Christ are not widely accepted and practiced even today! Indeed, all throughout Christ's public ministry, the disciples failed to realize the unimaginable changes that they would only finally embrace after their conversion on that first Pentecost.

Just as they didn't know the Father, they didn't have a grasp of the Kingdom of God and all its ramifications. For the disciples to know how to pray and be able to establish a right relationship with God, a proper framework of understanding would have to be built. Jesus would begin with the basics: The Father, The Kingdom of God, Salvation, Satan's destructive nature, etc.

Keep in mind that Jesus was expounding these new concepts to the disciples for the first time. The notion that Jesus was their Eternal Savior was not something they would be able to quickly embrace, nor was the concept that Jesus would become their "food," their spiritual sustenance. We see in Luke 19:11 that Jesus was aware that their minds were on a physical kingdom.

"Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately."

In Acts 1:6 we saw that, even after Jesus died, the twelve would still be looking for the immediate establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Although there are many prayers recorded in the Old Testament, and John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray, the disciples of Christ somehow realized that they needed to be taught a *more valid* way to pray. So they asked Christ to teach them how to pray correctly in Luke 11:1.

"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

Jesus Christ took the opportunity to introduce the major concepts that their prayers should revolve around.

What He taught them was not a prayer to be memorized and rote recited. It was a prayer guideline. God wants real meaningful dialogue with us and isn't interested in ritual or vain repetition. In fact, God seeks those who worship Him in sincerity and truth. Our relationship with Him must be totally genuine and intimately personal.

"And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words." (Matthew 6:7)

God wants a close personal relationship with each of us individually. In the next section, we will take a closer look at the instruction Jesus gave to His chosen men.

Teach Us to Pray

Do special prayers exist which are more powerful than others, or are there certain prayers which are more effective in certain situations? Is one prayer position, i.e., kneeling, bowing, standing, facing east, etc., better than the others? Are prayer wheels and rosary beads useful?

The fact that these questions can be asked is evidence that there is much superstition in the way the world approaches "prayer." Does God hear the prayer of a little child but reject the prayer of a man? There are answers to all of these questions, but to be able to answer these questions requires a fundamental understanding of prayer. Where do we go to get the truth about prayer? What is prayer?

Knowing how to pray in the right way does not come naturally. What do we need to understand to be able to pray effectively? The world thinks that Jesus composed the "Our Father" as a nice prayer for the disciples, but the church of God has always understood that this was *not* a prayer. Jesus was giving them the overall outline – a framework for the entirety of the picture He would portray to them during the course of His public ministry. What Jesus taught His disciples was *not* a prayer to be repeated verbatim.

The "Lord's Prayer" was not a prayer for all occasions. In fact, it was *not* a prayer at all, but a synopsis of the basic fundamentals that must be incorporated into our prayers for a genuine relationship to exist with both the Father and Jesus Christ. The newly selected disciples saw Jesus praying and wanted to know the correct approach to prayer. They did not ask Jesus *what* to pray - they asked Jesus to **teach them how to pray**. Jesus took this opportunity to begin upgrading the belief patterns of these carnally thinking men to the point where conversion would produce spiritually reasoning members of the church.

Jesus then addressed the aspects of personal prayer and gave them an effective framework for prayer. This is what Jesus taught the disciples.

“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 forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.” (Matthew 6:9-13)

Is that all there is to it? It seems so short. Here, in these few words, Christ gave a concise summary of those intricate details that He would be expounding for the next three and a half years. His disciples would undergo what would prove to be a rigorous learning process. Jesus was introducing them to the basics – most of which they couldn’t begin to comprehend at that starting point in their training. But in the long run, the understanding of these primary concepts would enable them to pray diligently and meaningfully – and most importantly – to have a right relationship with the Father.

The new truth Jesus was showing to the disciples was so far-reaching that the disciples were amazed – it was too much for them to fathom. Over and over, they had to ask Christ to explain His sayings. It would take the guidance and direct intervention of God through His Holy Spirit, after their conversion at the first Pentecost, almost four years later, to lead them to a fuller understanding. Jesus, knowing their lack of understanding, encouraged His disciples with this promise.

“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy [Spirit], whom the Father will send in my name, [it] shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.” (John 14:25-26)

In effect, Jesus was telling them that they would be able to “put the whole picture together” later. With God’s Holy Spirit, they would be able to grasp the wealth of wisdom in each phrase Jesus had given to them.

The following sections will expound on each of the concepts expressed in Christ’s outline. We will be looking in a detailed and deeper way at each one of those clauses that Christ gave to His

disciples, because they are meant for us as well. But first, let's consider the meaning of prayer.

What is prayer? Prayer is communication with God. It is talking to God with the understanding that there is an interaction taking place – a “meeting of the minds” – between God and us. Prayer is a close respectful dialogue that can only be accomplished through a right relationship with God and with an understanding of what God is all about. In prayer, we relate in a very intimate and personal way our deepest thoughts and introspection to our Heavenly Father. Prayer means “to ask earnestly;” it means “to plead, or to petition” – we cannot effectively do this if we hardly know the Father.

For example, when we first meet someone, the initial relationship is shallow, even superficial. That's natural, because we know so little about the person. As we come to know someone, we gain a deeper understanding of who he is, what is important to him, and what he expects in the relationship. The more we know someone's character and personality, the deeper and more meaningful the relationship can become. Close friends know just about everything about each other.

In the same way, we can only draw near to God when we know all we can about Him. Many people in the world who say, “I love Jesus,” actually know next to nothing about our Savior and what He expects of us. Their relationship is shallow indeed. Actually, that kind of superficial relationship is the only one that most people have with the True God. The prayer of most men and women is ineffectual because they cannot comprehend the spiritual depth within those words of Jesus Christ. Those who are unconverted are unable to have a close relationship with the Father because they have not yet gotten to know Him – their sin continues to be the cause of division. You might say, they haven't been properly introduced.

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that he will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

When we sin, we make God our enemy – not our friend. That separation between each person and God the Father must be removed by Jesus Christ *before* a right relationship with the Father can exist. Our sins, which tear apart any possibility of a Godly togetherness, must be removed before we can begin to have the mind of God. That is what reconciliation means – to be of the same mind with one another. Jesus’ death paid the price of our sins, making reconciliation with the Father possible.

“For if, when we were enemies [sinners], we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.” (Romans 5:10)

Jesus’ sacrifice makes it possible for God the Father to come into the lives of repentant people – making them individual members of the Family of God – the church.

When the original apostles asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, He didn’t say to them, “You are doing just fine – just do whatever comes naturally.” There are correct ways to pray, and there are incorrect ways to pray. Jesus Christ told His disciples not to pray as the hypocrites did. They wrongly prayed in public in order to gain notoriety for themselves. Jesus told His disciples that there wouldn’t be any additional reward for that type of prayer. He said in Matthew 6:5 that they had already gotten what they wanted – they attracted attention to themselves.

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”

James, the half-brother of Jesus would later explain other wrong concepts about prayer. He showed that certain prayer requests aren’t answered because of improper approaches to prayer.

“Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” (James 4:6)

Some years back, the late blues-rock singer Janis Joplin sang a song that demonstrates a wrong approach to God and to prayer. This is an example of asking amiss.

“Oh Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz?
My friends all drive Porsches, I must make amends.
Worked hard all my lifetime, no help from my friends,
So, Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz?
Oh, Lord, won’t you buy me a color TV?...
I’m counting on you, Lord, please don’t let me down...”

Besides the total irreverence shown to God’s name, Miss Joplin’s song demonstrates an approach toward God that all too many have when they pray. Obviously, we wouldn’t use God’s name so flippantly, but how many of us make the preponderance of our prayers the “give me” prayer? “O Lord, give me this, and give me that.”

What about the football coach who gets down on one knee with his team just before the start of the Friday night game and beseeches God to grant his team protection and safety? At the same time halfway around the world, two small countries at war with each other invoke God’s name each asking God for victory over the other nation. Does God hear their prayers? The astute reader will have caught the violations of God’s law in these last two examples of wrong prayer. Sabbath breaking and killing are sins which preclude a right relationship with God – He will not answer prayers like these.

“Now we know that God heareth [answers] not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth [answers].” (John 9:31)

We can contrast this wrong manner of praying with a correct attitude of prayer.

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is

seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23-24)

The only limitation in the depth of the relationship we are able to have with God is on our part. In other words, we can build and build on our nearness and communication with our Heavenly Father through the right kind of prayer.

In the next section, we will look more into how to pray correctly, and how not to pray. We do not naturally or inherently pray as we should. Let’s take a look in the Scriptures where we will find instruction on the correct way to pray – because there is a right way.

Our Father

Jesus said, "When you pray, say **Our Father...**". What an incredible thing it is to speak and be heard by the Great Eternal God! King David, when still a shepherd boy looking up at the stars, thought it was remarkable that the Almighty Creator God would even take the time to think of man. He wrote in Psalms 8:3-4:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

Now, Jesus was inviting the disciples to have a two-way relationship with God. This was more than they could grasp – to know God and to be known by Him! For three and a half years, Jesus taught them things they would need to know to be able to build a personal relationship with the Father, once they were converted. In their carnal state of mind, they would only hear the words of Jesus – not understand them. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2:11, would later explain that the Spirit of God was required to understand spiritual concepts.

"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

God is *Our Father*. These words express the understanding that God is literally our personal Father. Every one of us has had an earthly father, who imparted temporary *physical life* to us. We know that the Father is *spirit*. One becomes a begotten child of the Father when he is baptized, converted and given a portion of His Life – that is, His Spirit dwelling in us. It is man's ultimate potential to become born-again spirit and divine members in the Father's family for the rest of eternity. John says this in 1 John 3:1-3.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God... Beloved, now are we the sons of God... we know that... we shall be like Him."

We will see the Father and be like Him! This great truth was not known by those in Old Testament times. There were indications within the Scriptures like the one in Psalms 110:1.

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

There was not enough revelation to establish the greater awareness of the Father we now possess. It is not recorded in the Scriptures that John the Baptist knew or taught anything about God the Father. Indeed, those Scriptures were puzzling to men up until the time that Jesus made the Father known. Luke 10:22 shows that it was only Jesus who could unveil the hidden reality of the Father.

“All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who...the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.”

All throughout His earthly life, Jesus yielded to the Father. Jesus did the Will of His Father rather than doing things His own way. He always gave the Father all the credit. Keep in mind that up until this time in their lives, the disciples had precious little knowledge of the Father. Before this time, they did not look to the Father or pray to the Father. When Jesus taught them to pray, “Our Father,” He was beginning to teach them to yield totally to the Father (not to Himself).

Even as a child, Jesus knew the Father and did His bidding. When He was only twelve years old, He told His parents, “I must be about My Father’s business.” Jesus was unique in that He had a continuous relationship with His Father. Jesus never sinned! Sin cuts man off from having a relationship with the Father.

Not only was Jesus revealing the Father to man, He was going to make it possible for man to have a one-on-one relationship with the Father. Adam’s sin had caused mankind to be cutoff from God. The brethren of the church that Jesus would establish would have the tremendous privilege of coming before the Father in an intimate way. As sinners, we were completely isolated from Him, just as those in the world are now unable to have a

friendship with the Father. Isaiah gives us an example of this in 64:7.

“...For Thou hast hid thy face from us, ...because of our iniquities.”

For any relationship with the Father to be possible, man’s sins would have to be removed. Matthew records in 11:27 how Jesus also revealed the fact that access to the Father was strictly limited.

“All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins – making access to the Father possible. The words *Our Father* carry us to the very throne of God, where Jesus is now seated at His right hand.

Kneeling before Him, we know that we are incapable of picturing Him in all His glory and realize full well that His very brilliance would obscure His face. In the Scriptures, we have only been given glimpses of the Father and Christ’s glorified appearances. Paul explained our inability to actually see God to Timothy when he wrote in 1 Timothy 6:16 that Jesus and His Father were:

“... dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see...”

In reality, they can only be seen spiritually by spirit beings as Jesus unveiled to us while speaking of little children in Matthew 18:10. He said that indeed the angels behold God’s face continually.

“... I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

The establishment of a close, personal working relationship with our Father is what He desires. This “closeness” is of paramount importance in the development of our spiritual

character. God has said to us, "*I am the LORD thy God.*" Nothing, nothing at all, can be allowed to come between God and us. In the statement, "*Our Father,*" we declare that He is our Creator and that we owe our very existence to Him.

Jesus could have begun the prayer, "*My Father in heaven...*" But He didn't use *My*; instead He used *Our*. Perhaps we would like to have an exclusive relationship with the Father, but the very word, *Our* indicates that God's Will is to be *Father of all* mankind.

We are to come before the Almighty God of the universe in awe and respect, as one among all His creation. It would be an improper and arrogant concept to think of ourselves as having the inside track with God, to the exclusion of others. That is why Jesus didn't teach us to pray, "*My Father.*"

In 2 Peter 3:9, the LORD reveals His plan for all of mankind. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." In addressing our Father in prayer, we must remember that we are merely a part of His great design.

There are many beautiful prayers recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. They are a part of the Word of God. We are blessed to have them and the teaching that Jesus gave the disciples on how to pray. As we will see, Jesus Christ's instructions on how to pray include all the understanding of the Bible. The more we know about God's plan and purpose for mankind, the better we can know Him. The better we know Him – the better our relationship with Him will be.

Jesus has given us this *prayer outline* – known by many as "the Lord's Prayer" – to help us comprehend our part in His great plan and better define our relationship with our Father.

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)

Who art in Heaven

Jesus said unto them, "When ye pray, say, **Our Father which art in heaven.**" It is hard to say what concept the disciples had about "heaven" at this stage in their training. They may have thought, like so many people today, that "heaven" is the reward of the "saved." Jesus begins by establishing the fact that the realm of the Father's rule was not confined to the kingdoms of this earth. The disciples would come to understand that the "kingdom of heaven" is the brilliant, spiritually ruled, limitless kingdom of the Father. In Matthew 13:39-43, Jesus told them that at the end of the world:

"The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Jesus had just explained to them in Matthew 5:20,48 that God's throne was in heaven – Matthew calls it the "Kingdom of Heaven" – and that if the disciples were going to be a part of God's eternal plan, they would have to strive for Godly perfection.

"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

"Become ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Example after example, describing the Kingdom of Heaven, was given to the disciples so that they could grasp the vital need for Godly conduct over worldly ways. One such example is found in Matthew 13:24.

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field..."

These insightful lessons were shared *only* with the disciples, who didn't understand the parables until after Pentecost 31 AD. In Matthew 13:11, they asked Jesus why He spoke in riddles.

“He answered and said unto them, because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.”

The world doesn't know God's purpose "*in bringing many sons to glory*" – literally becoming members in God's Family. Religions today believe a completely wrong concept about "heaven" being a reward in the sky where men's souls go after they die. Some might picture heaven as a place of little angels with harps floating among puffy little clouds. Others see "heaven" as a place where men and angels will continuously behold the "face of God" in a "Beatific Vision."

Although Christ's disciples' perspective of heavenly things was extremely limited, it was necessary that a foundation be laid that could be built upon, once they were converted. Later as apostles, they would realize that God is sovereign and that there is none greater. The Father's supreme sovereignty means that He possesses absolute power.

Jesus revealed the glory of the kingdom of heaven to the disciples so that they could know that the Father reigns supreme over all beings – physical and spiritual. One Scriptural reference that shows this is Hebrews 12:9.

“Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”

The Father's Heavenly Throne surpasses the heavens of this earth and the universe to encompass even the entire spiritual creation. In 2 Corinthians 12: 2, Paul called *the kingdom of heaven* the "*third heaven*."

“The Heaven is My throne, and earth is my footstool.” (Isaiah. 66:1, quoted in Acts 7:49)

Our physical eyes, even with great telescopes, can only see the physical universe. The stars that we can see number in the billions of billions! To humans on the earth, they are impossibly immense, distant and, for now, beyond our reach. If the physical heaven is vast beyond comprehension, how great must the *kingdom of heaven* be? It is infinite – it is eternal!

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place.” (Isaiah 57:15)

“Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite.” (Psalms 147:5)

The *kingdom of heaven* is the infinite, eternal domain of the Father. It surpasses the measureless physical universe. We know that the stars were created by His hand and distributed across the universe by Him for a purpose. The boundless universe is associated with our ultimate destiny. Our inevitable destiny began in the Garden of Eden when God said,

“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion... over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26)

Furthermore, we understand from Hebrews 2:8 that our future destiny as spiritual beings will extend to the totality of the universe.

“You have put all things [the universe] in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.”

So, we see that it is our incredible destiny, as resurrected saints, to rule with Christ over absolutely everything that God created, including the universe – and still, we will be subject to the Kingdom of Heaven.

God wants us to think about these things. That’s why He asks questions like those in Isaiah 42:5.

“Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it?”

When Christ added this passage *“Who art in heaven”* for His disciples, they couldn’t begin to understand the profound depth of meaning contained in those words. It would take not only the

three and a half years they had with Jesus, but well into their years as apostles to appreciate the unimaginable magnitude of the Father's Heavenly Realm.

The Holiest Name

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.” (Luke 11:2-4)

Millions of sincere people have memorized these three verses as a prayer. In doing so, they have missed the greater meaning that Jesus Christ intended when He spoke these words. Jesus was declaring to the disciples the majestic qualities of the Father that they could never have imagined on their own.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, [Jesus] hath declared Him.” (John 1:18)

Hallowed be thy name is antiquated language that needs some clarification. The significance of the word *Hallowed* is lost on many people who repeat it often. It is similar to the Hallowe'en, which is short for “All Hallow Evening” – which still doesn't give a clue to its meaning. *Hallow* is simply old English for “holy.” The trouble is most people also don't know what *holy* means. Sure, they know it is a common religious word – but few people stop to think about what it means. *Holy* means “set apart.”

As it is used here, “***Hallowed be thy name***” would best be rendered “Father, Your Name is the Holiest;” or “Your Name is set apart in a class all its own, held in the greatest respect;” or “No other name compares to Your Holy Name.” Jesus intended that only His Father have the title, *Holy Father*. He specifically excluded any earthly religious leader being called *Holy Father*. In Matthew 23:9, He demanded that only His Heavenly Father be referred to in that way.

“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”

Just what should we gather by the thought "Your name is the Holiest" when we pray to our Father? The point is we are not informing Him. God already knows that His name is set above every other name.

"He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant forever: holy and reverend is his name." (Psalms 111:9)

God's name - i.e., God's authority, His power, His majesty - is in a class high above every other being. In Isaiah 55:9, God tells us that His ways and thoughts are completely different from man's.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."

Why then would Jesus tell us that, when we pray, we should say, "Father, your name is the holiest?" The answer is that Jesus Christ gave us this clause so that we would come to understand the supreme sovereignty of the Father. When we pray "Me and You LORD," we might think that we are able to rise to a similar level with God. We must realize that He exists in a spiritual realm far higher than our mundane existence. It will only be in the resurrection that we will be able to experience His eternal glory.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God... Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:1-2)

In praying "Hallowed be thy name," we are admitting that we recognize and accept that God is set apart, set entirely above every other being. It is saying to God, "I admit that Your dominion far exceeds everything else that exists." How amazing it is then to have the privilege of receiving the attention of, and being heard by our great God!

It is astounding that, as great as God is, He is willing to always be available to us! We do not have to “take a number” or stand in line. We are told in Romans 12:12 that we can be instant in prayer. The Father is accessible to us, because He wants us to be like Him. The absolutely incredible thing is that the Father receives our prayers!

“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.” (Psalms 34:15)

God is a family and a family name. By His grace, it is our good pleasure to inherit that God Family name – in other words, our name will be the same as His. It is God’s intention that we be holy, and that our names be “Hallowed” as well.

“Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16)

“Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you.” (Leviticus 22:32)

When do we take on the Father’s name? We aren’t born with it! We know that we must have the Father’s name to be assured of having His protection in this evil world. Jesus shows this in His prayer recorded in John 17. Notice verse: 11.

“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”

When we are born, we are named after our dad’s last name. We are given, and we take on the Father’s name in baptism – showing that we have become children of God. We were baptized into the Father’s name and spirit life – the same name and spirit Jesus has.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

If we didn’t have the same family name as the Father, how could we expect to inherit His kingdom? Strangers do not receive an inheritance. We are told in Ephesians 2:19 and 3:15

that we are not strangers but members of the family of God. Therefore, as His children, we literally become His heirs – just like Jesus.

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;” (Romans 8:16-17)

We are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, the Son of God! That is why the children of God are called *saints* i.e., “holy ones,” because we are set apart by the Father’s name! In this life on earth, we continue to go by our dad’s family name. As baptized Christians, children of the Kingdom of God, Jesus writes His Father’s name upon us. In Revelation 3:12 Jesus says to us,

“I will write upon him the name of My God...and I will write upon him my new name.”

Revelation 14:1 actually reads in the Greek texts, “...having His [Jesus’] name and His Father's name...”

In teaching the disciples to pray “Hallowed be thy name,” Jesus was developing the third commandment (Exodus 20:7) for them to build upon. He was showing them how the Father’s name is to be treated with the greatest dignity and highest respect.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

When we say, “Hallowed be thy name,” we reflect on our Father’s names and titles that tell us so much about His awesome power, magnificent character, boundless goodness, supreme authority, and everlasting kingdom.

Thy Kingdom Come

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He began to give them the pattern of prayer in which the numerous aspects of the plan of God could be arranged. They were being given so many new concepts that they could hardly put the whole picture all together.

What were the disciples to make of this request, **"Father...Thy kingdom come?"** The church of God today prays "Father...Thy kingdom come." We look for it. We expect it. We pray for it. For the most part, the world, on the other hand, is very confused about the Father's Kingdom. They certainly do not expect Jesus Christ to soon establish the Father's Kingdom on this earth in place of all of their worldly kingdoms.

For example, the Roman Catholic church believes that it has been given the keys to the kingdom - making it the kingdom of God on earth with the authority to bind and loose the Commandments of God. They combine Matthew 16:19 with the Acts 15 conference to justify using Catholic church authority to institute teachings contrary to Scripture and God's Laws. For Catholics and Protestants alike, this usurping of authority has resulted in the elimination of Godly institutions like the Sabbath, Holy Days, etc., that actually point to the soon coming Kingdom of God, ruled by Jesus Christ.

"Thy kingdom come" is future tense. It is something we look forward to. This world is not yet ruled by God. Christ will establish the Kingdom of His Father on the earth at His return. He will rule the earth with the spirit-born saints for one thousand years - completing the seven thousand year plan of God for mankind. The rulership of God the Father through Jesus Christ will result in peace and prosperity on the earth, with salvation open to all mankind.

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. ...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."
(Revelation 5:10, 20:6)

We have already seen in the introduction of this booklet how the disciples expected their nation to rise and dominate all other kingdoms of that time. Jesus had indeed qualified to replace Satan and rule the Kingdom of God on earth. At that point in their training, however, the disciples could only have concluded that Jesus was beginning a popular uprising against the local Romans, which uprising would grow to encompass the entire civilized earth.

Jesus was the messenger sent by the Father to announce the true gospel of the Kingdom of God. This deceived world prefers a substitute gospel message, which is a false gospel. During the course of the disciples' lives and throughout the history of the church, many false gospels would war against the true message that Jesus brought. It would take the disciples a long time to properly understand that Jesus was the Son of God and that He was the Anointed Messiah who would be King and rule over His Father's coming Kingdom.

"Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?" (Mark 8:27)

In Matthew 16:16-17, Peter answered the question. Notice the twist – Peter did not answer what men were saying – nor was it Peter's own answer. Christ explains that it was the Father in heaven who put the answer into Peter's mind.

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

From the very beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus was preaching the *good news* about His Father's Kingdom. *Gospel* means "good news!"

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God." (Mark 1:14)

Jesus presented example after example of what the Kingdom of God was like. It would be a profitable Bible Study for all of us to look at each instance where Christ says, "The Kingdom of God is like unto..." Even with all the personalized instruction the disciples received, they would not understand the spiritual component of the Kingdom of God until after Pentecost. After their conversion, with the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, the disciples would begin to put together a much better picture of the Kingdom of God.

At the time Jesus was giving the disciples instructions about what the Kingdom of God would be like, they thought that He would immediately give them positions of power and rulership in it. In fact, they were soon squabbling over who would get the best positions. Starting in Matthew 20:20, Mrs. Zebedee even got into the act, asking the highest offices for her sons, James and John.

"And [Jesus] said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask... but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two [James and John] brethren."

The disciples did not yet understand that the Kingdom of God would be ruled spiritually. Jesus had to explain to them that it was the Father's prerogative to fill those spiritual positions. They surely were not able to pray effectively "Father...Thy kingdom come" at this point in their calling. This is a perfect illustration of the need to grow in grace and wisdom in order to pray as we should.

About the year 97 AD, the Apostle John received the revelation from Jesus Christ, which God the Father had given Him - describing the establishment of the Kingdom of God - on earth. Satan will be vanquished and Jesus Christ will rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.

“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” (Revelation 12:10)

When we were baptized, we entered into a covenant whereby we would live according to the rules and regulations of the Kingdom of God – even now! God grants us a measure of His Spirit so that we can begin to gain the mastery of His perfect way now and one day be a part of that Kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus came into this world for the purpose of announcing the good news of the Kingdom of God and making it possible for us to be in it. He will return shortly to establish it on this earth. Everything we say and do in our lives must be geared toward ushering in God’s Kingdom on this earth. God the Father’s plan is for us to be in His family – the Family of God – the Kingdom of God!

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Matthew 24:14)

The *disciples* became the *apostles* “those sent forth” and spent the rest of their lives as witnesses of Jesus Christ – proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

In prayer, our mindset will also be that we too are making this our ultimate goal. All of our personal hopes and desires become secondary when we pray “Thy Kingdom Come.”

God's Will

Jesus Christ taught the disciples to pray "**Father...Thy will be done on earth**, as it is in heaven." He told them to specifically request that the Father's wish and desire be done. They were newly called for the purpose of being trained and taught – they did not yet know the will of God. After this day's instructions from Jesus, the disciples would spend the rest of their lives seeking the will of the Father.

What is God's will? How can we know? How important is it to know what the will of the Father is? Did Jesus teach His disciples what the will of the Father is? If He did, where is that information revealed for us today? The entire concept of our conversion has to do with allowing our own personal desires to be replaced by the will of God. It is crucial that we know what the will of the Father is in order to avoid the pitfalls that deceive so many in the church today.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

Did you know that it is the Father's will that everybody who ever lived should receive everlasting life in His Kingdom? (John 6:40)

"And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

God's will is expressed in His perfect law. David wrote in Psalms 40:8, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart."

When Christ returns to this earth and ushers in His millennial rule, the Kingdom of His Father, He will also begin to establish the Father's will in all the earth. At this present time in this evil world, it is Satan's will that is being done. He is the father of all this world's sinners.

“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.” (John 8:44)

Every time we see the words “Thy will be done on earth,” we should be reminded that Satan is going to be displaced by Christ bringing His Father’s peace and truth. Until then, we as Christians are to come out of this present evil world and be separate – seeking the will of our Father in heaven.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2)

As the children of God, we are given instructions on how to make God our Father and Jesus our elder brother. Jesus says that doing the Father’s will establishes a relationship with Him.

“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Matthew 12:50)

Are we able to say to God in prayer that the very reason for our existence is to do His desire? Jesus said that the Father’s will was His entire motivation in John 4:34.

“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

As citizens, not of this world, but primarily of heaven, we seek to do God’s will in everything. When we pray with this thought in mind, we are setting our minds to live according to God’s way of life, even now, on this earth.

“For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ:” (Philippians 3:20)

As children of God and citizens of heaven, we are to live by the rules of heaven. That is why Jesus added, “As it is in heaven,” to “Thy will be done on earth.”

When we pray “As it is in Heaven” we should picture in our minds that infinite heavenly realm of God that we are to be fully

incorporated into one day - and begin to put in correct perspective our present cares and woes. As Paul said to the Romans in 8:18,

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Jesus would humbly show the disciples the night before He died that even His own will was explicitly excluded in the request "Thy will be done."

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done." (Luke 22:42)

God's will is being done. Just like the original apostles, we are asking that His will be extended to every facet of our lives as well. Seeking God's will and then applying it in our lives is how we put priorities in the right order.

Bread From Heaven

While teaching His disciples how to pray, Jesus made up a new word not used anywhere else in the Bible. The new word coined by Jesus is the Greek word *epiousios*. Bible translators have had a very difficult time figuring out what this word means. Because of their lack of understanding, the King James translators decided to use the word *daily*.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” (Matthew 6:11)

The correct meaning of these words of Jesus Christ is of paramount importance. Most of “Christianity” believes that this is a simple request for *daily* physical food. On the surface, this explanation certainly seems plausible. Luke records it in a similar fashion.

“Give us day by day our daily bread.” (Luke 11:3)

The disciples had asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Did He respond by teaching them to be sure and ask for food each day? Or, was Jesus pointing them to an indispensable truth that is lost on the world? When this is fully understood, it will be absolutely clear that “Give us day by day our daily bread” is not primarily about asking for food.

What new concept was Jesus teaching His disciples that they needed to learn in order to pray effectively? Most people who read “Give us day by day our daily bread” assume the meaning to be a request for the physical nourishment that is required each and every day. We need to understand that it is much more. This request to the Father is one of the most misunderstood sayings in the entire Bible. Remember that this is not a prayer to be memorized and recited, but a collection of major areas of consideration for developing a prayerful relationship with our Father. Just how important is this relationship that Jesus would die in order to reconcile us to the Father?

The Bible is specifically inspired so that the world cannot see God’s truth in it. The deeper truths contained in the Word of God appear to be foolishness to the unconverted mind. The Holy Scriptures are revealed only to those whom God calls and opens

their minds. Luke gives an example of the very select audience for whom Jesus intended His message.

"Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.'...Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.'" (Luke 10:21-24)

Jesus was saying in effect, "There is more here than meets the eye." This phrase "Give us this day our daily bread" holds a greater meaning for us.

Just as soon as Jesus gave the disciples guidelines on how to pray, He immediately gave them the principle that places spiritual matters ahead of fundamental necessities. He told them to choose the spiritual over the physical. Jesus taught them, right before and right after these instructions, that the Father knew their needs before they asked – and would supply them!

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:31)

Jesus was not sending a contradictory signal to His men - saying on the one hand ask for daily bread, and on the other hand do not worry about daily bread. These verses must agree with one another and with the remainder of scripture. That is what we mean when we say, "Let the Bible interpret the Bible." How can we solve this dilemma facing the disciples?

Keep in mind that these bold concepts of Christianity were so new and hard to grasp that it was impossible for the disciples to fully embrace them until convicted by God's Holy Spirit after Christ had ascended up into heaven. We are blessed to have the benefit of their hindsight in that the Scriptures contain their final understanding of these lessons.

What are we to understand from this difficult verse "Give us day by day our daily bread?" (Matthew 6:11) The main problem

centers on the unique word *epiousios*, which was coined by Jesus and used by Him only once. Matthew and Luke each record this verse. Bible translators are not in agreement as to what this word means.

Let's look at various translations for an appreciation of the **difficulty facing the Bible translators**. There is obviously a great deal of confusion surrounding this word ***epiousios***, translated "**daily**" by the King James translators.

Moffat:

Matthew: "Give us to-day our bread for the morrow."

Luke: "Give us our bread for the morrow day-by-day."

Weymouth:

Matthew: "... our bread for the day."

Luke: "...day after day our bread for the day."

Lamsa:

Matthew: "Give us bread for our needs from day to day."

Luke: "Give us bread for our needs every day."

Luther:

Matthew: "Our daily bread give us today."

Luke: "Our daily bread give us day-by- day."

Elberfelder:

Matthew: "Our daily bread (Annotation: that is, the bread needed for today and tomorrow) give us today."

Luke: "Our bread that we need give us day-by-day."

Menge:

Matthew: "Our bread that is sufficient for us give us today."

Luke: "Our bread that is sufficient for us give us day-by-day."

The New Bible Commentary, ed. 1975, p. 825: *Daily* (*epiousion*) is a very unusual word, with several possible derivations. The most likely meaning is "for tomorrow."

The Greek Interlinear has it this way, translating the word *epiousios* with "needed."

E.V. Rieu's translation is different and better:

Matthew: "Give us the bread of life today."

E.V. Rieu saw something the other translators missed! E.W. Bullinger was also able to apply his Biblical knowledge and come to a better understanding of this Scripture.

E.W. Bullinger believed that the word *epiousios* **is a reference to Jesus Christ Himself**. In the E.W. Bullinger *Companion Bible*, we find this explanation for *epiousios*: "daily Greek *epiousios*. A word coined by our Lord, and used only here and Luke 11:3, by Him. Compounded from **epi** = upon, and **ousios** = coming...Therefore, it means **coming or descending upon**, as did the manna, with which it is contrasted in John 6:32-33. It is the True Bread from heaven, by which alone man can live – The Word of God, which is prayed for here."

The world has rejected this vital truth which E.W. Bullinger was able to see! **Jesus is that Bread of Life that descends from heaven!** This definition of *daily* answers the apparent contradiction of whether or not we should be concerned about our food and drink, as it points to the higher spiritual understanding of our need for Jesus Christ in our lives.

References in the Old Testament with regard to the bread from heaven were inspired for the purpose of pointing to Jesus. Indeed, their first application had to do with the physical bread from heaven that God provided for their survival. Jesus would apply the deeper meaning to *bread from heaven* – Jesus is the Savior who brings *everlasting life*.

"And gavest them *bread from heaven* for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst,

and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them." (Nehemiah 9:15)

Jesus spent three and a half years with His disciples - expounding on this very difficult spiritual concept. Even at the end of the first era of the church, Jesus would reiterate to John that He was the "*hidden manna*."

"To him who overcomes I will give of the hidden manna to eat." (Revelation 2:17)

At the beginning of His ministry, He was only presenting the prelude to the greater meaning of *bread from heaven*. He would show the disciples more and more up to His last Passover with them the night before He died.

The Apostle Paul, who was taught directly by Christ Himself, summed up our need for *Jesus, the spiritual sustenance*, over physical needs in one verse.

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." (Romans 13:14)

The King James translators, without understanding what it means to "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ," completely missed the point when they translated the Greek word *epiousios* as "daily." The following words of Christ will show that this verse is not about the physical food our bodies need.

When Jesus Christ taught His disciples to pray "Give us this day our daily bread," it was not a "give me" prayer, asking for breakfast, lunch and supper, or for the physical necessities of life. Rather, Jesus was pointing His disciples to the most important higher spiritual need. The disciples knew how Christ, the Word of God, had answered Satan according to Deuteronomy 8:3.

"Man shall not live by [physical] bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

The Apostle John wrote very late compared to the other New Testament writers. Those intervening years allowed him to grow in understanding the deep significance of Jesus' words. John

recorded how Jesus Christ often used the analogy of manna and bread when explaining the difference between our physical needs and our spiritual needs. (John 6:31-35)

"[The people said,] 'Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' Then they said to Him, 'Lord, give us this bread always.' And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life.'"

Jesus continued to explain to the disciples that it was He Who is the true spiritual sustenance that they must partake of, if they are to have eternal life.

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead." (John 6:48-49)

"This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die." (John 6:50)

The next words that Christ would say were so difficult for the disciples to grasp that some could not handle it.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (John 6:51)

The incredible idea of eating Christ's flesh, even after three years of miracles and instruction by Jesus, was too coarse for the disciples' sensibilities. Jesus knew that it was such a hard saying that, if He had spoken this plainly to the disciples when He first began to instruct them, they could not have accepted it. Even now, many abandoned Christ as their Rabbi or teacher.

"The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, *you have no life in you.*

Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. **This is the bread which came down from heaven** -- not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:52-58)

The disciples had a very hard time grasping the spiritual concept that Christ was teaching them. In a strictly carnal sense it sounded cannibalistic - making the concept too difficult to accept. From that time many of His disciples walked no more with Him.

Why did Jesus say this so bluntly? "You have to eat my flesh and drink my blood?" He knew how difficult that would be to accept. Why did Jesus not mitigate this saying in order to make it more palatable for His disciples - or as we would say today, "make it easier for the disciples to swallow?" Jesus could have said, "You are going to have to really, really try hard to embrace My principles in everything you do - really, really make them a part of you."

Because of the extreme importance of this concept - *Jesus Christ in us* - Jesus said it in the strongest way possible.

We desire for Christ to come into us and make His abode in us. Our bodies are His temple - He lives His perfect life in us. There is an old saying, "You are what you eat." Paul talked about "putting on Christ."

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27)

The world does not understand what it means to **put on Christ**. They say that they love Jesus, that they gave their hearts to Jesus - but they do not put on Jesus and become like Him. Paul stresses the importance of this concept in 2 Corinthians 13:5.

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? -- unless indeed you are disqualified.” The King James Version reads, “...how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

How ironic it is that Satan has deceived the world into believing that “give us this day our daily bread” is only about food – when it means so much more!

We are to be seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Therefore, when we read the mistranslated “daily bread,” we need to remember that Jesus is speaking of Himself – the true *spiritual* bread. He supplies our needs – physical and spiritual.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33)

In conclusion, it is most important to understand what Jesus was really saying to the disciples. When He said “Give us this day our daily bread, the “Give” did not constitute a request for personal wants or even physical necessities. Instead, the words, “Give us this day our daily bread,” **are a request to our Father to have Christ live His perfect life in us** and provide all things necessary for salvation. Jesus Christ is the True Bread from heaven.

Jesus began to teach the disciples how to pray “Give us this day our daily bread,” at the very beginning of His ministry, yet it was not until more than three years later on the very night before He died that He gave them the ability to partake of the symbols that truly represent Him.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’” (Matthew 26:26)

“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’” (Luke 22:19)

When we pray, Jesus Christ is the daily bread that we ask the Father to give us. The best meaning and translation, using the spiritual understanding provided by these verses is, "Father... Give us this day our spiritual heavenly bread - Jesus Christ."

Understanding God's Forgiveness

"And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." (Luke 11:4)

Jesus next teaches the disciples a hard lesson – which, in order to receive God's forgiveness, it is required first to forgive others. The importance of this point is often overlooked by most "Christians": to have a prayerful relationship with the Father, our sins must first be removed.

God would not expect humans to do something He was unwilling to do, so He set us an example that we should follow in His steps. Jesus acted first.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

It is real easy for us to say, "I'm sorry," so we can get on to other things. We should be careful, however, not to take this request "forgive us our sins" for granted. When we say "Forgive us our sins," we are, first of all, admitting that we are sinners worthy of eternal death.

Indeed, there can be no relationship with the Father until we have obtained forgiveness for our sins. Reconciliation with the Father must take place – the breach must be mended. Our own sins prevent a relationship with God. Isaiah was inspired to explain the broken relationship this way in Isaiah 59:2.

"Your iniquities [sins] have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear [answer]."

How can we get back in God's good graces? How can we be close to God once our relationship with Him has been destroyed? We are wholly incapable of making amends for the irreparable damage our sins have caused to the plan of God. We cannot afford to pay the price to make things right with God – only Christ can do that. We deserve to die – we have earned the death penalty for warring against God. When we implore God to forgive

us, we are asking Him to apply the sacrifice of Christ to cover our sins.

“Therefore, in all things He [Jesus] had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [payment] for the sins of the people.” (Hebrews 2:17)

Just as we ask our heavenly Father to forgive us our sins, He absolutely requires us to forgive others also.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors... For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:12-15)

For many of us, the hardest thing to do is to forgive someone who has wronged us or hurt one of our loved ones. Godly forgiveness is impossible without God’s Holy Spirit. When Christ explained the concept to the apostles – that they must forgive an offender no matter how many times he repents – they realized it was humanly impossible. Being frank, the apostles could only say, “Increase our faith,” because, humanly speaking, it was just too much to ask. (Luke 17:5)

God only forgives sin after repentance. To be forgiven of sin, the sinner must **stop** sinning. People in the world would rather skip this requirement. They indulge in a “false forgiveness” where they just overlook the sin and say, “just love everybody.” God requires us, on the other hand, to cease from sin before He forgives. Jesus set the record straight for us when He said in Luke 17:3.

“If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.”

When a person is obedient to God’s command to repent, and demonstrates that repentance by ceasing to sin, we have a moral obligation to forgive. Jesus made it clear: forgiveness is an absolute requirement for true Christians. In the same way that the Father is willing to reconcile with us, we must be willing to

reconcile with others. Paul put the responsibility on us to rebuild broken fellowships.

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:18)

On the other hand, if a member of the church continues in a blatant sin, not being repentant, we are obliged to cut off all social interaction with him. 1 Corinthians 5:11: “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother... not even to eat with such a person.”

This is not a self-righteous action. God commands it for a purpose. Our sinful brother is in danger of losing his salvation – and we are our “brother’s keeper” – in spite of what Cain said. Out of true Christian love, we are obligated to turn him away from eternal death.

“Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death...” (James 5:20)

If we were to continue to socialize with him, we would in effect be saying, “We approve of your actions.” God would hold us as guilty as the sinner himself. As far back as the Old Testament, God made it plain that, when there is wrongdoing going on, and we know about it, we have to become a part of the solution – or become as guilty as the perpetrator himself.

(Leviticus 5:1)

Incredulously, for the apostles (and for us), we are to forgive no matter how many times an offender repents and asks to be forgiven. This forgiveness on our part is an absolute requirement by God because He wants us to be like Him – He is a forgiver. So, in fairness and justice, He makes the very forgiveness He extends to us contingent upon our forgiveness of others. The scripture reads “as we forgive” – it means, in the same manner, or to the same degree as we forgive others.

If we are not willing to forgive, we will not be forgiven – we condemn ourselves. Our forgiveness of others is an obligation if we are to enter the Kingdom of God.

Trials and Temptation

Jesus taught the disciples to seek the Father's direction in their lives so that they would not be led into unnecessary trials, tests and hardships. "**Lead us not into temptation**" is a poor translation. God does not lead us into temptation. Satan is the tempter as recorded in Matthew 4:3.

"Now when the tempter [Satan] came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'"

This phrase *Lead us not into temptation* would be better translated as "Bring us not into trials," or as *The New Testament in Basic English* has it, "And let us not be put to the test." This is a humble request that recognizes that God controls all things and can prevent undue hardship from overwhelming us. He knows how weak we are.

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." (Psalms 103:14)

God is our comforter who stands by us. He is working with those He has called and will not allow time and chance to upset the work He has begun. The Father is our greatest supporter. It may be that the disciples had an unhealthy fear of God – as the world does – not understanding His tender mercies. Paul develops this thought nicely:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation [trials], that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

Notice that we learn from the trials we endure – so that we can learn to comfort others in their time of trials. Because the world does not understand the Plan of God, it thinks of the God of the Old Testament as being harsh – even cruel – bringing trials unjustly on men. Nothing could be further from the truth. James cleared up this misconception – God does not cause trials.

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God,’... nor does He [God] Himself tempt anyone.” (James 1:13)

In fact, it is God who promises to limit the temptations and trials that come upon us so that they will not be more than we can take. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

Peter expresses the same concept this way: “the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations...” (2 Peter 2:9)

Peter goes on to say that God does not seek our destruction. 2 Peter 3:9 shows it is just the opposite – He insures our survival.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

God is a loving Father who protects His Children. We can be sure that no sudden destruction will come upon us. He has promised us He will complete the work He has begun in us.

“...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)

He is also faithful to correct us in order to bring us back into line when we let down. This is a necessary part of our maturing process as Christians. If we are His children, we ask God to direct our lives by His Spirit so that we will not need correction – because as a loving Father He will correct us when we go astray. In Hebrews 12:6-11, the purpose of chastening is clearly shown to be for our profit.

“For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ... He [chastens us] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful

for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

This is the lesson the disciples needed to understand about the Father's dealings with them. Knowing that our heavenly Father always has our best interest in mind gives us the confidence that our trials are for our own good. James, the half brother of Jesus, would express it this way in James 1:2-3.

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."

It takes a good deal of faith to trust that God is always overseeing our lives. Paul would exclaim that all things work for the good, according to God's purpose, for those being called. (Romans 8:28) Peter tells us not to be surprised that God is personally involved in our Christian development.

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

When we look closer into the subject of "Lead us not into temptation," we see that Jesus was enlightening His disciples in the intimate way He and the Father are involved in our everyday lives in bringing us to perfection.

Satan

It is important for us to remember that Christ instructed the disciples in the major categories of prayer. They had little or no prior understanding of those concepts. The next request Jesus taught the disciples to make of the Father was "But deliver us from evil," or better translated "**But deliver us from the evil one.**" (Matthew 6:13 New Kings Version) Their knowledge of the spirit realm was also very limited at the beginning of their training.

Chapter four of the book of Matthew records that Jesus Christ had been involved in the greatest battle of wills this earth has ever experienced. In that colossal battle, Jesus Christ overcame Satan. This event took place at the very beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus qualified to replace Satan as the ruler of this world. This took place before the disciples realized that Satan was the god of this world. The Apostle Paul would refer to Satan in this way in 2 Corinthians 4:4.

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

Satan is the Evil One. He is the Adversary. We ask Almighty God for deliverance because of Satan's tremendous powers. He is capable of awesome destruction. Revelation 12:9 tells us that Satan has convinced this present evil world to worship him, rather than the true God.

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world."

At His return, Jesus will remove and replace the Deceiver. Jesus revealed to the beloved Apostle John in the next verse that Satan is the one who brings accusations against the saints.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." (Rev 12:10)

Our day-to-day battles seem to be caused by the people and circumstances we come into contact with – but God has revealed that this is not the case. Our struggles are brought about by Satan and his demons as spelled out for us in Ephesians 6:12.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Satan goes about seeking whom he may devour. Christ taught the disciples to recognize their complete vulnerability without God’s protection. It is the same for us! Without God’s guardianship, we could be consumed in an instant by the devil. We are told the following in 1 Peter 5:8.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

The devil is the one responsible for all the suffering, hate and destruction in this present evil world. He has brought about the lying, violence and wars that have plagued mankind since the days of Adam and Eve. Satan desires the destruction of mankind – he wants to bring an end to the Plan of God. He will not be successful – but will be abolished.

We must constantly be aware and draw near to God. History shows us how many of our former brethren have fallen prey to Satan and succumbed to the cares and pitfalls of this world. The Scriptures reveal that it is Satan himself who causes some not to see the Kingdom of God.

“When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts.” (Mark 4:15)

We are in a battle to overcome Satan just as the disciples were. Having *taught them how to pray*, Jesus told the disciples to put their prayers into action. The last night before He died, Jesus told the apostles to

“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” (Mark 14:38)

But again, as men, they and we are completely unable to stand against Satan. So we readily must admit that, when it comes to Satan, we need the Father's help. As Christ continues

"The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."

We receive that help from God Himself – that is what this request "But deliver us from the evil one" is intended to bring to mind. John 17:15 records that, only hours before He died, Jesus asked His Father to provide this critical defense against Satan.

"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one."

It is our responsibility to stay close to God so that Satan's evil ways will not influence us.

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God." (James 4:7)

In Christ's Name

Luke's narrative on how to pray goes on to cover the point the Lord made about the need to be persistent in prayer. (Luke 11:5-13)

Matthew adds this endnote to the instructive points Christ has previously given the disciples:

"Father...thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." (Matthew 6:13)

The disciples, in the beginning stage of their Christian development, had asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray." Jesus' purpose in responding the way He did was to give them essential guidelines necessary to build the framework in which their prayers would be developed. This education process enabled them to understand the Father's priorities over their own wants. Each phrase that Jesus gave them painted a portion of the mosaic that makes up the complete picture of fellowship with the Father.

If what Christ had just taught them had been meant to be a complete prayer in itself, it would have contained elements of "thanks," "praise," "healing," "asking in Christ's name," and

many other important topics. It does not contain these because it was not meant as a prayer to be memorized and recited. Its purpose is to help Christians know the Father and His plan so that we can conform our lives accordingly.

Later, Christ also taught His apostles to pray "In His Name." We do not pray by our own authority or to establish our own agendas. We are subject to Christ's authority, so we must ask by His permission and approval. We have the scriptural examples to show us that we should pray by Christ's authority.

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13)

"...whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." (John 15:16)

As Christians, our purpose is the same as Christ's purpose was when He came to this earth – the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Today, Jesus is working through us! With this wisdom, we are able to have the faith that our prayers will be answered when we obey His rules and ask according to God's will. When those two requirements are met, the Father answers prayer. Notice!

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear [answer] from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

We are members of the Body of Christ – The church of God. We are "God's People" called, "By God's Name!" To have our prayers answered, He says we must "humble ourselves" and "turn from our wicked ways." Obedience is necessary. He says it is also obligatory to "pray and seek His face" – which means to seek God's will.

The Apostle John calls for the same exact two requirements for prayers to be answered.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments...Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears [answers] us." (1 John 5:3,14)

"Anything!" That means answered prayer! When we are obedient and ask "according to His will," God actually responds in a positive way to fulfill those requests that are compatible with His overall plan. God answers the prayers of those whose lives comply with His perfect way.

Righteous means commandment keeping. James 5:16 attests to the benefits of petitioning God in this manner.

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Our Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). What an incredible thing it is that God

would even care what puny man thinks! David expressed this thought so poetically in Psalms 8:4:

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

When we grasp our insignificance in relation to the Almighty and Eternal God, we can not help but come before Him with a thankful, humble and contrite spirit - not only toward God, but toward our fellow man as well. Jesus said He would back us up in our requests to His Father. He designed these words that He taught His apostles to pray just for that purpose - “ask the Father in My name.”

God is aware of every prayer, right or wrong, that has ever been said. He hears, that is, He answers, He responds, only when they are properly prayed. That is why requests like those in Janis Joplin’s song and the football coach’s Friday night prayer - mentioned in the second section of this booklet, Teach Us to Pray - are not answered.

So that we do not become discouraged, one last point needs to be made. We cannot know the intricacies of the working of God’s will. So often we do not know what to ask or how to pray. Paul realized this and addressed this question. Our own words fail us in our prayers because our best efforts are insufficient - we come short - our prayers are inadequate. In the flesh, we are too weak to put into words the spiritual requirements of our lives.

Our responsibilities often overwhelm us. When that happens, we are insufficient of ourselves to even know how to frame our prayers. Thankfully, our heavenly Father knows our hearts better than we know them ourselves. He also knows our needs better than we can describe them. He willingly makes up for the shortfalls of our prayers when we come humbly before Him in a thankful and contrite attitude of prayer.

“The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the

Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27)

After Pentecost, with God's Holy Spirit, the apostles grew rapidly in spiritual Godly character. Daily in prayer, they were able to evaluate their efforts to conform to the perfect will of God. It is the same with us today. After our baptism and having received God's Holy Spirit, we are able to go daily to the throne of the Father and converse with Him. In that way we grow in grace and knowledge.

Pray

In order for us to be able to have a close relationship with God the Father, Jesus Christ has given us His personal instructions to make it possible. Unfortunately, too many people fail to pray properly. Subsequently, they do not develop a deep spiritual dialogue with our Father. Let us not miss out, but rather take advantage of this tremendous teaching on how to pray by putting it into effect each day. As we come to understand that the purpose of Jesus' prayer instructions is to bring about a close fellowship between Almighty God and us – His created sons and daughters – we are encouraged to pray more effectively.

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and **truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.**” (1 John 1:3)

Once we have become very familiar with the concepts that Jesus taught His disciples, and have incorporated them into our own understanding, and have begun to build a close relationship with God, then we are better able to approach our heavenly Father in a correct attitude of prayer. We are able to live God's way in our thoughts. We start to become like Him.

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