***Forgiveness***

**The Lord’s Prayer, Summer 2023: Matthew 6:9-13 August 6, 2023**

***This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be you name.  
Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.   
Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.”***

**Matthew 6:9-12**

**Forgiveness**

*“Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven . . . .*

*“This, then is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,*

*10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*11 Give us today our daily bread.*

*12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

*13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’*

Matthew 6

*21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”*

*22 Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

*23 “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt . . . .*

*35 “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”*

Matthew 18

1. “Debt” is the right word (sorry to the “trespasses” and “sins” fans) which focuses on the unsurmountable debt of my sin rather than an offense or a missing of the mark (Matthew 18:21-35, but see Bloom’s counter argument in my resources)

2. Forgiveness is difficult (see Ephesians 4:29-32 for the “easier” steps of discipleship)

1. the confession requires me to agree that my sin is an offense to our holy God

2. the responsibility requires me to put feet to my faith (see Philippians 2:12-13; James 2)

**Heidelberg Catechism, Part III: Gratitude, Lord’s Day 51**

Q 126. What does the fifth petition mean?

A. “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” means:

Because of Christ’s blood, do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are, any of the sins we do  
or the evil that constantly clings to us.1 Forgive us just as we are fully determined, as evidence of your grace in us, to forgive our neighbors.2

1 [Ps. 51:1-7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps.%2051:1-7&version=nrsv); [143:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps.%20143:2&version=nrsv); [Rom. 8:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom.%208:1&version=nrsv); [1 John 2:1-2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%202:1-2&version=nrsv) 2 [Matt. 6:14-15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%206:14-15&version=nrsv); [18:21-35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.%2018:21-35&version=nrsv)

**A short Old Testament history of forgiveness**

*15 When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?” 16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: 17 ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept.*

Genesis 50

*13 ‘If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, they are guilty. 14 When they become aware of the sin they committed, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. 15 The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull’s head before the Lord, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord. 16 Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull’s blood into the Tent of Meeting. 17 He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the Lord seven times in front of the curtain . . . . 19 He shall remove all the fat from it and burn it on the altar, 20 and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven . . . .’*

Leviticus 4 (for the New Covenant application, see Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 9:11-28)

*20 The Lord replied, “I have forgiven them, as you asked. 21 Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, 22 not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times— 23 not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.*

Numbers 14 (after the people rebelled and Moses interceded for them)

*1 Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,*

*whose sins are covered.*

*2 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him*

*and in whose spirit is no deceit.*

Psalm 32, a psalm of David (Paul quotes this psalm in Romans 7)

*17 “Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. 18 Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. 19 O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”*

Daniel 9, the high point of Daniel’s prayer for his people

**Living out the fifth petition: Being forgiven and forgiving**

The sixth sentence is ***a petition respecting our sins****--*"Forgive us our debts." We confess that we are sinners, and need daily grants of pardon and forgiveness. This is a part of the Lord's prayer which deserves especially to be remembered. It condemns all self-righteousness and self-justifying. We are instructed here to keep up a continual habit of confession at the throne of grace, and a continual habit of seeking mercy and remission. Let this never be forgotten. We need daily to "wash our feet." ([John 13:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2013.10).)

The seventh sentence is ***a profession respecting our own feelings towards others****--*we ask our Father to "forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." This is the only profession in the whole prayer, and the only part on which our Lord comments and dwells, when He has concluded the prayer. The plain object of it is, to remind us that we must not expect our prayers for forgiveness to be heard, if we pray with malice and spite in our hearts towards others. To pray in such a frame of mind is mere formality and hypocrisy. It is even worse than hypocrisy. It is as much as saying, "Do not forgive me at all." Our prayer is nothing without charity. We must not expect to be forgiven, if we cannot forgive.

J. C. Ryle

1. Yes, we still need to ask for forgiveness

So if I sin as a Christian, I should not fear condemnation, for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, but I should still feel pricked in my conscience. I should not despair, but I should feel guilty when I do things that deserve to be punished. I have disrupted the Father-son relationship I enjoy with God. That’s why I should ask for forgiveness—not to be justified all over again, but because I have made a mess of the most important relationship in my life. The prayer “Forgive us our debts” is the cry not of a frightened litigant but of a loving child.

Kevin DeYoung, “Why Do We Need to Keep Praying?”

2. The job of the church

*29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Ephesians 4 (see Colossians 3:13 and Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18, then Luke 17:1-6)

3. This is a prayer we pray for each other

*13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

James 5

**Resources for further study**

The poster for Matthew does a good job of showing the 5 Parts of the gospel, reflecting a “new Torah”, can be found at [*https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/*](https://bibleproject.com/downloads/posters/)

Ryle has a commentary of Matthew 6 at [*https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm*](https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm)

J. C. Ryle also has a wonderful study of how believers should respond to the disciplining work of God at [*https://www.monergism.com/finger-god*](https://www.monergism.com/finger-god)

Here are some of our growing number of prayer resources:

The CRCNA’s Prayer Guide illustrates how to use the Lord’s Prayer as a guide to corporate prayer at

[https://www.crcna.org]( https://www.crcna.org › files › the_lords_prayer) *[› files › the\_lords\_prayer]( https://www.crcna.org › files › the_lords_prayer)*

Kevin DeYoung’s article at [*https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-does-it-mean-to-pray-your-kingdom-come/*](https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-does-it-mean-to-pray-your-kingdom-come/)

Lora Copely’s “Extraordinary Prayer” article at <https://www.abideproject.org/articles/extraordinary-prayer>

Becket Cook’s story of his mother’s prayer at [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFWl9eWkmWg*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFWl9eWkmWg)

Kevin DeYoung has a very good study of the fifth petition at [*https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-do-we-need-to-keep-praying-forgive-us-our-debts/*](https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-do-we-need-to-keep-praying-forgive-us-our-debts/)

Jon Bloom gives the counter position to my view of “debts” at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/forgive-us-our-what*](https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/forgive-us-our-what)

Trevin Wax has a short summary at [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/forgive-our-debts/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/forgive-our-debts/)

J. C. Ryle has a very good commentary on the forgiveness passage in Matthew 18 at [*http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/ryle\_forgiving\_one\_another.pdf*](http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/ryle_forgiving_one_another.pdf)

Surgeon has several sermons on forgiveness:

on Ephesians 4:32 at [*https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1448.HTM*](https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/1448.HTM)

on Isaiah 43:25 at [*https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0024.HTM*](https://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/0024.HTM)

R.C. Sproul has a helpful article at [*https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/why-forgive*](https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/why-forgive)

Larry Stockstill has a good summary of the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer at [*https://larrystockstill.com/blog/prayer-template*](https://larrystockstill.com/blog/prayer-template)

Keller has a good listen at [*https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/the-upside-down-kingdom-5106/*](https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/the-upside-down-kingdom-5106/)or the .pdf version at [*https://www.scribd.com/document/258555474/Upside-Down-Kingdom-Tim-Keller*](https://www.scribd.com/document/258555474/Upside-Down-Kingdom-Tim-Keller)

Keller also has an 8-part series on the Lord’s Prayer on .mp3 at [*https://www.monergism.com/lords-prayer-8-part-mp3-sermon-series*](https://www.monergism.com/lords-prayer-8-part-mp3-sermon-series)

[*Monergism.com*](file:///I:\Summer%202023\monergism.com) has many resources on the Sermon on the Mount at [*https://www.monergism.  
com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/matthew/sermon-mount-ch-5-7*](https://www.monergism.com/topics/sermon-manuscripts-mp3s-scripture/matthew/sermon-mount-ch-5-7)

Bob Deffinbaugh has a sermon on this passage at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/fatal-failures-religion-3-externalism-matthew-61-18*](https://bible.org/seriespage/fatal-failures-religion-3-externalism-matthew-61-18)

Spurgeon has an interesting prayer take is at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-secret-of-power-in-prayer/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-secret-of-power-in-prayer/%23flipbook/)

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# Why Do We Need to Keep Praying “Forgive Us Our Debts”?

May 23, 2022  
 [Kevin DeYoung](https://www.crossway.org/authors/kevin-deyoung/) at [*https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-do-we-need-to-keep-praying-forgive-us-our-debts/*](https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-do-we-need-to-keep-praying-forgive-us-our-debts/)

## An Essential Truth

I remember hearing a pastor say years ago that you could give the secret to a good marriage in just one word. The word he gave was not money or sex or communication or even love. The word was forgive. Forgiveness is the key ingredient not only in marriage but in any relationship involving sinners. If your friends are going to stick around, if you are going to see your relatives more than once a year, if you plan to work in the same place with the same people for any length of time, if you want to be happy in the church (or simply not give up on the church), you need to learn forgiveness. You need to grant it, and you need to receive it.

What’s true in our horizontal relationships is also true in our vertical relationship. Of course, God is not a sinner. He never needs to be forgiven. But if we are to have a healthy relationship with our heavenly Father, we must often come before him confessing our sins and asking for grace.

We can look at this fifth petition in those two categories: our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationships with others. We can label these two realities the forgiveness we need to receive and the forgiveness we need to give.

In The Lord’s Prayer, Kevin DeYoung closely examines God’s model for prayer, giving readers a deeper understanding of its content and meaning, and how it works in the lives of God’s people.

## The Forgiveness We Need to Receive

We need daily bread that we might live and daily forgiveness that we might not die. If we ask every day for bread, it stands to reason that we also ask God every day for grace for our debts. We owe to God what we cannot pay. That makes us debtors.

Does it matter if we say “debts and debtors” or “trespasses and those who trespass against us”? We need an international council to settle this and make corporate prayer much easier! It doesn’t matter a lot, but it may matter a little. [Matthew 6:12](https://www.esv.org/verses/Matthew%206%3A12/) has the word debts, [Matthew 6:14](https://www.esv.org/verses/Matthew%206%3A14/) has trespasses, and [Luke 11:4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Luke%2011%3A4/) has sins—three different English words for three different Greek words. So whether we pray for our debts our trespasses or our sins to be forgiven, we pray biblically. The words mean roughly the same thing.

But they don’t mean exactly the same thing. The word trespass suggests that we have violated a rule or committed an infraction. The word debt suggests we owe God something we cannot pay. “Forgive us our debts” suggests that we have done things that we should not have done, and left undone things we should have done.

“Forgive us our trespasses” comes from the Book of Common Prayer, which is why many people use the word trespasses. The Geneva Bible and the King James Bible used the word debts. If you know your church history, you know that the Book of Common Prayer was and is still used by the Anglican Church. So denominations that came out of the Church of England—Episcopal, Wesleyan, Methodist—tend to use trespasses, while most everyone else says debts.

The only other place the Greek word opheilema (debt) occurs in the New Testament is in [Romans 4:4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Romans%204%3A4/), where it clearly refers to a debt, or what someone is owed. Likewise, the word opheiletes is consistently employed to mean “debtor” in the rest of the New Testament ([Matt. 18:24](https://www.esv.org/verses/Matt.%2018%3A24/); [Luke 13:4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Luke%2013%3A4/); [Rom. 1:14; 4:4; 8:12; 15:27](https://www.esv.org/verses/Rom.%201%3A14%3B%204%3A4%3B%208%3A12%3B%2015%3A27/); [Gal. 5:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gal.%205%3A3/)). Every English translation I can find, except for the loosely translated New Living Translation, uses “debts” in Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer.

If we are to have a healthy relationship with our heavenly Father, we must often come before him confessing our sins and asking for grace.

More important, however, than getting the word right is getting the idea right. Every day, we live as debtors to mercy. Do you believe that? Do you believe that just as you have needs to ask for every day, so you have sins that need to be forgiven every day? And notice the word in the prayer is not debt but debts, as in many. Every single debt deserves to be met with God’s righteous displeasure, but think about the many debts we owe to God, debts that we are powerless to pay. Herman Witsius makes this point powerfully:

Had we contracted by one debt of this kind, would not the thought of it have been enough to fill our mind with indescribable horror? But we are chargeable with debts—debts of every description: original, imputed, inherent; [and] actual, debts of omission and commission, of ignorance, infirmity, and deliberate wickedness, without limits and without number.1

At this point, some Christians may ask, “Why, if we have already been redeemed, cleansed, and justified, do we need to keep asking for forgiveness?” I remember well at my church a godly woman who objected to our weekly confession of sin. She thought it was a real downer and encouraged wallowing in our sins when God wanted us to know we were forgiven and free. She believed it was wrong for justified sinners to return to their sins over and over.

So why does Jesus teach us to pray, “Forgive us our debts,” and not just once but frequently, if not daily? Well, for starters, we still sin. We ask for forgiveness for our debts because we never stop being debtors. But more than that, it’s because Jesus wants us to relate to God not just as a judge but as a father. This is such an important point and one that sincere Christians often miss. If you think of God only as judge, then you are either innocent or guilty. You are justified or not justified. You don’t think in terms of pleasing or displeasing God. You think only in terms of the legal declaration of righteous or not righteous. As important as it is to recognize that God is judge, if that’s the only way you relate to him, your Christianity will become stilted and stale.

God is also our Father, and that’s explicitly how Jesus wants us to address him in the Lord’s Prayer. A good father always loves his children, but he can be pleased or displeased with them. You wouldn’t go back to the judge to admit another mistake, but you would go to your father to say you’re sorry. When my kids do what they shouldn’t do or fail to do what I asked of them, I don’t want them fearing that they are going to be disowned and booted out of the family. But neither do I want them to think that their disobedience is no big deal. If they are good children—and if they know I am a good father—they will come to me and acknowledge their sins, and I will be eager to forgive them.

So if I sin as a Christian, I should not fear condemnation, for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, but I should still feel pricked in my conscience. I should not despair, but I should feel guilty when I do things that deserve to be punished. I have disrupted the Father-son relationship I enjoy with God. That’s why I should ask for forgiveness—not to be justified all over again, but because I have made a mess of the most important relationship in my life. The prayer “Forgive us our debts” is the cry not of a frightened litigant but of a loving child.

**Notes:**

1. Herman Witsius, Sacred Dissertations on the Lord’s Prayer (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2010), 313. For ease of reading, I slightly altered the punctuation in the quotation.

This article is adapted from [The Lord’s Prayer: Learning from Jesus on What, Why, and How to Pray](https://www.crossway.org/books/the-lords-prayer-tpb/) by Kevin DeYoung.

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# Why Forgive?

R.C. Sproul at [*https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/why-forgive*](https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/why-forgive)

When someone orders us to do something, or imposes an obligation, it is natural for us to ask two questions. The first question is, “Why should I?” and the second is, “Who says so?” The why and the authority behind the mandate are very important to the question of forgiveness.

To answer the question of why we should be forgiving people, let us look briefly at the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament. In Matthew’s gospel, we read this account:

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” ([Matt. 18:21–35](https://www.esv.org/verses/Matt.%2018%3A21%E2%80%9335/))

In this parable, the point of Jesus’ teaching is clear, that the why for forgiving others is rooted in the fact that we have been the recipients of extraordinary mercy and compassion. We are all debtors who cannot pay their debts to God. Yet God has been gracious enough to grant us forgiveness in Jesus Christ. It is no wonder that in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus instructs His disciples to say, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” There is a parallel, a joint movement of compassion, that is first received from God and then we in turn exercise the same compassion to others. God makes it clear that if we lack that compassion and harbor vengeance in our heart, rather than being ready to forgive again and again, we will forfeit any forgiveness that has been given to us.

Thus, the foundation for a forgiving spirit is the experience of divine grace. It is by grace that we are saved. It is by grace that we live. It is by grace that we have been forgiven. Therefore, the why of forgiving is to manifest our own gratitude for the grace that we have received. Again, the parable of Jesus points to one who took the grace that he received for granted and refused to act in a way that mirrored and reflected the kindness of God. Why should we forgive? Simply, because God forgives us. It is not an insignificant thing to add on to the why the point that we are commanded by that God of grace to exercise grace in turn.

When we look at the question of forgiveness, however, we also have to ask the second query, “Who says so, and under what conditions are we to keep this requirement?” If we turn our attention to another gospel, we see in [Luke 17](https://www.esv.org/verses/Luke%2017/) the following:

And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.” ([Luke 17:1–4](https://www.esv.org/verses/Luke%2017%3A1%E2%80%934/))

It’s important that we look closely at this directive from Jesus regarding forgiveness. It is often taught in the Christian community that Christians are called to forgive those who sin against them unilaterally and universally. We see the example of Jesus on the cross, asking God to forgive those who were executing Him, even though they offered no visible indication of repentance. From that example of Jesus, it has been inferred that Christians must always forgive all offenses against them, even when repentance is not offered. However, the most that we can legitimately infer from Jesus’ actions on that occasion is that we have the right to forgive people unilaterally. Though that may be indeed a wonderful thing, it is not commanded. If we look at the commandment that Jesus gives in [Luke 17:3](https://www.esv.org/verses/Luke%2017%3A3/), He says, “If your brother sins, rebuke him.” Notice that the first response to the offense is not forgiveness but rather rebuke. The Christian has the right to rebuke those who commit wrong doing against him. That’s the basis for the whole procedure of church discipline in the New Testament. If we were commanded to give unilateral forgiveness to all, under all circumstances, then the whole action of church discipline to redress wrongs, would itself be wrong. But Jesus says, “If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents . . . ,”—here is where the command becomes obligatory—if the offender repents, then it is mandatory for the Christian to forgive the one who has offended him. If we refuse to give forgiveness when repentance has been manifest, then we expose ourselves to the same fate as the unforgiving servant. We open ourselves to the wrath of God. If, indeed, I offend someone and then repent and express my apology to them, but he refuses to forgive me, then the coals of fire are on his head. Likewise, if we fail to give forgiveness, when one who has offended us repents of the offense, we expose ourselves to the coals of fire, and we are in worse shape than the one who has given the offense. In other words, it is transgression against God when we refuse to forgive those who have repented for their offenses to us. This is the teaching of Jesus. It is the mandate of Jesus. As we are united in Christ, we are to show that union by extending the same grace to others that He extends to us.

**Matthew chapter 6**

[J.C. Ryle](https://www.gracegems.org/23/ryle_sermons.htm), 1856 at [*https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm*](https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/m06.htm)

*"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.  Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.  But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,  that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.*

*"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.  But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.  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.  Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.* [Matthew 6:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%206.1-8)

In this part of the sermon on the mount the Lord Jesus gives us instruction on two subjects. One is that of giving alms. The other is that of prayer. Both were subjects to which the Jews attached great importance. Both in themselves deserve the serious attention of all professing Christians.

Observe that our Lord takes it for granted, *that* ***all who call themselves His disciples will GIVE ALMS.*** He assumes as a matter of course, that they will think it a solemn duty to give, according to their means, to relieve the needs of others. The only point He handles is the *manner* in which the duty should be done. This is a weighty lesson. It condemns the selfish stinginess of many in the matter of giving money. How many are "rich towards themselves," but poor towards God! How many never give a farthing to do good to the bodies and souls of men! And have such people any right to be called Christians, in their present state of mind? It may be well doubted. A giving Savior should have giving disciples.

Observe again that our Lord takes it for granted, *that* ***all who call themselves His disciples will PRAY.***He assumes this also as a matter of course. He only gives directions as to the best way of praying. This is another lesson which deserves to be continually remembered. It teaches plainly that prayerless people are not genuine Christians. It is not enough to join in the prayers of the congregation on Sundays, or attend the prayer of a family on week-days. There must be private prayer also. Without this we may be outward members of Christ's church, but we are not living members of Christ.

But what are the rules laid down for our guidance about almsgiving and praying? They are few and simple. But they contain much matter for thought.

In GIVING, ***everything like ostentation is to be abhorred and avoided.***We are not to give as if we wished everybody to see how liberal and charitable we are, and desired the praise of our fellow men. We are to shun everything like *display*. We are to give quietly, and make as little noise as possible about our charities. We are to aim at the spirit of the proverbial saying, "Don't let your left hand know what your right hand does."

In PRAYING, *the principal object to be sought, is to be alone with God.* We should endeavor to find some place where no mortal eye sees us, and where we can pour out our hearts with the feeling that no one is looking at us but God. This is a rule which many find it very difficult to follow. The poor man and the servant often find it almost impossible to be really alone. But it is a rule which we must all make great efforts to obey. Necessity, in such cases, is often the mother of invention. When a person has a real desire to find some place, where he can be in secret with his God, he will generally find a way.

In all our duties, whether giving, or praying, the great thing to be kept in mind is, *that* ***we have to do with a heart-searching and all-knowing God.*** Everything like formality, affectation, or mere bodily service, is abominable and worthless in God's sight. He takes no account of the quantity of money we give, or the quantity of words we use. The one thing at which His all-seeing eye looks is the nature of our motives, and the state of our hearts. "Our Father sees in secret."

May we all remember these things. Here lies a rock, on which many are continually making spiritual shipwreck. They flatter themselves that all must be right with their souls, if they only perform a certain amount of "religious duties." They forget that God does not regard the quantity, but the quality of our service. His favor is not to be bought, as many seem to suppose, by the formal repetition of a number of words, or the self-righteous payment of a sum of money to a charitable institution. Where are our hearts? Are we doing all, whether we give or pray, "as to the Lord, and not to men?" Do we realize the eye of God? Do we simply and solely desire to please Him, who "sees in secret," and by whom "actions are weighed?" ([1 Sam. 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Sam.%202.3).) Are we sincere? These are the sort of questions, with which we should daily ply our souls.

**MATTHEW 6:9-15**

*In this manner, therefore, pray: 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. Amen.  "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.  But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* [Matthew 6:9-15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%206.9-15)

Perhaps no part of Scripture is so well known as this. Its words are familiar, wherever Christianity is found. Thousands, and tens of thousands, who never saw a Bible, or heard the pure Gospel, are acquainted with "Our Father," and "Paternoster." Happy would it be for the world, if this prayer was as well known in the spirit, as it is in the letter!

Perhaps no part of Scripture is so *full*, and so *simple* at the same time, as this. It is the first prayer which we learn to offer up, when we are little children. Here is its simplicity. It contains the germ of everything which the most advanced saint can desire. Here is its fullness. The more we ponder every word it contains, the more we shall feel, "this prayer is of God."

The Lord's prayer consists of ten parts or sentences. There is one declaration of the Being to whom we pray. There are three prayers respecting His name, His kingdom, and His will. There are four prayers respecting our daily needs, our sins, our weakness, and our dangers. There is one profession of our feeling towards others. There is one concluding ascription of praise. In all these parts we are taught to say "we," and "our." We are to remember others, as well as ourselves. On each of these parts a volume might be written. We must content ourselves at present with taking up sentence by sentence, and marking out the direction in which each sentence points.

The first sentence declares ***to whom we are to pray****--*"Our *Father* who is in heaven." We are not to cry to saints and angels, but to the everlasting Father, the Father of spirits, the Lord of heaven and earth. We call Him Father, in the lowest sense, as our Creator; as Paul told the Athenians, "in him we live, and move, and have our being--we are also his offspring." ([Acts 17:28](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2017.28).) We call Him Father in the highest sense, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, reconciling us to Himself, through the death of His Son. ([Col. 1:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Col.%201.20-22).) We profess that which the Old Testament saints only saw dimly, if at all--we profess to be His children by faith in Christ, and to have "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." ([Rom. 8:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom.%208.15).) This, we must never forget, is the sonship that we must desire, if we would be saved. Without faith in Christ's blood, and union with Him, it is vain to talk of trusting in the Fatherhood of God.

The second sentence is ***a petition respecting God's name****--*"May your name be kept holy." By the "name" of God we mean all those attributes under which He is revealed to us--His power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, and truth. By asking that they may be "holy," we mean that they may be made known and glorified. The glory of God is the first thing that God's children should desire. It is the object of one of our Lord's own prayers--"Father, glorify your name." ([John 12:28](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2012.28).) It is the purpose for which the world was created. It is the end for which the saints are called and converted. It is the chief thing we should seek, that "in all things God may be glorified." ([1 Peter 4:11](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Pet%204.11).)

The third sentence is ***a petition concerning God's kingdom****--*"May your kingdom come." By His kingdom we mean first, the kingdom of *grace* which God sets up and maintains in the hearts of all living members of Christ, by His Spirit and word. But we mean chiefly, the kingdom of *glory* which shall one day be set up, when Jesus shall come the second time, and "all men shall know Him from the least to the greatest." This is the time when sin, and sorrow, and Satan shall be cast out of the world. It is the time when the Jews shall be converted, and the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, ([Rom. 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rom.%2011.25),) and a time that is above all things to be desired. It therefore fills a foremost place in the Lord's prayer. We ask that which is expressed in the words of the Burial service, "that it may please you to hasten your kingdom."

The fourth sentence is ***a petition concerning God's will****--*"May your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." We here pray that God's laws may be obeyed by men as perfectly, readily, and unceasingly, as they are by angels in heaven. We ask that those who now obey not His laws, may be taught to obey them, and that those who do obey them, may obey them better. Our truest happiness is perfect submission to God's will, and it is the highest charity to pray that all mankind may know it, obey it, and submit to it.

The fifth sentence is***a petition respecting our own daily needs****--*"give us this day our daily bread." We are here taught to acknowledge our entire dependence on God, for the supply of our daily necessities. As Israel required daily manna, so we require daily "bread." We confess that we are poor, weak, needy creatures, and beseech Him who is our Maker to take care of us. We ask for "bread," as the simplest of our needs, and in that word we include all that our bodies require.

The sixth sentence is ***a petition respecting our sins****--*"Forgive us our debts." We confess that we are sinners, and need daily grants of pardon and forgiveness. This is a part of the Lord's prayer which deserves especially to be remembered. It condemns all self-righteousness and self-justifying. We are instructed here to keep up a continual habit of confession at the throne of grace, and a continual habit of seeking mercy and remission. Let this never be forgotten. We need daily to "wash our feet." ([John 13:10](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2013.10).)

The seventh sentence is ***a profession respecting our own feelings towards others****--*we ask our Father to "forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." This is the only profession in the whole prayer, and the only part on which our Lord comments and dwells, when He has concluded the prayer. The plain object of it is, to remind us that we must not expect our prayers for forgiveness to be heard, if we pray with malice and spite in our hearts towards others. To pray in such a frame of mind is mere formality and hypocrisy. It is even worse than hypocrisy. It is as much as saying, "Do not forgive me at all." Our prayer is nothing without charity. We must not expect to be forgiven, if we cannot forgive.

The eighth sentence is ***a petition respecting our weakness****--*"Bring us not into temptation." It teaches us that we are liable, at all times, to be led astray, and fall. It instructs us to confess our infirmity, and beseech God to hold us up, and not allow us to run into sin. We ask Him, who orders all things in heaven and earth, to restrain us from going into that which would injure our souls, and never to allow us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. ([1 Cor. 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor.%2010.13).)

The ninth sentence is ***a petition respecting our dangers****--*"deliver us from evil." We are here taught to ask God to deliver us from the evil that is in the world, the evil that is within our own hearts, and not least from that evil one, the devil. We confess that, so long as we are in the body, we are constantly seeing, hearing, and feeling the presence of evil. It is about us, and within us, and around us on every side. And we entreat Him, who alone can preserve us, to be continually delivering as from its power. ([John 17:15](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2017.15).)

The last sentence is ***an ascription of praise****--*"yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory." We declare in these words our belief, that the kingdoms of this world are the rightful property of our Father--that to Him alone belongs all "power,"--and that He alone deserves to receive all "glory." And we conclude by offering to Him the profession of our hearts, that we give Him all honor and praise, and rejoice that He is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

And now let us all examine ourselves, and see whether we really desire to have the things which we are taught to ask for in the Lord's Prayer. Thousands, it may be feared, repeat these words daily as a form, but never consider what they are saying. They care nothing for the "glory," the "kingdom," or the "will" of God. They have no sense of dependence, sinfulness, weakness, or danger. They have no love or charity towards their enemies. And yet they repeat the Lord's Prayer! These things ought not to be so. May we resolve that, by God's help, our hearts shall go together with our lips! Happy is he who can really call God his Father through Jesus Christ his Savior, and can therefore say a heart felt "Amen" to all that the Lord's Prayer contains.

**MATTHEW 6:16-24**

*"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.  But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,  so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.  "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;  but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.  For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.  "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.  But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!  "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.* [Matthew 6:16-24](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%206.16-24)

There are three subjects brought before us in this part of our Lord's sermon on the mount. These three are fasting, worldliness, and singleness of purpose in religion.

***Fasting****,* or occasional abstinence from food, in order to bring the body into subjection to the spirit, is a practice frequently mentioned in the Bible, and generally in connection with prayer. David fasted, when his child was sick. Daniel fasted, when he sought special light from God. Paul and Barnabas fasted, when they appointed elders. Esther fasted, before going in to Ahasuerus. It is a subject about which we find no direct command in the New Testament. It seems to be left to every one's discretion, whether he will fast or not. There is great wisdom in this. Many a poor man never has enough to eat, and it would be an insult to tell him to fast. Many a sickly person can hardly be kept well with the closest attention to diet, and could not fast without bringing on illness. It is a matter in which every one must be persuaded in his own mind, and not be hasty to condemn others, who do not agree with him. One thing only must never be forgotten. Those who fast should do it *quietly, secretly, and without ostentation*. Let them not "appear to men" to fast. Let them not fast to man, but to God.

***Worldliness***is one of the greatest dangers that beset man's soul. It is no wonder that we find our Lord speaking strongly about it. It is an treacherous, harmful, enticing, and powerful enemy. It seems so innocent to pay close attention to our business! It seems so harmless to seek our happiness in this world, so long as we keep clear of open sins! Yet here is a rock on which many make shipwreck to all eternity. They "lay up treasure on earth," and forget to "lay up treasure in heaven." May we all remember this! Where are our hearts? What do we love best? Are our chief affections on things in earth, or things in heaven? Life or death depends on the answer we can give to these questions. If our treasure is earthly, our hearts will be earthly also. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be."

***Singleness of purpose***is one great secret of spiritual prosperity. If our eyes do not see distinctly, we cannot walk without stumbling and falling. If we attempt to work for two different masters, we are sure to give satisfaction to neither. It is just the same with respect to our souls. We cannot serve Christ and the world at the same time. It is vain to attempt it. The thing cannot be done. The ark and Dagon will never stand together. God must be king over our hearts. His law, His will, His precepts must receive our first attention. Then, and not until then, everything in our inward man will fall into its right place. Unless our hearts are so ordered, everything will be in confusion. "Your whole body will be full of darkness."

Let us learn from our Lord's instruction about fasting, ***the great importance of cheerfulness in our religion.*** Those words, "anoint your head, and wash your face," are full of deep meaning. They should teach us to aim at letting men see, that we find Christianity makes us happy. Never let us forget that there is no religion in looking melancholy and gloomy. Are we dissatisfied with Christ's wages, and Christ's service? Surely not! Then let us not look as if we were.

Let us learn from our Lord's caution about worldliness ***what immense need we all have to watch and pray against an earthly spirit.*** What are the vast majority of professing Christians round us doing? They are "laying up treasure on earth." There can be no mistake about it. Their tastes, their ways, their habits tell a fearful tale. They are not "laying up treasure in heaven." Oh! let us all beware that we do not sink into hell by paying excessive attention to lawful things. Open transgression of God's law slays its thousands, but worldliness its tens of thousands.

Let us learn from our Lord's words about the "single eye," ***the true secret of the failures****,* which so many Christians seem to make in their religion. There are failures in all quarters. There are thousands in our churches uncomfortable, ill at ease, and dissatisfied with themselves, and they hardly know why. The reason is revealed here. They are trying to keep in with both sides. They are endeavoring to please God and please man, to serve Christ and serve the world at the same time. Let us not commit this mistake. Let us be decided, thorough-going, uncompromising followers of Christ. Let out motto be that of Paul, "One thing I do." ([Phil. 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Phil.%203.13).) Then we shall be happy Christians. We shall feel the sun shining on our faces. Heart, head, and conscience will all be full of light. *Decision* is the secret of happiness in religion. Be decided for Christ, and "your whole body will be full of light."