

The COMPANION
to
PRAYER

Study Guide

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and eat with him,
and he with me.*

Revelation 3:20

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INTRODUCTION

*Before they call I will answer;
while they are yet speaking I will hear.*

Isaiah 65:24

Invitation

We do not assume to know where you have come from in life. We want to welcome all who are desperate and seek help, all who are grieving and long for comfort, all who are ashamed and want to be forgiven, all who are lonely and ache for friendship, all who are unsatisfied and search for a life worth living, and all who will come. The Companion offers a doorway from where you are to who you are called to be.

Purpose

The aim of this guide is simple: to offer a basic instruction in prayer. You can think of it as a little guide for those starting out on the journey in prayer. Nevertheless, we hope even those seasoned in prayer might find some encouragement in what lies ahead.

We want to be clear at the start, this guide cannot manufacture the free and honest communication with God that is at the heart of prayer. Nor does it advance beyond the rich and diverse resources on prayer that have passed down to the church through the ages. We have created something “new” only to the extent that is organic growth out of our heritage—rooted in the Scriptures, instructed by the church’s historic teaching, encouraged by examples from past, and dependent on the Holy Spirit.

The essential thing for anyone who prays is to come to Jesus. As the Norwegian pastor and theologian O. Hallesby writes in the classic book, simply titled *Prayer*, “It is not our prayer which moves the Lord Jesus. It is Jesus who moves us to pray.” Our hope is this “little guide” will be a kind of doorway to come to Jesus.

How to Use this Study Guide

This study guide is designed to lead a small group or class through a season of extended reflection on and practice of prayer. While this guide is divided into 10 sessions, there can be flexibility in the pace in which the material is covered. Some may choose to cover one session per week for 10 weeks. Other groups may decide to cover multiple sessions each class or extend a single session over multiple classes. This guide has been designed to offer a model that can be adapted to various settings and needs, not to prescribe a rigid plan.

The first session, “Conversing with God,” focuses on God’s initiative in prayer. This is followed by “Lord, Teach us to Pray,” a session that concentrates on our need for God’s help in prayer. Sessions 3-9 each dwell on one part of the Lord’s Prayer—divided into a preface and six petitions. The concluding session sends us out into a life of prayer, “Practicing the Presence.”

Overview

Each session includes an overview which summarizes the central ideas to be explored. This provides a focus and starting point for each session.

Study

Selected scriptures and a quotation from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* on prayer are provided as primary texts for instruction. The whole of Scripture is our true and central guide in prayer. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* helps ground our study of prayer in the wisdom of the church in the past. Though the mode of communication may feel distant to contemporary readers, the guidance given sums up a breadth and depth of Scripture in a way that has proved faithful and enduring. It can be a great relief to realize our forebears in the faith wrestled with some of the same questions we have, depended on the Word of God for their answers, and offered their guidance in a form that has passed on the faith from generation to generation.

Reflect, Journal, Discuss

Reflection and discussion questions are provided to guide individual and group participation. We encourage writing down observations, insights, and questions to deepen engagement with content and provide for more substantive discussion.

Further Resources

Here, this study guide offers content to complement and extend each session. You will find listed The Companion audio episode associated with each session. In addition,

historic confessions and catechisms on prayer are provided for further study. Finally, an ancient prayer is offered, not that we would merely recite or admire those who have prayed before us, but that we would learn from and imitate their faith.

Practices

While group leaders and teachers should freely adapt this guide to the needs of their group, there are certain practices that are core to this study.

Connect

Companion classes or small groups should seek to create a trusting and welcoming space where participants are genuinely known and cared for. Ideally, a class or small group will designate a leader responsible for hospitality. This person should join the teacher or small group leader in praying for the participants. A “Connect” leader attends ready to seek out, get to know, and serve the participants. Their mentality is “I am here for your well-being.”

Abide

A study of prayer is worthless without the experience of God’s presence. Leaders should consistently seek to delight in and know more of God through the Word and Spirit. We also recommend that each group designate a coleader whose primary role is to pray for each participant by name. As Jesus said, “For apart from me you can do nothing.”

Extend

The course is intended to extend beyond the private, into the public, from the individual to the community. The extent of prayer is as far reaching as the people of God. We hope the prayers that begin in this study will extend to every corner of everyday life—in the kitchen, at the bedside, in the office, on the field, at the hospital, in foreign lands and at home, among friends, even to enemies, We exist to extend the transforming presence of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ deep to the heart and wide to the world.

The Companion: On Prayer

A prayer guide is provided to help participants pray personally and with others. You may decide that each participant works through the prayer guide on their own between meetings. Some classes or groups may decide to incorporate the prayer guide into their time together. Either way, this resource is offered to encourage instruction through practice, not just theory.

Session 1

Conversing with God

OVERVIEW

What is prayer? This is the question this first session seeks to explore. Prayer is conversing with God—both listening to and speaking with God. As we consider Scripture, we come to see that God initiates prayer. God pursues us. Prayer then is more than talking to God. It is our response to God’s pursuing love. Prayer also involves adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. A simple way to remember this is with the acronym A.C.T.S.

Adoration: celebrating the goodness of God

Confession: acknowledging our sin

Thanksgiving: expressing our gratitude

Supplication: asking for what we desire according to God’s Word

STUDY

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. *Revelation 3:20*

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 98

What is prayer?

Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. In your own words, how would you answer the question “what is prayer?”
2. How would you describe your experience of prayer?
3. If you met Jesus in person, what would you want to say to him?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer*, “Conversing with God”

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 1

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has delivered me from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, also assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 116

Why do Christians need to pray?

Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us.

And also because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who continually and with heartfelt longing ask God for these gifts and thank him for them.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 117

How does God want us to pray so that he will listen to us?

First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, who has revealed himself to us in his Word, asking for everything he has commanded us to ask of him.

Second, we must fully recognize our need and misery, so that we humble ourselves in God's majestic presence.

Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord, as he has promised us in his Word.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 118

What has God commanded us to ask of him?

Everything we need, spiritually and physically, as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXI., 3

Prayer, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, according to his will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance; and, if vocal, in a known tongue.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 179

Are we to pray unto God only?

God only being able to search the hearts, hear the requests, pardon the sins, and fulfill the desires of all; and only to be believed in, and worshipped with religious worship; prayer, which is a special part thereof, is to be made by all to him alone, and to none other.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 180

What is it to pray in the name of Christ?

To pray in the name of Christ is, in obedience to his command, and in confidence on his promises, to ask mercy for his sake; not by bare mentioning of his name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength, and hope of acceptance in prayer, from Christ and his mediation.

HISTORIC PRAYER

Lord, I seek you with all my heart, with all my strength you have given me. I long to understand that which I believe. You are my only hope; please listen to me. Do not let

my weariness lessen my desire to find you, to see your face. You created me in order to find you; you gave me strength to seek you. My strength and my weakness are in your hands: preserve my strength, and help my weakness. Where you have already opened the door, let me come in; where it is shut, open at my knocking. Let me always remember you, love you, meditate upon you, and pray to you, until you restore me to your perfect pattern. *Augustine*

SOURCES

Prayer of Augustine taken from *The HarperCollins Book of Prayers: A Treasury of Prayer through the Ages* edited by Robert Van De Weyer, 44.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 1, 116-118 taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 291, 328.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, XXI.,3, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 217.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 179-180, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 401.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 98, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 432.

Session 2

Teach Us to Pray

OVERVIEW

In this session, we look to Scripture as the anchor for our prayer. We pray as Jesus's disciple prayed, "Lord, teach us to pray." With these words, we find that we are not alone in our need for help in prayer. God is with us by the Spirit, and we have been given God's Word. We need not be discouraged in prayer. Even when words fail us, we can begin to pray by listening to and speaking the Word of God. Further, this session introduces the Lord's Prayer. We will look at each part of the Lord's Prayer in subsequent sessions. For now, it is sufficient to simply read and pray through The Lord's Prayer, considering Jesus's gracious response to teach us to pray.

STUDY

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone who is
indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation." *Luke 11:1-4*

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

"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 also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil. *Matthew 6:7-13*

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 99

What rule has God given for our direction in Prayer?

The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's Prayer.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. Why is prayer a struggle?
2. How has the Word of God taught you to pray?
3. Where do you want to grow in your knowledge and experience of prayer?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer*, "Teach Us to Pray"

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 181

Why are we to pray in the name of Christ?

The sinfulness of man, and his distance from God by reason thereof, being so great, as that we can have no access into his presence without a mediator; and there being none

in heaven or earth appointed to, or fit for, that glorious work but Christ alone, we are to pray in no other name but his only.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 182

How doth the Spirit help us to pray?

We not knowing what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, by enabling us to understand both for whom, and what, and how prayer is to be made; and by working and quickening in our hearts (although not in all persons, nor at all times, in the same measure) those apprehensions, affections, and graces which are requisite for the right performance of that duty.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 183

For whom are we to pray?

We are to pray for the whole church of Christ upon earth; for magistrates, and ministers; for ourselves, our brethren, yea, our enemies; and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter; but not for the dead, nor for those that are known to have sinned the sin unto death.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 184

For what things are we to pray?

We are to pray for all things tending to the glory of God, the welfare of the church, our own or others' good; but not for anything that is unlawful.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 185

How are we to pray?

We are to pray with an awful apprehension of the majesty of God, and deep sense of our own unworthiness, necessities, and sins; with penitent, thankful, and enlarged hearts; with understanding, faith, sincerity, fervency, love, and perseverance, waiting upon him, with humble submission to his will.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 186

What rule hath God given for our direction in the duty of prayer?

The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in the duty of prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which our Savior Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's Prayer.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 187

How is the Lord's Prayer to be used?

The Lord's Prayer is not only for direction, as a pattern, according to which we are to make other prayers; but may also be used as a prayer, so that it be done with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the right performance of the duty of prayer.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 188

Of how many parts doth the Lord's Prayer consist?

The Lord's Prayer consists of three parts; a preface, petitions, and a conclusion.

HISTORIC PRAYER

Almighty God, though we see and hear so many testimonies of your glory every day, we can be so blind and shut out all the light by our ingratitude.

Teach us to open our eyes. Yes, open them by your Spirit! Help us to spend time thinking on how many, how great, and how deep are your blessings toward us.

And while you set before us the proof of your eternal divinity, help us to excel in their school of devotion. May we learn to give you all praise, until there is nothing left to do but to glorify you alone. May we all the more grow in our ardent desire to worship you, the more you bend down to us in grace.

May we also devote ourselves to you and grow to care about this one thing: that your glory may remain and shine forth throughout all the world, through Christ our Lord, amen. *John Calvin*

SOURCES

Prayer of John Calvin taken from *Grace from Heaven: Prayers of the Reformation* edited by Robert Elmer, 13.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 181-188, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 401-403.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 99, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 432.

Session 3

Our Father

OVERVIEW

In this session we enter Jesus's instruction on prayer through the preface of the Lord's Prayer, *Our Father who art in heaven*. By teaching us to pray "our" Father, Jesus reveals the personal and communal nature of pray. We are united to God in Christ by the Holy Spirit and eternally connected to the people of God. When we enter pray through these words, we come to see God as our intimate Father, who is also the creator and sustainer of all things, for our God is "in heaven."

STUDY

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" *Luke 11:5-13*

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children,

then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. *Romans 8:12-17*

The Westminster Confession of Faith, XII. Of Adoption

All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him, as by a father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 100

What does the preface of the Lord’s Prayer teach us?

The preface of the Lord’s Prayer, which is, *Our Father who art in heaven*, teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. What do you think when you think of God as Father?
2. How does Scripture reshape our understanding of our relationship with God?
3. What do you wish you knew more of in relationship to God as Father?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer*, “Our Father”

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 120

Why has Christ commanded us to address God as “our Father”?

To awaken in us at the very beginning of our prayer what should be basic to our prayer—a childlike reverence and trust that through Christ God has become our Father, and will much less refuse to give us what we ask in faith than will our parents refuse us the things of this life.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 121

Why the words “who is in heaven”?

These words teach us not to think of God’s heavenly majesty in an earthly way, and to expect from his almighty power everything needed for body and soul.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 74

What is adoption?

Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow heirs with Christ in glory.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 189

What doth the preface of the Lord’s Prayer teach us?

The preface of the Lord’s Prayer (contained in these words, *Our Father which art in heaven*) teacheth us, when we pray, to draw near to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein; with reverence, and all other childlike dispositions, heavenly affections, and due apprehension of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension: as also, to pray with and for others.

HISTORIC PRAYER

As a reconciled Father, take me to be your child; and give me your renewing Spirit, to be in me a principle of holy life, and light, and love, and your seal and witness that I am yours. Let him quicken my dead and hardened heart. Let him enlighten my dark and unbelieving mind, by clearer knowledge and firm belief. Let him turn my will to the ready obedience of your holy will. Let him reveal to my soul the wonders of your love in Christ, and fill it with love to you and my Redeemer, and to your holy Word and works.
Amen. *Richard Baxter*

SOURCES

Prayer of Richard Baxter taken from *Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson, 61.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Questions 120-121, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 329.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, XII, taken *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 204.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 74, 189, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 358, 404.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 100, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 432.

Session 4

Hallowed Be Thy Name

OVERVIEW

This session considers the first petition in the Lord's Prayer, *Hallowed be thy name*. The word "hallowed" is related to the word "holy," meaning set apart. We pray for the one, true, living God to be praised. With these words, we ask for God to achieve the chief end for which we are made, in the words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

STUDY

I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.
One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.
They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The LORD is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.
All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your saints shall bless you!
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom

and tell of your power,
to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.
[The LORD is faithful in all his words
and kind in all his works.]
The LORD upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and kind in all his works.
The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.
The LORD preserves all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.
My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever. *Psalm 145*

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. *Ephesians 3:14-21*

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 101

What do we pray for in the first petition?

In the first petition, which is, *Hallowed be thy name*, we pray that God would enable us, and others, to glorify him in all that whereby he maketh himself known; and that he would dispose all things to his own glory.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. What does it mean to hallow God's name?
2. Where we look in Scripture for examples of hallowing God's name?
3. How can we hallow God's name in everyday life?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer, "Hallowed Be Thy Name"*

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 122

What does the first petition mean?

"Hallowed by your name" means: Help us to truly know you, to honor, glorify, and praise you for all your works and for all that shines forth from them: your almighty power, wisdom, kindness, justice, mercy, and truth.

And it means: Help us to direct all our living—what we think, say, and do—so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us but always honored and praised.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 54

How is Christ exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God?

Christ is exalted in his sitting at the right hand of God, in that as God-man he is advanced to the highest favor with God the Father, with all fullness of joy, glory, and power over all things in heaven and earth; and doth gather and defend his church, and

subdue their enemies; furnisheth his ministers and people with gifts and graces, and make intercession for them.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 190

What do we pray for in the first petition?

In the first petition (which is, *Hallowed be thy name*), acknowledging the utter inability and indisposition that is in ourselves and all men to honor God aright, we pray, that God would by his grace enable and incline us and others to know, to acknowledge, and highly esteem him, his titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, works, and whatsoever he is pleased to make himself known by, and to glorify him in thought, word, and deed: that he would prevent and remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatsoever is dishonorable to him; and, by his overruling providence, direct and dispose of all things to his own glory.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1

What is the chief end of man?

Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

HISTORIC PRAYER

Almighty God, you are the foundation and fountain of all being and all beauty, from you all is perfectly derived, upon you all is most absolutely and perfectly dependent; from you and through you and to you is all being and all perfection; your being and beauty is as it were the sum and comprehension of all existence and excellence, much more than the sun is the fountain and summary comprehension of all light and brightness of the day—to you, O God, be all praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength forever and ever. Amen. *Jonathan Edwards*

SOURCES

Prayer of Jonathan Edwards taken from *Be Thou My Vision* by Johnathan Gibson, 93.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 122, taken from Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition edited by Chad Van Dixon, 330.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 54 and 190, taken from Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition edited by Chad Van Dixon, 352, 404.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 1, 101, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 411, 433.

Session 5

Thy Kingdom Come

OVERVIEW

Now we turn our attention in this session to the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, *Thy kingdom come*. This is a prayer for God's presence and power to overwhelm the powers of darkness and usher in the fullness of God's good and loving purposes. We pray with the confidence that God's kingdom has come through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We continue to pray for God's kingdom to come because we wait the return of Christ and the full arrival of the new creation. As we pray for God's kingdom to come, God's people, in the power of the Holy Spirit, extend the transforming presence of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ deep to the heart and wide to the world.

STUDY

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." *Mark 1:14-15*

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1:9-14

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 102

What do we pray for in the second petition?

In the second petition, which is, *Thy kingdom come*, we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. What is the kingdom of God?
2. Why do we pray for God's kingdom to come?
3. How can participate in God's answer to this prayer?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer*, "Thy Kingdom Come"

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 123

What does the second petition mean?

"Your kingdom come" means: Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way that more and more we submit to you. Preserve and increase your church. Destroy the devil's work; destroy every force which revolts against you and every conspiracy against your holy Word.

Do all this until your kingdom fully comes, when you will be all in all.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 191

What do we pray for in the second petition?

In the second petition (which is, *Thy kingdom come*), acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray, that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate: that the ordinances of Christ may be purely

dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him forever: and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.

HISTORIC PRAYER

O Lord, come quickly and reign on your throne, for now often something rises up within me, and tries to take possession of your throne: pride, covetousness, uncleanness and sloth want to be my kings, and then evil-speaking, anger, hatred, and the whole train of vices join with me in warring against myself, and try to reign over me. I resist them; I cry out against myself, and try to reign over me. I resist them; I cry out against them, and say, "I have no other king than Christ." O King of peace, come and reign in me, for I will have no king but you! Amen. *Bernard of Clairvaux*

SOURCES

Prayer of Bernard of Clairvaux taken from *Be Though My Vision* Jonathan Gibson, 124-125.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 123, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 330.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 191, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 404-405.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 102, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 433.

Session 6

Thy Will Be Done

OVERVIEW

In this session we pray the third petition in the Lord's prayer, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. This is a petition for God to reveal and accomplish his will here and now as is done in heaven. Though we believe and confess that God hears and answers prayer, we must admit that there are many painful realities in life that are hard to reconcile with God's will. Nevertheless, we can pray for God's will to be done and gain confidence in this prayer by looking to Jesus, who, on the night he was betrayed, prayed to his Father, "not my will, but yours be done."

STUDY

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all

that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another. *John 15:1-17*

Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."

Luke 22:39-46

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 103

What do we pray for in the third petition?

In the third petition, which is, *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*, we pray that God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

See also Matthew 5-7, "The Sermon on the Mount"

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. What do we pray for when we pray, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*?
2. What challenges or comfort does this prayer raise for you?

3. Where do you want to see God's will done in your life and the world that surrounds you?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer*, "Thy Will Be Done"

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 124

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" means: Help us and all people to renounce our own wills and without any back talk to obey your will, for it alone is good.

Help everyone carry out his office and calling, as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 192

What do we pray for in the third petition?

In the third petition (which is, *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*), acknowledging, that by nature we and all men are not only utterly unable and unwilling to know and do the will of God, but prone to rebel against his Word, to repine and murmur against his providence, and wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh, and of the devil: we pray, that God would by his Spirit take away from ourselves and others all blindness, weakness, indisposedness, and perverseness of heart; and by his grace make us able and willing to know, do, and submit to his will in all things, with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy, as the angels do in heaven.

HISTORIC PRAYER

O Lord, if this is the hour you have set for me, your will be done. Only please do not rebuke me in your anger!

Lord, my dearest God, you know how willingly I would have shed my blood for your word, but perhaps I am not worthy. Your will be done. If it be your will that I die, may your name be glorified by life or death. If it had been possible I would have wished to live longer for the sake of the believers, Lord, for the sake of your elect, but if the hour is come, you are the Lord of life and death.

My dearest God, you have led me into this business. You know my life is all about your truth and your word. Do not let our enemies be glorified, but glorify your holy name against the enemies of your most holy word.

Lord Jesus, you have given me the knowledge of your name. You know I believe that you are true God and our true mediator and savior. Be present with your Spirit in this hour.

Up to now, Lord, you have wonderfully kept me. Keep me still, if it is your will. My dearest God, you are always a God of sinners and those who are miserable. Help me! Lord Jesus, you said to ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened unto you. Open now to the one who knocks!

Dearest God and Father, you have given me many thousand precious gifts above what you have given others.

I would have liked still to be used for the honor of your name and the good of your people. But your will be done, that you may be glorified by life or death. Amen.

Martin Luther

SOURCES

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 124, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 331.

Prayer of Martin Luther taken from *Grace From Heaven: Prayers of the Reformation* by Robert Elmer, 82.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 192, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 405.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 103, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 433.

Session 7

Give Us

OVERVIEW

Give us this day our daily bread is the fourth petition in the Lord's Prayer. In this session we look and see God as our source of daily sustenance. When we pray, we are seeking after the one on whom all of our life is dependent. God is the ultimate provider, both spiritually and physically. Even so, one of the great challenges to prayer is worry. It seems, for many, we want to be sure of tomorrow's provision today. Still, Jesus has taught us to pray for "daily bread." The posture of this petition is confidence in the God who takes care us right where we are, today, in life and in death, with his very presence.

STUDY

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. *Matthew 6:25-34*

See also Psalm 145.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 104

What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

In the fourth petition, which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*, we pray that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. What is "daily bread?"
2. What is the source of our propensity to worry?
3. What promise does this prayer hold for us?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer*, "Give Us"

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 26

What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?"

That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father for the sake of Christ his Son.

I trust God so much that I do not doubt he will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this vale of tears.

He is able to do this because he is almighty God; he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 27

What do you understand by the providence of God?

Providence is the almighty and ever-present power of God by which God upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty—all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by his fatherly hand.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 28

How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us?

We can be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature will separate us from his love. For all creatures are so completely in his hand that without his will they can neither move nor be moved.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 125

What does the fourth petition mean?

“Give us this day our daily bread” means: Provide for all our physical needs so that we may recognize that you are the only source of everything good, and that neither our care and work nor your gifts can do us any good without your blessing. Therefore may we withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it in you alone.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 193

What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

In the fourth petition (which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*), acknowledging, that in Adam, and by our own sin, we have forfeited our right to all the outward blessings of this life, and deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God, and to have them cursed to us in the use of them, and that neither they of themselves are able to sustain us, nor we to merit, or by our own industry to procure them; but prone to desire, get, and use them unlawfully: we pray for ourselves and others, that both they and we, waiting upon the providence of God from day to day in the use of lawful means, may, of his free gift, and as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of them; and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them, and contentment in them; and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort.

HISTORIC PRAYER

O Lord, we desire to adore your name, which is excellent in all the earth, and whose glory is above the heavens. You are the maker and disposer of all things; and for your sovereign pleasure it is that they still exist, and were at first created. Your hands have made and fashioned us; and all that we enjoy comes from you. As we are the

workmanship of your power, O make us likewise your spiritual workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus, unto holiness and true righteousness. Give proof that you have formed us for yourself, by causing us to show forth your praise, and by making us to live to glory, as we do every day live upon your bounty. Amen. *Augustus Toplady*

SOURCES

Prayer of Augustus Toplady taken from *Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson, 179.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 26-28, 125 taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 298-299, 331.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 193, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 406.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 104, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 433.

Prayer of confession taken from *Worship Sourcebook*, 89-90.

Session 8

Forgive Us

OVERVIEW

In the fifth petition, *and forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors*, we confess our sin. We also remember the power of Christ to forgive us and free us to forgive others. In this session, we consider the meaning of sin and our need of forgiveness. We understand sin to mean missing the mark of God's perfect righteousness. We were once debtors to sin and the devil, but now, in Christ, we have been forgiven. Though we still sin, we have the freedom to confess to God and receive the assurance of forgiveness. Further, through our union with Christ, we witness to the power of the Gospel by forgiving those who hurt us. In this petition, we are praying the freedom we have in Christ.

STUDY

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. *1 John 1:5-10*

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. *Ephesians 4:31-32*

See also Psalm 51, Luke 23:33-34, Colossians 3:12-13.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 105

What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

In the fifth petition, which is, *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*, we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. What are we confessing when we pray, *and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*?
2. What does this prayer tell us of the Gospel?
3. How does this prayer challenge and transform conflict?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer, "Forgive Us"*

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 126

What does the fifth petition mean?

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" means: Because of Christ's blood, do not impute to us, poor sinners that we are, any of the transgressions we do or the evil that constantly clings to us.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 194

What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

In the fifth petition (which is, *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*), acknowledging, that we and all others are guilty both of original and actual sin, and thereby become debtors to the justice of God; and that neither we, nor any other creature, can make the least satisfaction for that debt: we pray for ourselves and others,

that god of his free grace would, through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, apprehended and applied by faith, acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sin, accept us in his Beloved; continue his favor and grace to us, pardon our daily failings, and fill us with peace and joy, in giving us daily more and more assurance of forgiveness; which we are the rather emboldened to ask, and encouraged to expect, when we have this testimony in ourselves, that we from the heart forgive others their offenses.

HISTORIC PRAYER

O Lord my God, light of the blind, and strength of the weak; yes, also light of those that see, and strength of the strong—hearken unto my soul, and hear it crying out of the depths. Woe is me! . . . Lord, help us to turn and seek you; for not as we have forsaken our Creator have you forsaken your creation. Let us turn and seek you, for we know you are here in our heart, when we confess to you, when we cast ourselves upon you, and weep in your bosom, after all our rugged ways; and you gently wipe away our tears, and we weep the more for joy; because you, Lord—not man of flesh and blood—but you, Lord, who made us, remake and comfort us. Amen. *Augustine*

SOURCES

Prayer of Augustine taken from *Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson, 102.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 26-28, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 298-299.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 194, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 406-407.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 105, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 434.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 104, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 433.

Prayer of confession taken from *Worship Sourcebook*, 89-90.

Session 9

Desiver Us

OVERVIEW

In this session, we pray the sixth and final petition of the Lord's Prayer, *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. This prayer asks for God to keep us from temptation. It also seeks God's help to persevere through the trials, temptations, and tests we face. Prayer is the most powerful force there is in resisting temptation. When we pray, God turns our eyes to Jesus who gives us life in his ways.

STUDY

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. *James 1:12-18*

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. *1 Peter 5:6-11*

See also Psalm 119:37, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 2:18,

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 106

What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

In the sixth petition, which is, *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*, we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. What are praying for in the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*?
2. What comfort is found in this prayer?
3. How does this prayer challenge us?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer*, "Deliver Us"

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 127

What does the sixth petition mean?

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" means: We are so weak that we cannot stand on our own for a moment, and our sworn enemies—the devil, the world, and our own flesh—never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong by the power of your Holy Spirit, so that we may not be defeated in this spiritual fight, but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 195

What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

In the sixth petition (which is, *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*), acknowledging, that the most wise, righteous, and gracious God, for divers holy and just

ends, may so order things, that we may be assaulted, foiled, and for a time led captive by temptations; that Satan, the world, and the flesh, are ready powerfully to draw us aside, and ensnare us; and that we, even after the pardon of our sins, by reason of our corruption, weakness, and want of watchfulness, are not only subject to be tempted, and forward to expose ourselves unto temptations, but also of ourselves unable and unwilling to resist them, to recover out of them, and to improve them; and worthy to be left under the power of them: we pray, that God would so overrule the world and all in it, subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan, order all things, bestow and bless all means of grace, and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we and all his people may be his providence be kept from being tempted to sin; or, if tempted, that by his Spirit we may be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation; or when fallen, raised again and recovered out of it, and have a sanctified use and improvement thereof: that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, Satan trodden under our feet, and we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil, forever.

HISTORIC PRAYER

Write your blessed name, O Lord, upon my heart,
there to remain so indelibly engraved,
that no prosperity, no adversity shall ever move me from
your love.

Be to me a strong tower of defense,
a comforter in tribulation,
a deliverer in distress,
a very present help in trouble,
and a guide to heaven through the many temptations
and dangers of this life. Amen. *Thomas à Kempis*

SOURCES

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 127, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 332.

Prayer of Thomas à Kempis taken from *Be Thou My Vision* by Jonathan Gibson, 183.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 195, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 407.

*The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 434, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 434.*

Session 10

Practicing the Presence

OVERVIEW

In this final session, as we conclude the Lord's Prayer, we turn our attention to practicing the presence of God through solitude, Biblical meditation, and praying in everyday life. Solitude is more than being alone. It is a discipline of attention, putting away distractions so that our heart and mind can focus on Jesus. Biblical meditation is also a practice of God's presence, where we dwell on a particular Scripture, read it over and over, perhaps even write it down to allow the Word to soak deep. Finally, it is important for us to remember God is with us always. Wherever we are, whatever circumstance we find ourselves, right then and there is the time and place God is near, for we have union with Christ. Practicing the presence of God means listening and talking to God in all circumstances, remembering we are God's children. Our Father delights to listen to our hearts. Through the Word and Spirit, a life of prayer is listening to the heart of God.

STUDY

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night[h] he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. *Mark 6:46-52*

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. *1 Thessalonians 5:14-22*

See also Psalm 46:10, Luke 10:38-42; 18:1-8.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 107

What doth the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer teach us?

The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, which is, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen*, teacheth us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to him; and, in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, *Amen*.

REFLECT AND JOURNAL

1. What do I notice?
2. What does it mean?
3. What do I want to know more about?

DISCUSS

1. What does it mean to pray without ceasing?
2. What might it look like to pray throughout the day?

FURTHER RESOURCES

Companion Audio: *Prayer*, "Practicing the Presence"

The Belgic Confession, Article 26

The Intercession of Christ

We believe that we have no access to God except through the one and only Mediator and Intercessor: Jesus Christ the Righteous.^a

He therefore was made man, uniting together the divine and human natures, so that we human beings might have access to the divine Majesty. Otherwise we would have no access.

But this Mediator, whom the Father has appointed between himself and us, ought not terrify us by his greatness, so that we have to look for another one, according to our fancy. For neither in heaven nor among creatures on earth is there anyone who loves us more than Jesus Christ does. Although he was “in the form of God,” he nevertheless “emptied himself,” taking the form of “a man” and “a servant” for us;^b and he made himself “completely like his brothers.”^c

Suppose we had to find another intercessor. Who would love us more than he who gave his life for us, even though “we were his enemies”?^d And suppose we had to find one who has prestige and power. Who has as much of these as he who is seated “at the right hand of the Father,”^e and who has all power “in heaven and on earth”?^f And who will be heard more readily than God’s own dearly beloved Son?

So then, sheer unbelief has led to the practice of dishonoring the saints, instead of honoring them. That was something the saints never did nor asked for, but which in keeping with their duty, as appears from their writings, they consistently refused.

We should not plead here that we are unworthy—for it is not a question of offering our prayers on the basis of our own dignity but only on the basis of the excellence and dignity of Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is ours by faith.

Since the apostle for good reason wants us to get rid of this foolish fear—or rather, this unbelief—he says to us that Jesus Christ was “made like his brothers in all things,” that he might be a high priest who is merciful and faithful to purify the sins of the people.^g For since he suffered, being tempted, he is also able to help those who are tempted.^h

And further, to encourage us more to approach him he says, “Since we have a high priest, Jesus the Son of God, who has entered into heaven, we maintain our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to have compassion for our weaknesses, but one who was tempted in all things, just as we are, except for sin. Let us go then with confidence to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace, in order to be helped.”ⁱ The same apostle says that we “have liberty to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus. Let us go, then, in assurance of faith. . . .”^j

Likewise, “Christ’s priesthood is forever. By this he is able to save completely those who draw near to God through him who always lives to intercede for them.”^k

What more do we need? For Christ himself declares: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to my Father but by me.”^l Why should we seek another intercessor?

Since it has pleased God to give us his Son as our Intercessor, let us not leave him for another—or rather seek, without ever finding. For when God gave him to us he knew well that we were sinners.

Therefore, in following the command of Christ we call on the heavenly Father through Christ, our only Mediator, as we are taught by the Lord’s Prayer, being assured that we shall obtain all we ask of the Father in his name.

a | John 2:1 *b* Phil. 2:6-8 *c* Heb. 2:17 *d* Rom. 5:10 *e* Rom. 8:34; Heb. 1:3 *f* Matt. 28:18 *g* Heb. 2:17 *h* Heb. 2:18 *i* Heb. 4:14-16 *j* Heb. 10:19, 22 *k* Heb. 7:24-25 *l* John 14:6

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 55

How doth Christ make intercession?

Christ maketh intercession, by his appearing in our nature continually before the Father in heaven, in the merit of his obedience and sacrifice on earth, declaring his will to have it applied to all believers; answering all accusations against them, and procuring for them quiet of conscience, notwithstanding daily failings; access with boldness to the throne of grace, and acceptance of their persons and services.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 128

How do you conclude this prayer?

“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”

This means we have made all these petitions of you because, as our all-powerful king, you are both willing and able to give us all that is good; and because your holy name, and not we ourselves, should receive all the praise, forever.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 129

What does the little word “Amen” express?

“Amen” means: This shall truly and surely be!

For it is much more certain that God has heard my prayer than I feel in my heart that I desire such things from him.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 196

What doth the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer teach us?

The conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer (which is, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen*), teacheth us to enforce our petitions with arguments, which are to be taken, not from any worthiness in ourselves, or in any other creature, but from God; and with our prayers to join praises, ascribing to God alone eternal sovereignty, omnipotency, and glorious excellency; in regard whereof, as he is able and willing to help us, so we by faith are emboldened to plead with him that he would, and

quietly to rely upon him, that he will fulfill our requests. And, to testify this our desire and assurance, we say, *Amen*.

HISTORIC PRAYER

Lord, since eternity is yours, do you not know of what I speak to you? Or do you see in time, what passes in time? Why then do I so often speak to you in time?

Truly I do not pray so you will learn from me, but to stir up my devotion toward you. We pray so that we all may say, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised."

I have said it already, and will say it again: I do this for the love of your love.

For we pray also, and yet Truth (that is, Jesus himself) has said, "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8).

So it is our affections that we lay open to you, confessing our own miseries, and your mercies on us.

Through prayer, you may free us wholly. Through prayer, we may cease to be miserable in ourselves, and blessed in you.

Through prayer, we see how you have called us to become poor in spirit, and meek, and mourners, hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Through prayer, we learn to become merciful, and pure in heart, and peacemakers.

See, I have told you many things, as I could and as I would, because you first wanted me to confess unto you, my Lord God. For you are good, and your mercy endures forever, amen. *Augustine*

SOURCES

Prayer of Augustine taken from *Font of Heaven: Prayers of the Early Church* edited by Robert Elmer, 14.

The Belgic Confession, Article 26, taken from taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, page 98-100.

The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 128-129, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 332-333.

The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 196, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 408.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 107, taken from *Creeds, Confessions, & Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* edited by Chad Van Dixon, 434.

Appendices

Praying the Psalms

Day 1

Morning Prayer: Psalms 1-5

Evening Prayer: Psalms 6-8

Day 2

Morning Prayer: Psalms 9-11

Evening Prayer: Psalms 12-14

Day 3

Morning Prayer: Psalms 15-17

Evening Prayer: Psalm 18

Day 4

Morning Prayer: Psalms 19-21

Evening Prayer: Psalms 22-23

Day 5

Morning Prayer: Psalms 24-26

Evening Prayer: Psalms 27-29

Day 6

Morning Prayer: Psalms 30-31

Evening Prayer: Psalms 32-34

Day 7

Morning Prayer: Psalms 35-36

Evening Prayer: Psalm 37

Day 8

Morning Prayer: Psalms 38-40

Evening Prayer: Psalms 41-43

Day 9

Morning Prayer: Psalms 44-46

Evening Prayer: Psalms 47-49

Day 10

Morning Prayer: Psalms 50-52

Evening Prayer: Psalms 53-55

Day 11

Morning Prayer: Psalms 56-58

Evening Prayer: Psalms 59-61

Day 12

Morning Prayer: Psalms 62-64

Evening Prayer: Psalms 65-67

Day 13

Morning Prayer: Psalm 68

Evening Prayer: Psalms 69-70

Day 14

Morning Prayer: Psalms 71-72

Evening Prayer: Psalms 73-74

Day 15

Morning Prayer: Psalms 75-77

Evening Prayer: Psalm 78

Day 16

Morning Prayer: Psalms 79-81

Evening Prayer: Psalms 82-85

Day 17

Morning Prayer: Psalms 86-88

Evening Prayer: Psalm 89

Day 18

Morning Prayer: Psalms 90-92

Evening Prayer: Psalms 93-94

Day 19

Morning Prayer: Psalms 95-97

Evening Prayer: Psalms 98-101

Day 20

Morning Prayer: Psalms 102-103

Evening Prayer: Psalm 104

Day 21

Morning Prayer: Psalm 105

Evening Prayer: Psalm 106

Day 22

Morning Prayer: Psalm 107

Evening Prayer: Psalms 108-109

Day 23

Morning Prayer: Psalms 110-113

Evening Prayer: Psalms 114-115

Day 24

Morning Prayer: Psalms 116-118

Evening Prayer: Psalm 119:1-32

Day 25

Morning Prayer: Psalm 119:33-72

Evening Prayer: Psalm 119:73-104

Day 26

Morning Prayer: Psalm 119:105-144

Evening Prayer: Psalm 119:145-176

Day 27

Morning Prayer: Psalms 120-125

Evening Prayer: Psalms 126-131

Day 28

Morning Prayer: Psalms 132-135

Evening Prayer: Psalms 136-138

Day 29

Morning Prayer: Psalms 139-141

Evening Prayer: Psalms 142-143

Day 30

Morning Prayer: Psalms 144-146

Evening Prayer: Psalms 147-150