



SEVEN SPRINGS Presbyterian Church



Prayer Guide

Based on the Lord's Prayer and the Westminster Larger Catechism

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WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit; with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

INTRODUCTION

Learning to pray is not an easy undertaking. Prayer runs contrary to our natural disposition as fallen human beings, for we do not naturally confess weakness or dependence. We prefer to be self-sufficient and strong. Yet the life of prayer requires us to acknowledge our need and to turn to God in humility. Even the disciples of our Lord felt their own insufficiency and asked, “Lord, teach us to pray.” In response, Jesus gave them the Lord’s Prayer—not only a prayer to be recited, but also a model to shape and guide all our prayers.

When we begin to structure our prayers after the pattern of the Lord’s Prayer, our petitions grow beyond mere lists of personal concerns. Instead, they expand to encompass the glory of God, the coming of His kingdom, and the needs of His church and the world. The Lord gave this prayer so that His people might be taught, corrected, and encouraged in the life of prayer.

In the seventeenth century, the Westminster Assembly produced the Westminster Standards, which include two catechisms: the Shorter Catechism, written for the instruction of children, and the Larger Catechism, written for adults. Within these catechisms, the divines provided a rich guide to prayer—laying down its foundations, offering practical counsel, and expanding on the six petitions of the Lord’s Prayer with an extensive catalogue of things for which we may pray.

The Lord’s Prayer may be divided into two parts: the “Thy” petitions, which focus on God’s name, kingdom, and will; and the “Us” petitions, which concern our daily bread, our forgiveness, and our deliverance. Taken together, they form a perfect pattern for our prayers, leading us from heaven down to earth, and from God’s glory to our deepest needs.

This booklet is a simple reformatting of the Westminster catechisms to aid you in growing in prayer. We encourage you to pray through these petitions regularly, both in private and in family worship. You may choose to focus on one petition each day, or select one item from each petition as you work through them. However, you use this resource, may it serve to enlarge your prayers, deepen your dependence upon God, and strengthen your faith in the One who taught us to pray.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Rickard". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Pastor

FOUNDATIONS

Prayer is directed to God alone

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. (WLC 179)

To our Heavenly Father

When we pray to draw near to God with confidence of his fatherly goodness, and our interest therein; with reverence, and all other child-like dispositions, heavenly affections, and due apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension: as also, to pray with and for others. (WLC 189)

Through a Mediator

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. (WLC 180)

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. (WLC 181)

By the Help of the Spirit

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. (WLC 182)

PRACTICAL

Who are we to pray for?

From WLC 183

1. The whole church of Christ upon earth; (Eph. 6:18, Ps. 28:9)
2. magistrates, (1 Tim. 2:1–2)
3. ministers; (Col. 4:3)
4. ourselves, (Gen. 32:11)
5. our brethren, (James 5:16)
6. our enemies; (Matt. 5:44)
7. all sorts of men living, (1 Tim. 2:1–2)
8. generations that shall live hereafter; (John 17:20, 2 Sam. 7:29)

We are not to pray for:

1. the dead, (2 Sam. 12:21–23)
2. those that are known to have sinned the sin unto death. (1 John 5:16)

What should we pray for?

From WLC 184

1. all things tending to the glory of God, (Matt. 6:9)
2. the welfare of the church, (Ps. 51:18, Ps. 122:6)
3. our own good (Matt. 7:11)
4. good for others; (Ps. 125:4)

What should we not Pray for?

1. Any thing that is unlawful. (1 John 5:14)

How are we to pray?

From WLC 185

1. With an awful apprehension of the majesty of God, (Eccl. 5:1)
2. Deep sense of our own
 - a. unworthiness, (Gen. 18:27, Gen. 32:10)
 - b. necessities, (Luke 15:17–19)
 - c. sins; (Luke 18:13–14)
3. Hearts that are
 - a. penitent, (Ps. 51:17)
 - b. thankful, (Phil. 4:6)
 - c. enlarged; (1 Sam. 1:15, 1 Sam. 2:1)
4. With
 - a. understanding, (1 Cor. 14:15)
 - b. faith, (Mark 11:24, James 1:6)
 - c. sincerity, (Ps. 145:18, Ps. 17:1)
 - d. fervency, (James 5:16)
 - e. love, (1 Tim. 2:8)
 - f. perseverance, (Eph. 6:18)
5. While
 - a. waiting upon him, (Micah 7:7)
 - b. in humble submission to his will. (Matt. 26:39)

PATTERN FOR PRAYER

Hallowed by thy name, (Matt. 6:9)

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. (WSC 101 *qf.* WLC 190)

Doctrine

We, in ourselves and all men, are utterly unable and to honor God aright (2 Cor. 3:5, Ps. 51:15).

Prayer

1. God would by his grace enable and incline us and others to know, to acknowledge, and highly to esteem him, (Ps. 67:2–3)
 - a. his titles, (Ps. 83:18)
 - b. his attributes, (Ps. 86:10–13,15)
 - c. his ordinances and word, (2 Thess. 3:1, Ps. 147:19–20, Ps. 138:1–3, 2 Cor. 2:14–15)
 - d. His works, and whatsoever he is pleased to make himself known by; (Ps. 145, Ps. 8)
2. All would glorify him in
 - a. thought, word, (Ps. 103:1, Ps. 19:14)
 - b. and deed: (Phil. 1:9,11)
3. God would prevent and remove:
 - a. atheism, (Ps. 67:1–4)
 - b. ignorance, (Eph. 1:17–18)
 - c. idolatry, (Ps. 97:7)
 - d. profaneness, (Ps. 74:18,22–23)
 - e. whatsoever is dishonorable to him; (2 Kings 19:15–16)
4. God would direct and dispose of all things to his own glory by his over-ruling providence. (2 Chron. 20:6,10–12, Ps. 83, Ps. 140:4,8)

Thy kingdom come, (Matt. 6:10)

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. (WSC 102 *cf.* WLC 191)

Doctrine

We, ourselves and all mankind, by nature, are under the dominion of sin and Satan (Eph. 2:2–3)

Prayer

1. The kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, (Ps. 68:1,18, Rev. 12:10–11)
2. The Kingdom of God would come through
 - a. the gospel propagated throughout the world, (2 Thess. 3:1)
 - b. the Jews called, (Rom. 10:1)
 - c. the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; (John 17:9,20, Rom. 11:25–26, Ps. 67)
 - d. the church
 - i. furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, (Matt. 9:38, 2 Thess. 3:1)
 - ii. be purged from corruption, (Mal. 1:11, Zeph. 3:9)
 - iii. countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate: (1 Tim. 2:1–2)
 - iv. the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed,
 - v. the ordinances of Christ be made effectual to
 1. Converting of those that are yet in their sins,
 2. Confirming, comforting, and building up of those that are already converted: (Acts 4:29–30, Eph. 6:18–20, Rom. 15:29–30,32, 2 Thess. 1:11, 2 Thess. 2:16–17)
3. The Christ the King would
 - a. rule in our hearts here, (Eph. 3:14–20)
 - b. hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever: (Rev. 22:20)
 - c. be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends. (Isa. 64:1–2, Rev. 4:8–11)

Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven, (Matt. 6:10)

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. (WSC 103 *cf.* WLC 192)

Doctrine

By nature, we and all men are

1. utterly unable and unwilling to know and do the will of God, (Rom. 7:18, Job 21:14, 1 Cor. 2:14)
2. prone to rebel against his word, (Rom. 8:7)
3. to repine and murmur against his providence, (Exod. 17:7, Numb. 14:2)
4. wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh, and of the devil: (Eph. 2:2)

Prayer

1. God would by his Spirit take away from ourselves and others all
 - a. blindness, (Eph. 1:17–18)
 - b. weakness, (Eph. 3:16)
 - c. indisposedness, (Matt. 26:40–41)
 - d. perverseness of heart; (Jer. 31:18–19)
2. God would, by his grace, make us able and willing to know, do, and submit to his will in all things, (Ps. 119:1,8,35–36, Acts 21:14) as the angels do in heaven. (Isa. 6:2–3, Matt. 18:10)
 - a. with the like humility, (Micah 6:8)
 - b. cheerfulness, (Ps. 100:2, Job 1:21, 2 Sam. 15:25–26)
 - c. faithfulness, (Isa. 38:3)
 - d. diligence, (Ps. 119:4–5)
 - e. zeal, (Rom. 12:11)
 - f. sincerity, (Ps. 119:80)
 - g. constancy, (Ps. 119:112)

Give us this day our daily bread, (Matt. 6:11)

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. (WSC 104 *cf.* WLC 193)

Doctrine

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; (Gen. 2:17, Gen. 3:17, Rom. 8:20–22, Jer. 5:25, Deut. 28:15–17)

1. These outward blessings are unable to sustain us, (Deut. 8:3)
2. We cannot merit these outward blessings, (Gen. 32:10)
3. We cannot procure these outward blessings by our own industry (Deut. 8:17–18)
4. We are prone to
 - a. Desire these outward blessings, (Jer. 6:13, Mark 7:21–22)
 - b. Get these outward blessings, (Hos. 12:7)
 - c. Use these outward blessings unlawfully: (James 4:3)

Prayer

1. 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; (Gen. 43:12–14, Gen. 28:20, Eph. 4:28, 2 Thess. 3:11–12, Phil. 4:6)
 - a. We would have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of these outward blessings, (1 Tim. 4:3–5)
 - b. We would be contentment in these outward blessings; (1 Tim. 6:6–8)
 - c. We would be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort. (Prov. 30:8–9)

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, (Matt. 6:12)

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. (WSC 105 *cf.* WLC 194)

Doctrine

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 (Rom. 3:9–12,19, Matt. 18:24–25, Ps. 130;3–4).

Prayer

1. 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, (Rom. 3:24–26, Heb. 9:22)
 - a. accept us in his Beloved; (Eph. 1:6–7)
 - b. continue his favour and grace to us, (2 Pet. 1:2)
 - c. pardon our daily failings, (Hosea 14:2, Jer. 14:7)
 - d. fill us with peace and joy, in giving us daily more and more assurance of forgiveness; (Rom. 15:13, Ps. 51:7–10,12)
2. For ourselves and others, be emboldened to ask, and encouraged to expect, when we have this testimony in ourselves, that we from the heart forgive others their offenses. (Luke 11:4, Matt. 6:14–15, Matt. 18:35)

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, (Matt. 6:13)

That God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted. (WSC 106 *cf.* WLC 195)

Doctrine

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; (2 Chron. 32:31) Satan, (1 Chron. 21:1) the world, (Luke 21:34, Mark 4:19) and the flesh, are ready powerfully to draw us aside, and ensnare us; (James 1:14)

We, even after the pardon of our sins, by reason of

1. our corruption, (Gal. 5:17)
2. weakness, and want of watchfulness, (Matt. 26:41)

We are still subject to be tempted, and forward to expose ourselves unto temptations, (Matt. 26:69–72, Gal. 2:11–14, 2 Chron. 18:3, 2 Chron. 19:2)

We are, in ourselves, unable and unwilling

1. to resist them,
2. to recover out of them,
3. to improve them; (Rom. 7:23–24, 1 Chron. 21:1–4, 2 Chron. 16:7–10)
4. worthy to be left under the power of them: (Ps. 81:11–12)

Prayer

1. God would so over-rule the world and all in it, (John 17:15)
 - a. subdue the flesh, (Ps. 51:10, Ps. 119:133)
 - b. restrain Satan, (2 Cor. 12:7–8)
2. God would order all things, (1 Cor. 10:12–13)
 - a. bestow and bless all means of grace, (Heb. 13:20–21)
 - b. and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we and all his people may by his providence be kept from being tempted to sin; (Matt. 26:41, Ps. 19:13)
3. We would, if tempted, raised again and recovered out of it, at either the;
 - a. At the hour of temptation; (Eph. 3:14–17, 1 Thess. 3:13, Jude 24)
 - b. Or when fallen, (Ps. 51:12)
4. We would have a sanctified use and improvement thereof: (1 Pet. 5:8–10)
 - a. that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, (2 Cor. 13:7,9)
 - b. Satan trodden under our feet, (Rom. 16:20, Zech. 3:2, Luke 22:31–32)
 - c. we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil, for ever. (John 17:15, 1 Thess. 5:23)

FURTHER RESOURCES

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