



*Living the Lord's Prayer*  
***Together***

*HOME Group Study*

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**HOME Group Study**

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***Living the Lord's Prayer Together***

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# *Living the*

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## **LIVING THE LORD'S PRAYER TOGETHER**

### INTRODUCTION TO THESE HOME GROUP STUDIES

The following six studies are written to be used in HOME groups for growth in prayer and discipleship. The bullets below explain the purpose of each part of these studies.

Break the Ice provides a suggestion or two meant to get light-hearted discussion flowing. The discussion starters introduce the study topic for each session.

Dig Into the Word is the section focused on Bible study. Scripture passages are to be read aloud by someone in your group while everyone else follows along in their own Bibles. The questions provided do not specifically deal with the content of the Scripture passage. Rather, they are meant to stimulate critical thinking, discussion, and life application. In other words, they are mostly aimed at the heart rather than the head. If these questions are confusing, then just ask the Lutheran question: What does this mean?

Sermon Discussion is identical (apart from the sermon date) for each study. For sermon content, refer to the message thoughts/questions found in each week's BrookFIELD Notes. Bring this insert and message notes to your HOME group meeting. Discuss the questions from the bulletin, and apply each week's sermon in your discussion.

Catechism Connection brings in Lutheran teaching on the Lord's Prayer each week. There are plenty of questions in this section that get at the meaning and life application of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

For Further Discussion presents additional relevant content and discussion questions for your group to use if time allows.

Pray from the Heart provides guidance for group prayer time. You are encouraged to pray for the needs of the group, as many groups normally do. These prayer suggestions are meant to align your group prayers the way our Lord taught us to pray.

A Promise to Remember is a Bible verse or two to memorize. Challenge one another to memorize these promises from God's word. Find creative ways to hold each other accountable, and lift up the discipline of Bible memorization in your group.

"Lord, use these studies to teach us to pray." – Duane Tweeten

# *Lord's Prayer*

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# Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

*Exalted and hallowed be His great name in the world which He created according to His will. May He rule His kingdom.* — The Qaddish, a Jewish Prayer

When Jesus' disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1), Jesus didn't say, "Just pray from your heart, whatever you feel." Jesus gave the disciples specific requests, specific words, which we know today as the Lord's Prayer or the "Our Father."

The disciples' question about prayer came from a curiosity that existed in Judaism. Many rabbis taught their followers how to pray. For example, the ancient Jewish Qaddish, part of which is quoted above, shows marked similarity to the first two petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Although historians have not discovered a direct link between the Lord's Prayer and the Qaddish, it is entirely likely that Jesus gave His disciples a form of prayer they knew, His personal version of the Qaddish.

Early Christians received the Lord's Prayer not just as an example of how one could pray, but also as a model of how one should pray. The Didache, the earliest Christian book about worship outside the New Testament, records the Lord's Prayer and encourages people to recite it three times a day. This builds on the Jewish tradition of daily prayer and its Old Testament roots.

Today the vast majority of Christians continue to recite the Lord's Prayer. Ask Christians from a variety of denominations how they pray and you'll soon discover that they share a common use of the Lord's Prayer. Lutherans recite the Lord's Prayer in personal devotions and public worship. However, Lutherans also use the Lord's Prayer as a confession of faith, to teach the faith to new believers.

This study of the Lord's Prayer builds on that tradition epitomized in Luther's Small Catechism. Following ancient custom, Martin Luther divided the Lord's Prayer in the following way:

- **Introduction**

- Our Father who art in heaven.

- **Seven Petitions**

- Hallowed be Thy name.

- Thy kingdom come.

- Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

- Give us this day our daily bread.

- And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

- And lead us not into temptation.

- But deliver us from evil.

- **Conclusion**

- Amen.

## (INTRODUCTION CONTINUED)

The text comes from Matthew 6:9–13. Luke 11:2–4 records Jesus’ prayer with slightly different wording. Lutherans usually end the Lord’s Prayer with the ancient doxology “For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.”

For Lutherans, the Lord’s Prayer highlights all the basic elements of prayer:

Praise: the introduction

Requests: the “Thy” petitions (1–3)

Thanksgiving: the first “us” petition (4)

Intercession: all of the “us” petitions (4–7)

Take special note of how much space Jesus gives to “spiritual” requests from God. Only the Fourth Petition focuses on earthly goods (and only for the current day, implying daily use of the prayer). So often our prayers falter into requests for “things.” As you go through this study, consider anew the spiritual blessings God wants you to have through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. Confidently make your requests in His name.

# *Introduction*

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# Lutheran

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## LUTHERN FACTS

All who worship the Holy Trinity and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins are regarded by Lutherans as fellow Christians, despite denominational differences.

Lutheran churches first described themselves as evangelische, or evangelical, churches. Opponents of these churches called them Lutheran after Dr. Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century German church reformer.

Lutherans are not disciples of Dr. Martin Luther but rather are disciples of Jesus Christ. They accept the name Lutheran because they agree with Dr. Luther's teaching from the Bible, as summarized in Luther's Small Catechism.

Although Martin Luther did not give fixed rules about prayer, he encouraged Christians to pray in the morning, the evening, and before and after meals.

Lutheran prayer and worship services tend to be less formal than Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox services but more formal than other Protestant services.

Most Lutherans pray quietly and listen as a pastor or layperson leads them in prayer. A prayer often ends with a recognizable conclusion so that everyone may say "Amen" together. Lutherans usually recite the Lord's Prayer together.

At home, the head of a Lutheran family is expected to lead the rest of the family in prayer.

Lutherans pray directly to God and not through the intercession of saints. They believe that God hears and answers prayer today, according to His good and gracious will. Lutherans are encouraged by Scripture to "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

For further study on prayer, the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations released a theological report in November 2011 called *Theology and Practice of Prayer: A Lutheran View*. The report has three major sections: What is prayer? Why do we pray? How do we pray? The seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer are examined in the third section. This resource can be purchased in a printed booklet or accessed online at [www.lcms.org/ctcr](http://www.lcms.org/ctcr) in .pdf format.

To prepare for "Our Father Is Holy," read Matthew 6

# Facts

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# *Our Father*

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## **OUR FATHER IS HOLY**

### OPENING WORSHIP

“Holy, Holy, Holy” (LW 168) appropriately introduces the holiness of God. Sing it as a group, or read it aloud slowly, thoughtfully.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity! Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee, casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea. Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee, Who wert and art and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee, though the eye made blind by sin Thy glory may not see, only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee, perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All Thy works shall praise Thy Name in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Spend some time discussing what you hope to learn about prayer. Understand that the purpose of prayer is not to receive every item on your wish list from a distant cosmic vending machine, but that prayer's purpose is to worship and glorify their heavenly Father. Rather, Jesus taught us to pray to God as our dear, and very near, heavenly Father for WHO-HE-IS, and for all He has done for us. Prayer is an opportunity to express our thanks and praise, as well as our deepest needs. As we worship Him in the act of praying, we present our requests to God, and we trust that God will answer our prayers according to His will.

# *Is Holy*

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## KIM'S STORY

Paul Miller tells the story of losing a contact lens on a camping trip with his family. When Paul suggested that they pray, his 14-year-old daughter burst into tears and said, "What good does it do? I've prayed for Kim to speak, and she isn't speaking." Kim is Ashley's younger sister who struggles with autism and developmental delay. Because of her weak fine-motor skills, she is also mute. Prayer was no mere formality for Ashley. She had taken God at his word and asked that he would let Kim speak. But nothing happened. Kim's muteness was testimony to a silent God. Prayer, it seemed, doesn't work.

Many Christians today ask similar difficult questions about prayer. Why pray if God knows everything anyway? Does prayer really make a difference? Does prayer change God's mind?

## BREAK THE ICE

As we begin this HOME group series, take a few minutes to build community in your group:

- For new groups, go around the room and introduce yourselves.
- For all groups, go over the group covenant. In your discussion, talk over meeting dates, times, locations, study leaders, and decide on who is bringing the refreshments!
- Answer these questions to get to know each other better:
  - When you were growing up, how familiar were you with the Lord's Prayer?
  - If very familiar, how did you learn it?
- Write down your answers to the following questions in the space provided. It's important to write them down because we will compare your answers now with your answers to the same questions asked at the end of this study.
  1. Why do you pray the Lord's Prayer?
  2. What difference does praying the Lord's Prayer make?

## DIG INTO THE WORD

1. Read Matthew 6:4–13. Jesus wanted His disciples to know the importance of prayer. What does he tell them? What are the general themes in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5–7? How does that impact the teaching of the Lord's Prayer?
2. Read Matthew 6:5–8. What was Jesus telling His disciples to avoid when they prayed? Read Isaiah 29:13. How does Jesus' teaching on prayer in Matthew 6 compare with the prophet's words in Isaiah?
3. Read Romans 8:15–17. How different would the Lord's Prayer be if it had started "MY Father who art in heaven. . . ?" What makes it possible to address God as "Our Father?"
4. Read Luke 11:9–13. What do we learn about God our Father? What might we lose if we did away with calling God "our Father"?
5. Read Exodus 20:1–7. What comes to mind when you hear the word "holy"? The First Petition states that God's name is to be hallowed, literally, "set apart." What do these verses teach about God's character?

6. How does the Second Commandment, "You shall not take God's name in vain," and the First Petition, "Hallowed be Thy Name," connect with each other? Are there ways you dishonor God's name in your life?
7. Read Phillippians 2:9–11 and Acts 4:12. What do these Bible verses say about the name of the Lord? What message does our culture send about honoring and respecting God's name? What does it mean to keep God's name holy in your daily life?

### **SERMON DISCUSSION**

This section is intended for your group to reflect and personally apply the sermon from September 30/October 1, 2012, at BLC. Refer to your bulletin insert for sermon discussion questions. The sermon CD is available at the information center, or you can download the sermon from the BLC website to listen to in your group.

1. What key points from the sermon were especially meaningful?
2. What did you find most challenging, interesting, or significant in the sermon?
3. Was there anything in the sermon that raises a question in your mind?

### **CATECHISM CONNECTION**

In Luther's Explanation of the Introduction to the Lord's Prayer, he uses the following words: "With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father."

1. If these words really do summarize the key thoughts of Luther's introductory words to the Lord's Prayer, what difference does that make in your prayer life?
2. Do you experience the unity of community when praying the Lord's Prayer? How could your HOME group experience "true community" more?
3. In Luther's Explanation of the First Petition, he explains that to hallow God's name means to hold what God's Word teaches as true, as well as to live our lives as people set apart by Christ. So what does that look like in your life when you take it seriously? How does it impact how you approach friendship, enemies, marriage, parenthood, etc.?

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

Human fathers may be good or bad. For children from broken or abusive homes, the term "father" may cause more anxiety than encouragement or comfort.

1. If someone were to say they have trouble calling God “Our Father” because their earthly father abandoned or abused them, how would you respond?
2. In contrast, several New Testament passages reveal that the first Christians prayed to God with the Aramaic word “Abba” (i.e., “daddy”). How might the name “Abba” encourage you to pray?
3. When you address God with the intimate title of “Father,” you are speaking to God, whose name is to be hallowed. How do you reconcile these two truths?

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### THE REST OF KIM’S STORY

To encourage you to keep on praying, here is the rest of the story about how God answered prayers for Kim to speak. Through a speech computer and several years of learning to use it, she learned to speak with an electronic voice. God answered the prayers for Kim to speak, but the answer was inseparable from repenting, serving, managing, and waiting. This prayer, like so many others, was answered in the context of the larger story that is all God’s doing.

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### PRAY FROM THE HEART

Jesus taught His disciples to pray sincerely from their heart, not with fancy words or long prayers so that they could impress others. How often have you recited the Lord’s Prayer without paying attention to its meaning?

1. What have you learned about praying from the heart as a result of this study?
2. What have you learned specifically about honoring your Holy Father?
3. How will what you have learned impact the meaning of “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name” when you pray it?
4. What would you like to see happen in your HOME group’s prayer life as a result of this study series? As you conclude this study, include some of these thoughts in your prayers.

### A PROMISE TO REMEMBER

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. (Romans 8:15–16)

*To prepare for the next study, “God’s Reign,” read John 3:1–21.*

*God's*

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## **GOD'S REIGN**

### **OPENING WORSHIP**

Blessed Be the Lord God Almighty, by Maranatha Music

Father in heaven, how we love You,

We lift Your Name in all the earth.

May Your Kingdom be established in our praises,

As Your people declare Your mighty Words:

Blessed be the Lord God Almighty

Who was, and is, and is to come.

Blessed be the Lord God Almighty

Who reigns forevermore.

Bob Fitts

Sing these verses twice, or play them, perhaps via ipod or computer (youtube).

Spend some time discussing God's kingdom and God's will.

Pray this brief prayer: Lord, reign in me, and rein me in.

Meditate and discuss its implications.

*Reian*

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Here we may reign secure; and, in my choice  
 To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:  
 Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.  
 — John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

These rebellious words, attributed to Satan, are a helpful reminder as we study prayer. Although our Father reigns by His grace, Satan rules in a kingdom of darkness. Since all people on earth live in the crossfire of these two warring kingdoms, we have an urgent need to pray!

Although Jesus teaches on many occasions about the kingdom of God, His disciples struggled to understand and recognize it. For example, James and John longed to rule with Jesus on earth, even though God's kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. In Jesus' kingdom, if you want to be first, you will become last and be a servant of all. In this kingdom His Spirit leads you so that you are not conformed to the pattern of this world, but rather transformed by the renewing of your mind.

In Lutheran doctrine, God's kingdom comes when the heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit through the Word, so that we believe the Gospel and lead godly lives now and in eternity. The church (true believers) is Christ's kingdom (Apology to the Augsburg Confession, VII. 16).

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## BREAK THE ICE

If you had the choice of speaking to a “king” from current times or from history, which of the following would you most likely choose to talk to and why?

- “The King” – Elvis
- “The Queen of Soul” – Aretha Franklin
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- The King of Queens – Kevin James
- The Dancing King – Donald Driver
- King Henry VIII
- Some other king or queen?

## DIG INTO THE WORD

1. Read John 3:1–18 and Romans 14:17. Nicodemus thought Jesus was talking about a physical rebirth. According to these Bible verses, what is God's kingdom and how do we receive it?
2. Luke 12:22–32. Why do we sometimes think that God's kingdom and our kingdoms can coexist happily? What happens when we try to accommodate both in our lives? What hinders God's kingdom among us?
3. Read 1 Timothy 2:3–6. What is God's desire? What means does God provide to accomplish this?
4. Though there is turmoil and trouble in the world today, God is still on the move, and His kingdom is near and here. As you look at your life, your church, other followers of Jesus you know, and the work of God around the world, what are some of the signs you see that assure you that God's kingdom is near and here?

5. Read John 2:15–17 and Romans 12:1–2. What do we learn about the will of God?
6. Read Galatians 5:16–21. Why is it so difficult to follow the will of God? Christians often find themselves in a “my will” vs. “Thy will” tug-of-war contest. What is an area of tug-of-war in your life right now?
7. Read Genesis 12:1–5a. What questions cross your mind as you hear God’s call to Abram? How does the call for Abram (Abraham) to leave his homeland for the “Promised Land” tie into our desire to understand God’s will with great clarity? With great faith? How does clarity work against faith?

### **SERMON DISCUSSION**

This section is intended for your group to reflect and personally apply the sermon from October 7/8, 2012, at BLC. Refer to your bulletin insert for sermon discussion questions. The sermon CD is available at the information center, or you can download the sermon from the BLC website to listen to in your group.

1. What key points from the sermon were especially meaningful?
2. What did you find most challenging, interesting, or significant in the sermon?
3. Was there anything in the sermon that raises a question in your mind?

### **CATECHISM CONNECTION**

In Luther’s Explanation of the Second Petition, he explains that to pray “Thy kingdom come,” means that God’s kingdom comes into the world without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that God’s kingdom would come to us also.

1. How would our lives change if we prayed “Your kingdom come” and both understood and lived out its implications?
2. In Luther’s Explanation of the Third Petition, he explains that to pray “Thy will be done,” means that He must break the plans that the devil seeks to tempt us with, the plans the world keeps pressuring us to conform to, and the plans our own sinful nature cooks up for us.
3. How can we put the tug-of-war of wills to the test to discern our will versus God’s will?

## FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

In reading John 3, we learn that through baptism we have been born again into God's kingdom. It seems so simple, yet the battle rages between personal agendas and God's agenda.

1. Identify one specific area in your life where you have fought against God's reign.
  
2. Identify one person with whom you can share the Good News of God's kingdom.
  
3. In prayer, offer your life and the person mentioned above to God.

## PRAY FROM THE HEART

1. What are some specific ways you can pray for the kingdom of God to . . .
  - reign more in our lives?
  - be unleashed within our church?
  - impact our culture and society?
  
2. Which of the following things tend to get in your way of living out the prayer "Thy will be done"?
  - A desire for clarity before we move out in faith
  - Fantasies we hold about what our life, or the Christian life, is to be like
  - Our desire to lay out our plans and for God to embrace or bless them

Please begin to pray around the room over specific requests and these desires for the Kingdom of God to come and for God's will to be done among us. At the conclusion, join together in the Lord's Prayer.

## A PROMISE TO REMEMBER

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.  
(Matthew 6:33)

To prepare for the next study, "Our Daily Bread," read Matthew 6.

# *Our Daily*

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## **OUR DAILY BREAD**

### **OPENING WORSHIP**

“Now Thank We All Our God” (LW 443).

Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices

Who wondrous thins has done, in Whom His world rejoices

Who from our mothers' arms has blest us on our way

With countless gifts of love and still is ours today.

Oh, may this bounteous God through all our life be near us

With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us

And keep us in His grace and guide us when perplexed

And free us from all harm in this world and the next!

Consider one of our brothers from a previous century. George Mueller ran orphanages in England in the 1800's. He never told any human of his financial needs for the children. He only asked God. One time he and the children were gathered around the dinner table. There was nothing on that table to eat. He had them join him in thanking God for the food they were to eat that day. By the end of the prayer, someone had set a bag of groceries outside the front door! This man, like Elijah, lived out the petition Jesus gives us. What are the dangers for us with our fridges, and freezers today?

# *Bread*

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“Admittance to the School of Prayer is by an entrance test with only two questions. The first one is: Are you in real need? The second is: Do you admit that you are helpless to handle that need? Whatever I have learned about prayer has come as the result of times when I could answer a resounding yes to both questions. Looking back over my life, those times of need stand out like mountain peaks rather than, as one might suppose, valleys of despond. Peaks — because each time I learned something important about God — how real He is and how gloriously able to answer prayer.”  
– Catherine Marshall

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### **BREAK THE ICE**

1. Describe a moment when you experienced a perspective shift, realizing how much you have (of material value) compared to many people in the world who have very little. How did it impact you? For how long?
2. Give an example of a person (yourself or someone else) who expressed the feeling that they did not have enough, but in reality, they had so much. How do you think God feels when his children stand at a full closet or refrigerator and complain that they need more?

### **DIG INTO THE WORD**

1. Read Matthew 5:45 and Psalm 145:15–16. Do you think that God is fair in giving his blessings to both the just and the unjust? Do you consider the blessings listed in these passages the same as daily bread? Why should we pray for daily bread when God provides the same blessings for everyone?
2. Read Romans 13:8–10 and Philippians 4:10–13. What does Paul say about material possessions? Why is the pursuit of ownership such a great temptation? How do you suppose Paul learned to be content regardless of his situation?
3. Read 1 Timothy 6:6–10. What does Paul say about contentment? Do you agree with what he says about money? Has the love of money been destructive in your life? If so, share an example from your own experience.
4. Read Matthew 19:16–26. Can you relate to the young man who went away sorrowful because he had great possessions? What does Jesus go on to say about the cost that follows after you receive the free gift of eternal life?
5. Compare Matthew 6:19–24 with the promises in Psalm 23. As you look at your own life, where are you making your investments? Whom are you serving – your Shepherd or yourself (i.e., via your stuff)?

6. Read Matthew 6:25–34 and Philippians 4:6. In the Matthew passage Jesus reminds us that God provides us with daily bread (food, clothing, etc.), so we ought not to be anxious about these things. In light of this passage, why does Jesus teach us to pray for daily bread? When you pray for daily bread, does that help to reduce your worry over earthly possessions?

### **SERMON DISCUSSION**

This section is intended for your group to reflect and personally apply the sermon from October 14/15, 2012, at BLC. Refer to your bulletin insert for sermon discussion questions. The sermon CD is available at the information center, or you can download the sermon from the BLC website to listen to in your group.

1. What key points from the sermon were especially meaningful?
2. What did you find most challenging, interesting, or significant in the sermon?
3. Was there anything in the sermon that raises a question in your mind?

### **CATECHISM CONNECTION**

In Luther's Explanation of the Fourth Petition, he explains that to pray "Give us this day our daily bread" means more than just getting our daily supply of carbs. He includes in this petition "everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, workers, rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

1. How does this expanded list impact your understanding of this petition?
2. Is there anything in this list that you would question or something not in the list that you would add?

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

As we conclude this Bible study, reflect for a moment on your priorities and attitudes toward all that God has richly and daily provided for you.

1. What does it mean to be a good steward of God's gifts? What are the areas in your life where you are being a good steward of the gifts God has given to you to manage?
2. Are there any areas in your life in which you have not been a good steward? How has the Word and the Holy Spirit convicted you to change?

3. Identify one person or family with whom you can share some of the material gifts with which God has blessed you. What are some practical ways you could do this?

### **PRAY FROM THE HEART**

“Why is prayer so startlingly effective when we admit our helplessness? First, because God insists upon our facing up to the true facts of our human situation. Thus we lay under our prayer-structure the firm foundation of truth rather than self-delusion or wishful thinking. This recognition and acknowledgement of our helplessness is also the quickest way to the right attitude which God recognizes as essential to prayer. It deals a mortal blow to the most serious sin of all – man’s independence that ignores God.” – Catherine Marshall

Realizing your helpless condition, don’t forget how much God loves you and longs to hear your prayers. Before beginning your group prayer time, pause silently for a minute and consider God’s generous provisions. Then spend time offering praise and thanksgiving to God. At the conclusion, join together in the Lord’s Prayer.

### **A PROMISE TO REMEMBER**

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:33)

To prepare for “Forgiveness,” read Luke 15:11–32.

# Forgiveness

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## FORGIVENESS

### OPENING WORSHIP

Recite Psalm 51 responsively. Then, sing "Lord, Have Mercy (M.W. Smith)  
Jesus, I've forgotten the words that You have spoken  
Promises that burned within my heart have now grown dim  
With a doubting heart I follow the paths of earthly wisdom  
Forgive me for my unbelief; Renew the fire again

Chorus

*Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy on me.*

*Lord, have mercy, Christ, have mercy, Lord, have mercy on me.*

I have built an altar where I worship things of men  
I have taken journeys that have drawn me far from You  
Now I am returning to Your mercies ever flowing  
Pardon my transgressions; Help me love You again!

Chorus

I have longed to know You and Your tender mercies  
Like a river of forgiveness ever flowing without end  
I bow my heart before You in the goodness of Your presence  
Your grace forever shining Like a beacon in the night

Chorus

God commands us to forgive one another so we can avoid the bitter trap of pain and holding on to grudges. Share an example from your own life how forgiveness has unlocked your heart to freedom and new growth. God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is the key to discipleship. This study teaches the critical need of giving and receiving forgiveness for normal everyday application in a disciple's life.

Norwegian theologian Ole Hallesby settled on the single word “helplessness” as the best summary of the heart attitude that God accepts as prayer. “Whether it takes the form of words or not, does not mean anything to God, only to ourselves,” he adds. “Only he who is helpless can truly pray.” – Philip Yancey

Asking for forgiveness requires a helpless attitude. The idea of forgiveness is easy to ponder; the practice of forgiveness is another matter. Two brothers haven’t spoken for years because they have unresolved issues about the family business. A son weeps at his dying father’s bedside after years of silence due to bitterness and anger from the past. Broken relationships are commonplace, and they result in further pain and anguish.

In the Fifth Petition, Jesus is trying to spare His people such pain by teaching His disciples the importance of forgiveness. In this lesson, participants will recognize the need for forgiveness, celebrate God’s gift of forgiveness, and apply the power God gives to forgive others.

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## BREAK THE ICE

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how forgiving are you in your life (1 = “one strike and you’re out in my book,” and 10 = “forgiving is as easy as breathing for me”)?
2. Is it really Biblical to “forgive and forget”? What is the reasoning behind saying it is or isn’t? Why do so many Christians believe it is? What dangers are possible when we forgive and forget?

## DIG INTO THE WORD

1. **Read Ecclesiastes 7:20, Jeremiah 7:20, and Romans 6:23.** What is the default condition of the human heart? In your everyday life, do you recognize this truth about your fallen human condition? Or do you tend to think that you’re a pretty good person?
2. **Review the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11–32.** How does this parable describe the father’s love for his younger son? What did the father do when his son humbly returned home to be his servant?
3. How does the elder son respond to the father’s love for him? Both sons are lost. Both sons want the father’s things, but they don’t want a relationship with the father. With which son do you most closely identify?
4. **Read Psalm 103:8–13.** How does the Lord deal with undeserving sinners? God completely forgives sins, yet we still deal with the consequences of our sin. Why is it so difficult to be free from the burden of guilt and shame of sin?
5. **Read Colossians 3:12–13, Ephesians 4:32, and Matthew 18:21–35.** We are reminded in these passages that because God has first forgiven us, now we are to forgive one another. It’s easy for us to minimize our own sin and then magnify the sin we notice in others. How can we more readily extend grace and forgiveness to one another?

## **SERMON DISCUSSION**

This section is intended for your group to reflect and personally apply the sermon from October 21/22, 2012, at BLC. Refer to your bulletin insert for sermon discussion questions. The sermon CD is available at the information center, or you can download the sermon from the BLC website to listen to in your group.

1. What key points from the sermon were especially meaningful?
2. What did you find most challenging, interesting, or significant in the sermon?
3. Was there anything in the sermon that raises a question in your mind?

## **CATECHISM CONNECTION**

In the Luther's Small Catechism the question is asked, "What does it show when we forgive others?" It shows that we truly believe that God has forgiven us is the answer given. "Just as we daily sin much against God, and yet He forgives everything through grace, so we, too, must ever forgive our neighbor who does us injury, violence, and wrong, shows malice toward us, and so on. If, therefore, you do not forgive, then do not think that God forgives you." (Large Catechism III, 94-95).

1. Does this petition suggest that Christ is laying out a "precondition" for forgiveness? In other words, is Christ saying: "Before I forgive you, you must forgive others" or "I'll forgive you just as much as you forgive others"?
2. If it is a precondition, what does that mean for our forgiveness when we receive God's grace and his unconditional love?

## **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

Ole Hallesby writes in his book that he learned much about prayer from a spiritually gifted man named Samuel Zeller. Hallesby learned the purpose and meaning of prayer: To glorify the name of God. "The scales fell from my eyes. I saw in a new light the misuse of prayer and the difficulties connected with prayer as well as the place of our own efforts in prayer. Prayer life has its own laws, as the rest of life has. The fundamental law in prayer is this: Prayer is given and ordained for the purpose of glorifying God. Prayer is the appointed way of giving Jesus the opportunity to exercise His supernatural powers of salvation. And in so doing, He desires to make use of us."

– O. Hallesby, *Prayer* © 1931 Augsburg Publishing House, p. 127.

1. Do you agree with Hallesby's reflection on the meaning and purpose of prayer? Why or why not?

## **PRAY FROM THE HEART**

1. Read Matthew 5:23–26. What is this passage of Scripture saying to us about taking the initiative to offer forgiveness and reconciliation with a neighbor?
  
2. Forgiveness is the greatest gift offered through Christ, the very heart of the Christian faith. Unfortunately, we often take God's forgiveness for granted or are too stubborn to accept an apology from a close friend. It's easy to justify our behavior and allow ourselves to be guided by our sinful nature rather than by God's Spirit. Is there a situation in your life where you need to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with someone? If so, make an action plan right now. Share your intentional plan with a trusted accountability partner and give that person permission to check in with your progress.

Spend some time in silence contemplating the situation(s) you listed in the paragraph above. Ask God to empower you to follow His Spirit's leading in your life. Openly accept His love and forgiveness. Jesus died for you! Close the study in prayer and conclude with the Lord's Prayer.

## **A PROMISE TO REMEMBER**

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.  
(Psalm 103:12)

*To prepare for "God's Protection," read Matthew 4:1–11.*

# God's

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## **GOD'S PROTECTION**

### **OPENING WORSHIP**

Sing “ Onward Christian Soldiers (LW 518).

Onward, Christian soldiers marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before  
Christ, the royal Master leads against the foe, Forward into battle see His banners go!  
Onward, Christian soldiers marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before!

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,  
But the Church of Jesus constant will remain!  
Gates of hell can never 'gainst the Church prevail  
We have Christ's own promise and that cannot fail  
Onward, Christian soldiers marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before

Onward, then, ye faithful, join our happy throng, blend with ours your voices in the triumph song  
Glory, laud and honor unto Christ, the King; This through countless ages men and angels sing  
Onward, Christian soldiers marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before

Why do people often blame God for life's difficulties? Did God ever promise a “cross-less” blissful life on earth? Why do we sometimes think He did? The Church is often pictured as a “hospital” for the wounded. If that is the only picture we think of, we have a very limited view, and indeed, we are limiting God's use of us. The Church is also an army in battle (see Eph 6:1-18). There is a war going on!

# *Protection*

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“Culture has been drastically shaped by the Star Wars phenomena. No one could have guessed the huge impact it would make. But the struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, is classic. The Star Wars films picture the philosophy of dualism at its finest. Whether they consider themselves dualists or not, most of the world’s people live in doubt about life’s outcome. Will evil or good prevail? Will darkness or light prove stronger in the end? In dualistic thought, the two forces are locked in perpetual battle. Dualists believe the battle will last forever, and neither side will ever or can ever defeat the other.” – Jane Fryar

The devil wants to drive us away from God and His kingdom, but the final outcome is never in doubt. In the Sixth Petition we pray for God’s protection from temptation, and in the Seventh Petition we acknowledge that God does protect and deliver us from evil.

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## **BREAK THE ICE**

Which of the following temptations are you most likely to fall prey to and why?

- Reaching for an extra piece of cake or pie
- Spending extra on an impulse buy at the store
- Sharing an extra juicy bit of gossip with a friend
- Skipping out on work to do something fun

## **DIG INTO THE WORD**

1. **Read Matthew 4:1–11.** Three times Jesus comes face-to-face with the devil and temptation. In each of the temptations Jesus faced, what might have been appealing? It’s interesting that Jesus doesn’t confront temptation relying on his own authority. How does Jesus overcome Satan’s temptation each time? What can we learn from the way He handles temptation? How often do you use the Word of God to battle temptation?
2. **Read James 1:13–14.** Author David Timms in his book, *Living the Lord’s Prayer*, makes the following observation: “Our mortal enemy is not the one who forces us against our will, but the one who destroys us by appealing to our will.” How does this compare to what James says about temptation? What does he say is the cause of temptation? What desires lurk within each of us that need the Lord’s help to combat?
3. **Read 1 Corinthians 10:6–13.** What promise does God provide when we are tempted? How does this promise give us a better understanding of why we pray this petition?
4. **Read Hebrews 2:17–18 and 4:15–16.** What hope do these passages this give you as you face temptations in your life?

5. **Read Ephesians 6:10–12.** Here Paul talks about the nature of spiritual warfare and how we are up against “the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” How does this passage put these petitions in a different light? If we were commanders charged with preparing Christian soldiers for battle against Satan, which of his tactics to lure us into sin would we warn them about?

### **SERMON DISCUSSION**

This section is intended for your group to reflect and personally apply the sermon from October 28/29, 2012 at BLC. Refer to your Brookfield Notes for sermon content and discussion questions. The sermon CD is available at the information center, or you can download the sermon from the BLC website to listen to in your group.

1. What key points from the sermon were especially meaningful?
2. What did you find most challenging, interesting, or significant in the sermon?
3. Was there anything in the sermon that raises a question in your mind?

### **CATECHISM CONNECTION**

In Luther's Explanation of the Sixth Petition, he explains that we are praying that “God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, or other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory.”

1. If Paul's (and Luther's) description of the Christian life as a battle is true (and it is!), how does (or can) that lead us to live differently?
2. Can you share a time you feel like you've stood up to temptation or testing and in God's power stood firm (or, if you're comfortable acknowledging it, you could even share a time when you didn't stand firm.)? What did you learn?

### **FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

1. On December 29, 1890, the U.S. Cavalry confronted and attempted to disarm a band of more than 300 Sioux Indians at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. The Indians believed that their ritual clothing, “ghost shirts,” would protect them from the soldiers' bullets. When the shooting stopped, 25 cavalrymen had died, but more than 150 Indian men, women, and children had also died. Still others were wounded. Their “ghost shirts” had not protected them. What was missing in the faith of the Sioux who were shot at Wounded Knee?

2. Read Daniel 3:16–18. How does the faith expressed by these young men connect with God's promises? What does their faith tell you about the real possibility of suffering and even death for the cause of Christ?

## **PRAY FROM THE HEART**

**Read Matthew 16: 18 to prepare your heart for prayer.**

“We dare not underestimate the power of darkness. Peter did that and ended up denying Christ. Judas toyed with the darkness, and it stole his soul. On the other hand, we dare not despair. The church is on the march, not under siege. Hell does not advance on us. No, Satan and his demons are the ones fighting a holding action. God has, by our Savior's victory on Calvary, pushed the darkness back; as we continue to unite in prayer against it, we keep on pushing it back.” – Jane Fryar

Before your usual HOME group prayer time this week, create a breath prayer – a prayer that you can say in one breath – to help you remember to ask for God's help when facing temptation.

- First, think of a special name for God that you like to use: i.e., God, Jesus, Christ, Lord, Savior, Creator, Father.
- Next, choose a few words to form a brief sentence asking God to help you when you are tempted. It may be something like, “Help me choose what is right.”
- Finally, combine the name for God with your brief sentence. Try placing the name for God at the beginning and at the end of the sentence to see which fits best.

Write out your breath prayer and begin to use it, especially when you feel weak.

## **A PROMISE TO REMEMBER**

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

*To prepare for “Amen,” read Matthew 14:22–36.*

# Amen

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## AMEN

### OPENING WORSHIP

Sing or read together this hymn "Like a River Glorious." Written in 1874 by Francis Havergal, an English poet/hymnwriter, this text points to the source of perfect peace.

Like a river glorious, is God's perfect peace,  
Over all victorious, in its bright increase;  
Perfect, yet it floweth, fuller every day,  
Perfect, yet it groweth, deeper all the way.

Refrain

*Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest  
Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.*

Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,  
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand;  
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,  
Not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there.

Refrain

Every joy or trial falleth from above,  
Traced upon our dial by the Sun of Love;  
We may trust Him fully all for us to do.  
They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.

Refrain

Consider the last line of the third verse. True. Genuine. Staying on the course. Amen. Jesus used that word. Wherever the King James version says "Verily, verily, I say unto thee..." the Gospel writers were recording Jesus saying "Amen, Amen..." Revelation begins "so shall it be. Amen" (1:7) and closes with the word. "Amen". Come, Lord Jesus" (22:20). The angels and creatures and saints sing it. "Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 7:12).

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“Therefore, David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly. And David said, ‘Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatest and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.’” (David prays in the Assembly – 1 Chronicles 29:11)

The “Our Father” is contained twice in the Bible (Matt. 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4) with no doxology, for although very ancient, it is not found in the original manuscripts. This is simply a prayer from the believers in the early centuries of the Church whose spirits were moved by the Holy Spirit to close this beautiful prayer in grandiose fashion. These early writings never present it as an essential part of the “Our Father,” but rather an “embolism,” (added prayer), intended to increase fervor and direct the intention of the faithful.

In the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, we have the opportunity to respond to God with boldness and confidence as we place all of our petitions into His care. It is a final time in the prayer to acknowledge that God is supreme and beyond our comprehension. As we pray the conclusion, we are trusting that God is in control of all things. By faith we place our lives and all things into the caring hands of our Father.

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### **BREAK THE ICE**

1. It has been said the three greatest temptations for all humanity are power, fame, and success. Do you agree or disagree? Which of the three do you most find yourself struggling with?
2. In the first study in this series two questions were asked. Answer them again now.

Why do you pray the Lord’s Prayer?

What difference does praying the Lord’s Prayer make?

Compare your answers with your responses the first time. Did your responses today change in any way? If so, what are the reasons for the changes?

### **DIG INTO THE WORD**

1. **Read John 8:12–30.** The conflict that Jesus was having with the religious leaders of his day was actually a conflict over the true nature of God’s “kingdom, power, and glory.” In this passage, Jesus is having a clash with the Pharisees over these issues. Describe the nature of the kingdom, power, and glory that the Pharisees seemed to pursue. Compare that to the Church of Luther’s day. Do you still see that struggle alive in the churches of our time? How?
2. **Read Matthew 14:22–36.** Why are the disciples afraid when they see Jesus approaching the boat? How does this passage illustrate the fact that faith is truly a gift from God? The disciples were clueless about the power that Jesus possessed.
3. What is Peter thinking when he steps out of the boat and walks on water, and how does this passage relate to the final petition of the Lord’s Prayer?

4. When Peter realized that walking on water was out of the natural realm of human possibilities, he began to sink. His fear controlled his faith, rather than allowing the Spirit to calm his fear. What application does this have for you in walking by faith day by day?
5. **Read Ephesians 3:14–21.** What are all the things Paul is expressing in his prayer for the Ephesians? His earnest prayer is brimming with heart-felt love, grace, and thanksgiving for the Christians at Ephesus. How is Paul's language filled with the eternal kingdom, the power, and the glory of God?
6. **Read Romans 8:28–39.** How is this Spirit-filled passage of Scripture similar to the doxology of the Lord's Prayer? How does the Spirit help you to pray when you are weak and don't know what to pray for?
7. When you say "Amen," at the end of the Lord's Prayer, what do you mean? Has there been a time when you deeply sensed God's "Yes" to you? If so, describe it? How can we develop a deeper trust in the Lord's grace and provision? How can we live in this "Amen" when we are experiencing deep pain and sorrow?

### **SERMON DISCUSSION**

This section is intended for your group to reflect and personally apply the sermon from November 4/5, 2012 at BLC. Refer to your bulletin insert for sermon discussion questions. The sermon CD is available at the information center, or download the sermon from the BLC website to listen to in your group.

1. What key points from the sermon were especially meaningful?
2. What did you find most challenging, interesting, or significant in the sermon?
3. Was there anything in the sermon that raises a question in your mind?

### **CATECHISM CONNECTION**

In Luther's Small Catechism, question 235 asks, "How do I know God is able to answer the prayers of His people in Christ Jesus?" Personalize this question and discuss it in your group: "How do I know God is able to answer my prayers in Christ Jesus?"

Luther directs his focus and confidence in answered prayer to God alone. "He alone is the King who has all good gifts in His control. He alone has the power to grant our petitions. He has all glory and is worthy of our praise." In these words we are encouraged to trust God with the difficult areas in our lives, realizing that all things are possible with God as 1 Timothy 1:17 reminds us: "To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

## FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

On September 11, 2001, Todd Beamer dialed for an operator on an air phone and reached Lisa Jefferson, an operator in Chicago. Todd explained that his plane, United Airlines Flight 93, had been hijacked. He calmly described the plans of the passengers to retake the plane, to prevent the hijackers from crashing it into a populated area. As Todd waited for his fellow passengers to organize, he told Lisa about his family. They recited the Lord's Prayer and Psalm 23 together. Suddenly, Lisa realized that Todd had set the phone down. She heard him say, "God help me. Jesus help me." Then she heard him ask: "Are you guys ready? Let's roll." Though the plane crashed near Pittsburgh, God had heard Todd's plea for help. He helped Todd and the other passengers do the right thing in a moment of paralyzing fear. God enabled Todd to walk by faith.

1. This heroic account illustrates what it means to surrender and trust in God. What does the phrase "walk by faith" mean to you?
2. How do the promises of God in this study help you to trust in God and walk by faith?

## PRAY FROM THE HEART

1. How is God asking you to "walk on water" and trust Jesus in the difficult areas of your life?
2. What fears do you need to confess and ask for God's help?

In your prayer time during this final study, step out of your comfort zone and trust God with the difficult areas in your life. Remember that accomplishing these things are impossible without the Holy Spirit's power. We can't do it on our own. Pray that God will give you the strength to take the next step and trust Him.

The last words of the Lord's Prayer form a "doxology" – i.e., a hymn of praise to God. We will create our own prayer doxology as a group. Pray around the circle with each person, in sequence, saying the following words and then filling in their own response:

May my life praise You, O God, by the way I \_\_\_\_\_

Pause for a moment after each petition to allow time for reflection. Then, when everyone has spoken their petition, conclude by saying the Lord's Prayer together slowly.

## A PROMISE TO REMEMBER

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)

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# LEADER'S GUIDE FOR LIVING THE LORD'S PRAYER TOGETHER HOME GROUP STUDY

## OUR FATHER IS HOLY

### Dig into the Word

1. In Matthew 6:4–13 Jesus introduces the Lord's Prayer. He specifically tells His disciples to avoid drawing attention to themselves when they pray. Rather, He wants to reinforce the practice of praying simply with a contrite heart. This section of Scripture is included in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus is contrasting Jewish legalistic traditions with His own teachings. Therefore, the concept of a simple and sincere prayer as outlined in the Lord's Prayer was another way Jesus illustrated that childlike faith is desired more than outward and showy prayers.
2. Jesus is telling His disciples to avoid praying as a show for others. Rather, they were instructed to pray to their Father in secret. Seven hundred years earlier, God spoke through Isaiah to tell His people that although they were going through the motions of worship, they were not believing with their hearts. Ask participants if they can relate to this struggle in their own worship life.
3. Although some passages of the Old Testament describe God as Father, Jesus makes God's fatherhood a central teaching of the New Testament. Through Christ's death and resurrection, we can now have an intimate relationship with God. We don't have to address Him as Lord, God, or Judge. In Romans 8:15–17, Paul states that this is possible because God's Spirit is alive in us and we are no longer dead. Through His Spirit, we are empowered to believe that God is our Father who sent Jesus to rescue us from sin, Satan, and evil.
4. A good earthly father does not ignore the requests of his children. How much more does our heavenly Father hear our requests and answer them? He loves His children and desires to give them what is best for them.
5. The First Petition states that God's name is to be hallowed. In the Second Commandment, God commands us to keep His name holy by not profaning or misusing it. As we are empowered by the Spirit, we honor God's name through word and deed. The Bible describes God as "jealous" when people worship other gods. He responds with punishment (Exodus 20:4–6).

### For Further Discussion

- 1 and 2. Prayer was given as a gift for us to communicate intimately with our God. The death and resurrection of Jesus made a way for us to address God as Father or Abba. There may be participants who have not had a positive experience with their earthly father. Therefore, the title of God as their "Father" may be difficult. Acknowledge their hurt from the past and encourage them through the power of the Gospel to forgive and begin the healing process. Explain that they have a perfect heavenly Father who loves them unconditionally. Encourage other participants to share positive memories they have of their earthly fathers.
3. In the church over the past 30 years, the practice of approaching God with awe and respect has waned. This may be an interesting point of discussion. Ask participants why they think respect has been declining in the church. Remind them that through Christ's death and resurrection, we can now approach the throne of God with confidence. However, we should not forget that it is the throne of our almighty God that we are approaching. God is holy and most deserving of our honor and respect.

Discuss the impact modern culture has made on America's values. Lead a discussion reinforcing that we as Christians have an opportunity to honor God's name through our words and actions as an example for others.

Give participants the opportunity to share examples of how they can honor God in their own lives. Remind them that it is a response to God's love for us and through His Spirit that we are empowered to live lives that honor God's name.

### **Pray from the Heart**

Allow students the opportunity to share significant insights they have gained from the study. Reinforce the objectives stated above. Close by leading them in the Lord's Prayer, pausing after each petition to ponder and reflect on its meaning.

Additional background study material on the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed by thy name," may be found in *Theology and Practice of Prayer - A Lutheran View*, p. 44-46.

## **GOD'S REIGN**

### **Dig into the Word**

1. Prior to having participants read John 3:1-18, set the tone by explaining that Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council. He was considered an enemy of Jesus. Even though Nicodemus approached Jesus at night so he could not be seen, he had great courage to ask the questions. As you discuss God's kingdom, clarify that it is a spiritual kingdom that begins at Baptism through water and the Spirit. In John 3:3, 5, 12, and 16, you have the opportunity to share the Gospel and reassure all participants that they dwell in God's kingdom through Baptism and faith that Christ died for them.

Romans 14:17 reinforces the fact that God's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that does not consist of man-made ceremonial practices. God makes us members of His kingdom through the death and resurrection of Jesus and empowers us through His Spirit to live lives filled with peace and joy.

2. In Luke 12:22-31, Jesus addresses His disciples and admonishes them to seek God's kingdom above all earthly desires. We often get distracted by earthly desires and don't trust God or accept that His kingdom is at work among us.
3. God desires that all people will be saved and come to the knowledge of Him. Jesus is the Mediator who makes it possible for us to approach God's throne. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and empowers us to share God's kingdom with others. We pray that God's kingdom would come to all people when we pray "Thy kingdom come."
5. God's kingdom is His church, and God's will is that all people would be part of His kingdom. In both sections of Scripture, the battle between the desires of the world and the kingdom of God is described. This is an ideal opportunity to discuss how modern culture impacts daily kingdom living. First, John clearly states that anyone who loves the world cannot have the love of the Father within. In Romans 12, Paul reinforces this thought as he admonishes the Christians in Rome to remember that the kingdom of God is at work in their minds. In the same way, as we are led by the Spirit, God will carry out His will in our lives.
6. In Galatians 5:16-21, Paul describes the battle between the sinful nature and the Spirit of God that occurs in all believers. This battle makes it difficult to follow the will of God because the sinful nature is at work. (This would be a good opportunity to discuss the fact that believers are both saints

and sinners.) If time permits, also read Paul's description in Romans 7:7–25 as well as Galatians 5:22–26. Emphasize the victory we have over our sinful nature through Christ's death and resurrection.

### **For Further Discussion**

2. Discuss practical, specific ways they can share with this person. Encourage them to pray specifically for this person when they pray the Second Petition.

Additional background study material on the second and third petitions of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," may be found in *Theology and Practice of Prayer - A Lutheran View*. p. 47-52..

## **OUR DAILY BREAD**

### **Dig into the Word**

1. Matthew 5:45 states that God provides rain and sunshine for the wicked as well as the righteous. Psalm 145:15–16 states that all creation looks to God to supply its needs and He satisfies the desires of every living thing. Unfortunately, unbelievers do not realize that God is the supplier of all their needs. Believers join with the psalmist in praising God and acknowledging that all good gifts come from His hand. God is just and He cares for all of His creation. Don't worry about what others have, rather rejoice in the gifts God has given to you. Even when the trials of life consume you, through God's Spirit you can say with Paul that you have learned the secret of contentment: Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:12).
2. In Romans 13:9, Paul lists some of the commandments, including "Do not covet"; then he goes on to say that all the commandments can be summed up in one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." This is a guiding principle as we apply the Fourth Petition to daily life. When we love others as much as we love ourselves, we are challenged to rejoice with them and thank God for the gifts He gives to them.
3. In 1 Timothy Paul directs Timothy and other church leaders to live godly lives and be examples for the believers. Apparently some of the leaders in the church at Ephesus were using their positions of leadership for financial gain. Therefore, Paul is addressing that particular issue in chapter six. Paul clearly illustrates that we do not need to be concerned about our physical needs, because God will provide for us. He goes on to warn Timothy that the love of money can be destructive to one's faith. Examples include those people who obsessively pursue gambling and the stock market.
4. In Matthew 19:16–26, Jesus clarifies that it is not outward acts that cause one to be saved; rather it is God's mercy. According to verse 26, salvation—as well as following the commandments—is only possible through God's power. In verse 24, Jesus compares a rich man's efforts to enter God's kingdom to a camel going through the eye of a needle. Jesus was comparing a very large thing (a camel) with a very small thing (a needle's eye) to show the impossibility of gaining eternal life by one's own merit.
5. This section of Scripture follows the Lord's Prayer. Here Jesus is teaching about priorities. He reinforces the fact that material items do not have eternal value. Unfortunately, material possessions dictate many people's priorities and decisions. The point that Jesus is trying to make is summed up in the First Commandment. You may want to spend some time discussing how people spend their time and their money. Remind participants that Satan wants us to be distracted by the things of this world, whereas God wants us to focus and celebrate His kingdom.

6. The main point that Jesus makes in Matthew 6:25–34 is that God is the great Provider and none of His children need to worry about material things. Jesus compares God’s provision for His people to the way He provides for birds and flowers. He makes the point that people are much more valuable to Him and He will take care of them. He instructs His people to focus on God and His kingdom rather than earthly goods, because He will provide for them.

In Philippians 4:6, Paul writes to the church of Philippi and encourages them to present their requests to God with thankful hearts, rather than experience anxiety. In the explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed, Luther also exhorts believers to know and acknowledge that all good gifts come from God. We are to receive our blessings with an attitude of thanksgiving.

### **For Further Discussion**

Give participants time for personal reflection and evaluation. As they reflect, note different blessings they depend on right now: food they eat for strength, shelter to keep them warm or cool, light so that they can see, and the very air they now breathe. Ask for volunteers to share their responses (priorities and attitudes). Reinforce the concepts that were just studied by reminding participants that it is only possible through God’s power to live with balanced priorities.

Also, reinforce the fact that God displays His unconditional love for us by providing for all of our needs. His ultimate gift is Jesus, whose death and resurrection offer hope for living each day as well as the assurance of eternal life in the future. Ask participants to share how God’s love motivates them to share their gifts with others.

Additional background study material on the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread,” may be found in *Theology and Practice of Prayer - A Lutheran View*. p. 52-55.

## **FORGIVENESS**

### **Dig Into the Word**

1. Many scholars believe that King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes later in his life. One theme throughout the book is that no one can possess enough wisdom to comprehend God and His ways. In Ecclesiastes 7:20, Solomon explains the reason for this human weakness is that no one on earth does right and never sins. This confirms what King David wrote in Psalm 51:5: “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (See also Psalm 14:3.) However, the Good News is that through Christ’s death and resurrection, we receive the free gift of eternal life. Ask participants to really think about what they deserve from God as a result of their sin. Though this is uncomfortable to consider, it is important to remember that all of us deserve to die and without Christ we are destined for eternal separation from God.
2. Luke 15:11–32 is the familiar and powerful parable of the lost son. It is a beautiful picture of what God does for us. Even though we have intentionally rebelled and disobeyed Him, He runs with open arms to meet us and offer us forgiveness. He longs to give us His best. However, we are ready to receive His gifts only after God’s Spirit has softened our hearts and helped us realize that we are in dire need of a Savior. Often times, like the younger son, we have to hit rock bottom and find ourselves eating the food of the swine before we realize how much we need Jesus and the new life He freely offers.

3. Many of the participants may relate to the older son, who thinks that he deserves a special favor because of all the good things he has done in his life. He believes that he has worked hard to earn a place of importance in his father's household. Therefore, he is jealous when his younger sibling receives such grace from his father. Similarly, as Christians, we may see ourselves better than others who haven't been "life-long" Christians. This is an ideal opportunity to remind participants that they can do nothing to be saved. But, rather, simply receive what the Father has to offer. As the father in the parable said to his older son, "Everything I have is yours."
4. Psalm 103 is a hymn of praise written by King David, thanking God for all of His blessings. Verse 12 paints a picture of what God does with our sin. Ask participants how far the east is from the west. Then, reinforce David's point that God removes our sins completely from us. Unfortunately, we still have to live with the consequences of our sin. But, we can do so with a clean conscience, not burdened by the weight of guilt.
5. In Colossians 3:12-13, Paul describes how the Holy Spirit clothes His chosen people. Through His power and the fruit of His Spirit, we forgive others as Christ forgives us. Point out to the participants that forgiveness is not a feeling. The feelings will follow the act of forgiveness. Sometimes, it may take years for the feelings of peace and love to occur, but the act of forgiveness is the first step. This would be a good time to discuss situations that seem impossible to forgive by human standards, such as marital unfaithfulness or cases of abuse. Remind participants of Matthew 19:26 from the previous lesson, which states, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

### **Pray from the Heart**

1. In Matthew 5:23-26 Jesus is describing the urgency of reconciliation. He does not want His children to be separated through sin. Therefore, He offers His eternal strength and empowers us with His perfect love to forgive others.

Allow participants a few minutes of silence to contemplate and confess their sins. Then offer an absolution, assuring participants of God's forgiveness and love for them.

Additional background study material on the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," may be found in *Theology and Practice of Prayer - A Lutheran View*. p. 55-57.

## **GOD'S PROTECTION**

### **Dig Into the Word**

1. With every temptation, Jesus uses God's Word to refute Satan.
2. James was encouraging the early Christian church that was scattered as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Syrian Antioch. They were experiencing trials in their faith, and his main purpose was to encourage the church. In this particular section he is clarifying that God does not tempt believers. In fact, God Himself cannot be tempted because by His very nature He is holy. James is clearly making the point that each one of us is tempted when our own sinful nature "is dragged away and enticed." James clearly outlines the process of temptation that leads to sin.
3. Paul is writing to the church at Corinth, which is primarily Jewish. Therefore, he uses the Jewish forefathers as examples to help the Corinthians understand how easy it is to fall into temptation. In verses 6 through 12, the Law is clearly illustrated, convicting the hearts of the people in Corinth to know that they are also susceptible to temptation. Then, in verse 13, the Gospel message is shared, informing the people that there is no temptation that they cannot overcome through God's power.

4. God's on your side. You can always look to God to give you strength when you are faced with temptations.

### **For Further Discussion**

1. Answers will vary. Human "faith" leads to destruction, but faith in God is a blessing. Simple truth. Because their beliefs were rooted in falsehood, they suffered horribly.
2. They understood that they were in God's hands, not left alone to suffer the whims of people. They believed that God would care for them, but were also ready to suffer for the truth.

Additional background study material on the sixth and seventh petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil," may be found in *Theology and Practice of Prayer - A Lutheran View*. p. 57-61.

## **AMEN**

### **Dig into the Word**

2. Matthew 14:22-36 illustrates the fact that faith is truly a gift from God. The disciples were clueless about the power that Jesus possessed. They had just witnessed Jesus' miraculous feeding of 5,000 people and then saw Him walking on water. They were afraid because they thought He was a ghost. Jesus was frustrated with their lack of faith and understanding. They still did not get it—He is the Son of God!
3. Peter wants to illustrate his faith in Jesus, so he steps out of the boat and walks on water. This is a well-known passage, yet its application to the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer is very powerful. Challenge your participants to step out of their comfort zones and trust God with the difficult areas in their lives. Remind them that it is impossible without the Holy Spirit's power. They can't do it on their own. But, God will give them the strength to take the step and trust Him. This story clearly illustrates what it means to surrender and trust in God.
4. Obviously, Peter realized that walking on water was out of the natural realm of human possibilities, and then he sank. His fear controlled his faith, rather than allowing the Spirit to calm his fear. This has some definite applications for daily living. Ask participants if their natural response is one of fear or one of faith. Jesus responded by rescuing Peter and then challenging him in his faith. Jesus made the ultimate rescue when He suffered on Calvary on our behalf.
5. In Ephesians 3:14-21, Paul shares a beautiful prayer for the Ephesians. This section paints a picture of the love God has for each one of His children. It is beyond understanding.
6. Romans 8:28-39 is a powerful section of Scripture that reminds us that there is nothing that can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus! Use this section of Scripture to reinforce the fact that there is no temptation or sin so great that it can separate a person from God's love.

### **For Further Discussion**

2. Discuss "walking by faith." Explain that in our Baptism we received God's Spirit, who daily empowers us to trust God and surrender to His will and way.

Additional background study material on the conclusion to the Lord's Prayer, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.," may be found in *Theology and Practice of Prayer - A Lutheran View*. p. 62-63..



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