

The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:7–15)

By Jacob D. Gerber

In Matthew 6:1–18, Jesus confronts three forms of the hypocrisy of “practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them” (Matt. 6:1): in giving to the poor (Matt. 6:2–4), in prayer (Matt. 6:5–6), and in fasting (Matt. 6:16–18). After Jesus deals with hypocritical prayer that seeks to be seen by other people, he offers one of the most important side comments ever to have been uttered in Matt. 6:7–15. Here, Jesus teaches us how to pray when we are in secret, instructions that even include our Lord's Prayer. In the prayer that he teaches, Jesus captures a striking paradox within prayer: *we pray to Almighty God as children speaking with our Father.*

Paradoxical Prayer (Matt. 6:7–9b)

In prayer, Jesus identifies another kind of potential hypocrisy: heaping up empty phrases “as the Gentiles do” (v. 7). Again, Jesus' concern is not with prayer, nor even with longer prayers or repeated prayers, since he sometimes prayed through the night (Luke 6:12), and in the Garden of Gethsemane he repeated his prayer three times, “saying the same words again” (Matt. 26:44).¹ Jesus' concern is that we should “not ‘babble’ (an onomatopoeic word—*battalogeō*, literally, *to say batta*). In light of vv. 7b–8, this at least refers to a long-winded and probably flowery or rhetorical oration.”² While the pagans (i.e., “the Gentiles”) believe that prayers could persuade the gods by brute force, Jesus wants us to embrace an entirely different approach to prayer: “the grace of God is not obtained by an unmeaning flow of words; but, on the contrary, a devout heart throws out its affections, like arrows, to pierce heaven.”³

Therefore, when we come to pray, we must keep squarely in mind that “your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (v. 8). Thus, God's children do not come to inform him of their needs, but for an entirely different purpose: “On the contrary, they pray, in order that they may arouse themselves to seek him, that they may exercise their faith in meditating on his promises, that they may relieve themselves from their anxieties by pouring them into his bosom; in a word, that they may declare that from Him alone they hope and expect, both for themselves and for others, all good things.”⁴ We come primarily to enjoy communion and fellowship with God through prayer. To be sure, our Father is pleased to grant us our needs through prayer; however, we do not go to God with our prayers the way we go to the supermarket with a shopping list.

Rather, we go to God the way we go to our earthly fathers to know them better, seek their

¹ Carson, “Matthew,” 200.

² Blomberg, *Matthew*, 117.

³ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 1:313.

⁴ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, 1:314.

wisdom, and enjoy their company. We may revisit the same subjects with our earthly fathers across multiple conversations, or even circle back around multiple times to the same concerns within a single conversation. We would not dream, though, of simply blasting our requests at our earthly fathers in a vain, repetitive manner. To do so, we would have to treat them as though they weren't present with us at all! By contrast, when we come to our heavenly Father in prayer, we must speak to him as would be fitting for Someone present in our midst—for he is indeed with us!

A Better Way to Pray (v. 9a)

Instead of praying as the Gentiles do, Jesus then gives his disciples a better model to guide their prayers (v. 9a). Here, Jesus offers what has come to be called "the Lord's Prayer," and it stands as one of the most important practical parts of our Lord's instruction to guide our spiritual pursuit of Christian piety. The Westminster Shorter Catechism rightly teaches that "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" (WSC #99). Therefore, this prayer is of use to us both as a general pattern, as well as a form of prayer for us to use verbatim.⁵

The structure of the prayer includes a preface ("Our Father in heaven"), which is then followed by six petitions. In the liturgical prayer (that is, the version of the Lord's Prayer that we use in our worship services), there is also a conclusion: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."⁶ The six petitions are divided between three petitions that pertain to God's glory, and three that seek our good.⁷ The simplicity of the prayer, along with the careful balance between the nature of each section of the petitions, lean strongly against the hypocritical, vain babbling prayers that Jesus condemns among the Gentiles (v. 7).⁸ Jesus is, indeed, emphatic on this point: "Thus you shall pray...."⁹

The Preface (v. 9b)

Before offering any petitions, Jesus teaches his disciples to address God with a preface of address: "Our Father in heaven" (v. 9b). As the Westminster Shorter Catechism explains, "The preface of the Lord's prayer, which is, *Our Father which art in heaven*, teacheth 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

⁵ "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." (WLC #187)

⁶ Q. Of how many parts doth the Lord's prayer consist?

A. The Lord's prayer consists of three parts; a preface, petitions, and a conclusion. (WLC #188)

⁷ "The first three, it ought to be known, relate to the glory of God, without any regard to ourselves; and the remaining three relate to those things which are necessary for our salvation." (Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, 1:316.)

⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 242–43.

⁹ "Both οὕτως [*houtōs*; "thus"] and ὑμεῖς [*humeis*; "you"] are emphatic: "thus...you," i.e., as my disciples. Both words place the disciples in contrast with all others who may pray." (Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 263.)

with and for others” (WSC #100).¹⁰ This simple address profoundly orients us rightly to prayer in at least three ways. First, we are comforted that God is *our* Father, so that we are *his* children. Second, we are reminded that God is our *Father*, so that we may have the confidence of children as we approach him, with assurances of his love for us. Third, we are warned that God is “in heaven,” so that we approach him not only with the familiarity of children to a Father, but also the due reverence of creatures to their Almighty Creator. As William Hendriksen notes, this phrase “in heaven” also reminds us that we are pilgrims who sojourn on this earth, while our true home is with our Father in heaven.¹¹

Pious Prayer (Matt. 6:9c–10)

In the first three petitions, Jesus teaches us to pray with a sense of holiness, awe, fear, dread, and reverence. In a word, Jesus teaches us *piety* for our prayers. While we do approach God on familiar terms as “our Father,” we do not approach God with *over*-familiarity, since he is also “in heaven.” To orient our hearts, then, Jesus teaches us first to pray with genuine piety.

The First Petition (v. 9c)

In the first petition, Jesus teaches us to pray that God’s name would be “hallowed.” Grammatically, these first three petitions are all third-person imperatives, which can be tricky to capture in English. Often, we translate these kinds of expressions with the language of permission: “Let your name be hallowed”; that, however, doesn’t quite work here. Other times, there is an indirect kind of force: “Make your name be hallowed,” where we are asking someone to deliver a command to someone/something else. Neither of these really capture the sense of the Greek, which, as an imperative, is *like* the second-person imperatives that we so commonly use (“Do it!”), and so the traditional rendering is probably best, which simply prays, “Hallowed be thy name.”

Hallowed is another difficult part of this petition, since it is not a word that we commonly use. The word means to “sanctify” or “to make holy.” Lenski puts it this way: “‘To hallow,’ ‘to sanctify’ means to set apart from everything common and profane, to esteem, prize, honor, reverence, and adore as divine and infinitely blessed. The opposite is ‘to profane,’ to treat the Word as not being divine, to neglect, change, or contradict it by word or by deed.”¹² Particularly, we are praying for God to hallow “his name,” which is not merely what we *call* God, but refers to God along with all his attributes, works, and word. Thus, this first petitions prepares our hearts to seek God’s glory above all things. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches, “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” (WSC

¹⁰ See also the Westminster Larger Catechism question #189: “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 apprehensions of his sovereign power, majesty, and gracious condescension: as also, to pray with and for others.”

¹¹ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 327.

¹² Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 266.

#101).¹³

The Second Petition (v. 10a)

In the second petition, Jesus extends our focus from God and his name, to God's *kingdom*: "Your kingdom come" (v. 10a). While we are speaking to our *Father* in heaven, we must also approach him as the great King of kings. We do not approach him in prayer to give him orders for how to build *our* kingdom; rather, we pray that *his* kingdom would come. Speaking personally, this is always the petition that catches me as I pray through the Lord's Prayer. As I pray, the Holy Spirit often convicts the secret motives of my heart as having come to instruct God, rather than the other way around. Who, though has been the Lord's counselor (Rom. 11:34)? We are indeed his children; however, we are also unworthy servants (Luke 17:10).

This does not mean, however, that God's kingdom stands in opposition to us, if we are indeed rightly reconciled to him through Christ. Rather, as John Calvin notes, the kingdom of God is to our advantage: "It is of unspeakable advantage to us that God reigns, and that he receives the honor which is due to him: but no man has a sufficiently earnest desire to promote the glory of God, unless (so to speak) he forgets himself, and raises his mind to seek God's exalted greatness."¹⁴ Indeed, God reigns over his kingdom so as to build up his church against our enemies—that is, against *his* enemies. Thus, the Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches, "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" (WSC #102).¹⁵

The Third Petition (v. 10b)

The third petition is connected to the second: "your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (v. 10b). The clarification in the second part of the petition tells us just how searching this prayer is: "In the third petition, which is, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven, we pray that God, by his

¹³ Westminster Larger Catechism: "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 to 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." (WLC #190)

¹⁴ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, 1:318.

¹⁵ Westminster Larger Catechism: "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." (WLC #191)

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).¹⁶ This is not a prayer that God’s *decretal* will would be accomplished, but that his *revealed* will would be obeyed. Calvin clarifies this point well:

Although the will of God, viewed in itself, is one and simple, it is presented to us in Scripture under a twofold aspect. It is said, that the will of God is done, when he executes the secret counsels of his providence, however obstinately men may strive to oppose him. But here we are commanded to pray that, in another sense, *his will may be done*, — that all creatures may obey him, without opposition, and without reluctance.¹⁷

This is a necessary posture in prayer, as we recognize that we do not come to God to *change* his will, but to pray that his will would be done. This, then, is the point and purpose of the first three petitions: to prepare our hearts to make our petitions to our Father in heaven, the Almighty God whose kingdom shall never end, in order that *his* will would be done here on earth as it is done in heaven.

Personal Prayer (Matt. 6:11–15)

In the final three petitions, we make our requests known to God. To reiterate, by this point our hearts have been re-oriented to God, his kingdom, and his will. Thus, we do not come making brash demands, but with humble petitions before the throne of Almighty God.

The Fourth Petition (v. 11)

In the fourth petition, we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (v. 11). While we are largely separated from the processes of growing and raising the food we eat, recent volatility in the global economy have cast fresh light on how precarious our situation really is. It takes far less than we realize to prevent food from reaching consumers through breakdowns in the supply chain, war, famine, fires, or other disasters. While most of us have never lacked food in our lives, we are still just as dependent upon God to give us our daily bread. The Westminster Shorter Catechism rightly recognizes that this petition extends beyond simply our food, but for all the good things that we seek in life: “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” (WSC #104).¹⁸ This petition is thus a reorientation to our *physical* neediness.

¹⁶ Westminster Larger Catechism: “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 to 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.” (WLC #192)

¹⁷ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, 1:320–21.

¹⁸ Westminster Larger Catechism: “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

The Fifth Petition (v. 12)

In the fifth petition, we ask God to forgive our debts. In this case, we are asking him specifically to forgive our *spiritual* debts—that is, the guilt that we incur before a holy God. While our bodies cannot live without our daily bread, our souls cannot live apart from the forgiveness that God promises to give through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Further, Jesus here teaches us to pray an acknowledgement that we must also forgive those who sin against us, a subject that he will say more about in vv. 14–15. The Westminster Shorter Catechism summarizes the fifth petition this way: “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” (WSC #105).¹⁹ This petition is thus a reorientation to our *spiritual* neediness.

The Sixth Petition (v. 13)

The sixth petition deals with “temptation,” which can refer to “any kind of trial.”²⁰ In English, we often translate this word either as “test” or “trial” when God is the one leading us into an experience where our faith and obedience will be put to the test. Elsewhere, however, we translate this as “tempt” in cases where our three sworn enemies (the World, the Flesh, and the Devil) seek to seduce us into sin. James 1:13 insists that God never *tempts* anyone in this latter sense; however, we should recognize that this same word for “temptation” [πειρασμόν; *peirasmon*] appeared to describe the role of the Holy Spirit in leading Jesus out in the wilderness “to be tempted [πειρασθῆναι; *peirasthēnai*] by the devil” (Matt. 4:1).²¹ In that case, the Holy Spirit led Jesus out for a *testing* that involved Satan's *temptation*.

In this petition, then, we are praying that God would *not* lead us into temptation. Later, Jesus will counsel Peter to “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation [πειρασμόν;

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.” (WLC #193)

¹⁹ Westminster Larger Catechism: “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.” (WLC #194)

²⁰ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, 1:328.

²¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 252.

peirasmon]. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). When external temptations present themselves to us, those temptations are not necessarily sin; however, our sinful flesh often arises with intrigue and secret desire to those temptations. Furthermore, some temptations arise internally, from our own lusts (Jas. 1:14). While Jesus “suffered” under the external temptations he faced (Heb. 2:18), he never desired what he was tempted by, nor did any temptations arise internally, from within his own soul. Here, our sinless Savior is counseling us to pray that we would avoid entering into temptation altogether.²² Therefore, as R. T. France writes, “the point of the petition would be not that the testing is in itself bad, but that the disciples, aware of their weakness, would prefer not to have to face it.”²³

If, however, we *do* face testing/temptation, then Jesus also teaches us to pray that we may be delivered from evil—or, the “Evil One.” There has been extensive debate about how to translate this, but Dennis Hagner is probably correct when he writes the following: “The difference between Satan and evil is small in the present petition: to pray to be free from one is to pray to be free from the other. But the more vivid, personal interpretation may be slightly preferable here; Satan desires to use any severe testing of the Christian to his advantage.”²⁴ The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches this about 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” (WSC #106).²⁵ This petition is thus a reorientation to our spiritual *weakness*.

The Conclusion

Some manuscripts include what has come to be used as a part of the traditional conclusion to the Lord’s Prayer: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, Amen.” Even the *Didache* (written very early—perhaps even during the late 1st century, or early 2nd century) includes a similar

²² “When temptations come from without, the temptation itself is not sin, unless we enter into the temptation. But when the temptation arises from within, it is our own act and is rightly called sin.” (Bryan Chappell et. al., “Report of the Ad Interim Committee on Human Sexuality to the Forty-Eighth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America (2019–2020),” [May 2020], 9.)

²³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 252.

²⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 1 - 13*, 151.

²⁵ Westminster Larger Catechism: “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 by 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.” (WLC #195)

conclusion: “for thine is the power and the glory forever.”²⁶ Nevertheless, there are good textual reasons to believe that Matthew did not write this conclusion, as textual scholar Bruce Metzger explains:

The absence of any ascription in early and important representatives of the Alexandrian (Ⲙ B), the Western (D and most of the Old Latin), and other (f¹) types of text, as well as early patristic commentaries on the Lord’s Prayer (those of Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian), suggest that an ascription, usually in a threefold form, was composed (perhaps on the basis of 1 Chr. 29.11–13) in order to adapt the Prayer for liturgical use in the early church. Still later scribes added “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”²⁷

This, of courses, raises an important question: if this was not a part of the original autographs of the Gospel of Matthew, then should we actually pray the traditional conclusion?

In this case, the answer to the question is very simple: *yes*, we should pray that traditional conclusion to the Lord’s Prayer. While Jesus may not have used these words during his Sermon on the Mount (or, at least, Matthew did not record them!), the words are nevertheless fully *biblical*. The whole Bible captures the truth that to God belongs the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Indeed, Solomon prayed this exact thing in 1 Chronicles 29:11–13, as Metzger pointed out (above): “Yours is the kingdom, O LORD....In your hand are power and might...and [we] praise your glorious name.” We need have no concerns with such a thoroughly biblical prayer when we pray the Lord’s Prayer in our worship services. Furthermore, the conclusion forms a fitting end to the prayer as a whole, as the Westminster Shorter Catechism notes: “The conclusion of the Lord's prayer, which is, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, 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*” (WSC #107).²⁸

A Warning (vv. 14–15)

Finally, Jesus closes his teaching on how to pray with a warning: “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (vv. 14–15). Some have read this with the

²⁶ Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 338.

²⁷ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (Fourth Revised Edition)*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 14.

²⁸ Westminster Larger Catechism: “The conclusion of the Lord's prayer (which is, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. 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.*” (WLC #196)

concern that Jesus is teaching that God will only forgive us if we somehow merit his forgiveness (i.e., by forgiving others their trespasses). This, however, is not what Jesus is saying. First, Jesus is not saying that only those who immediately forgive the deepest hurts can themselves be forgiven.²⁹ Further, Jesus is not saying that we must do something to merit our forgiveness. Even more, as Craig Blomberg notes, “Jesus is not claiming God’s unwillingness to forgive recalcitrant sinners but disclosing their lack of capacity to receive such forgiveness.”³⁰

Jesus is rather speaking of those “who refuse to forget the injuries which have been done to them, [and who thereby] devote themselves willingly and deliberately to destruction, and knowingly prevent God from forgiving them.”³¹ In other words, the warning here is for those who would presume upon God’s grace. If you have no *intention* of forgiving your neighbor, you cannot then expect for God to forgive you.

Discussion Questions

1. How do the “Gentiles” pray (v. 7)? Why do the Gentiles pray in that way? What do they hope to gain by such prayers? Why does Jesus tell us not to pray as the Gentiles pray? What hope does God’s Fatherly care for us hold out for us? What is paradoxical about addressing God as “Our Father in heaven” (v. 9b)? In what ways should this prayer lead us into fear? In what ways should this prayer give us confident boldness?
2. What do we ask for in the first petition, “Hallowed by your name” (v. 9c)? What do we ask for in the second petition, “Your kingdom come” (v. 10a)? What do we ask for in the third petition, “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (v. 10b)? What do these petitions teach us about God? What do these petitions teach us about prayer? How do each of these first three petitions reorient us as we come into God’s presence?
3. What do we ask for in the fourth petition, “Give us this day our daily bread” (v. 11)? What do we ask for in the fifth petition, “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (v. 12)? What do we ask for in the sixth petition, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (v. 13)? What do these petitions teach us about God? What do these petitions teach us about prayer? How do these prayers change our posture toward God?
4. Why does Jesus warn us that those who do not forgive others will not be forgiven by our heavenly Father (vv. 14–15)? Does this mean that only those who immediately forgive their deepest wounds will be forgiven? Does this mean that we must earn our forgiveness from God? Why or why not? If not, what does Jesus mean by this warning? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about ourselves? How does this warning reorient our prayers?

²⁹ Osborne, *Matthew*, 231.

³⁰ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 121.

³¹ Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists*, 1:330.