

TEACH US



TO PRAY!

This booklet is a free educational service, provided by the “Church of God, a Christian Fellowship” in Canada, in collaboration with the “Church of the Eternal God” in the United States of America and the “Global Church of God” in the United Kingdom. Printed in Canada 2006. This booklet is not to be sold.

Scriptures in the booklet are quoted from the New King James version ((c)1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publishers) unless otherwise noted.

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cover image: ©Soupstock/BigStockPhoto.com

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Introduction

Do you pray?

If not, you are just one, among many, who don't. Why is that the case?

Perhaps it is due to indifference—a lack of understanding of *WHY* it matters. Or maybe people don't know *HOW* to pray. It could be that they don't know *WHAT* to pray about, or they don't know *WHEN* to pray. It may be they don't even know to *WHOM* they should pray. Then again, it could very well be that some who were once diligent in prayer, simply got away from any meaningful communication with God, due to entanglement in the concerns of daily life.

The Bible is filled with instructions and principles concerning prayer, such that we are really without excuse when it comes to developing and maintaining a conversant relationship with God.

In this booklet, we will present those Biblical instructions and principles to help you pray successfully. We hope that you will be encouraged to begin a meaningful dialogue with God the Father, if you have never done so before. On the other hand, if you think you already know how to pray, but have become slack in this area, it is our hope that you will be motivated to renew a close, personal relationship with God through prayer. Then again, if you are one who does pray regularly, it is our hope that we can help you make your prayers more effective.

Whatever category you find yourself in, we believe this booklet will help you pray successfully.

To Whom Should We Pray?

It is common in Protestant churches to pray to Jesus Christ, while in the Catholic Church, Mary and various saints are also addressed in prayers. There is, indeed, much confusion regarding how to pray and to whom one should pray, but what is the Biblical teaching on this important subject?

The Bible clearly reveals that the followers of Jesus Christ should direct their prayers, first and foremost, to God the Father. When one of Jesus' disciples asked Him how they should pray, He was very specific regarding to whom prayer was to be offered: "...He said to them, 'When you pray, say: *Our Father* in heaven, Hallowed be *Your* name. *Your* Kingdom come. *Your* will be done On earth as it is in heaven'" (Luke 11:2). In the full context of His instruction about prayer, we find this final comment: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your heavenly Father* give the Holy Spirit to those who ask *Him!*" (Luke 11:13).

Jesus teaches that we should **address our prayers to the Father**, thus pointing to the ultimate relationship that God is creating with mankind! In the account in Matthew concerning Jesus' instruction about prayer, we read: "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For *your Father* knows the things you have need of before you ask *Him*" (Matthew 6:7-8).

Jesus describes the heathen who think that their prayers are heard for their many words. This judgment also applies to those who believe they are practicing Christianity, but, in fact, are deceived! Jesus warns that many will say they invoked His name in order to validate their religious practices; however, His response to that will be: "...I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:23).

When Jesus and His disciples had come to a certain city in Samaria, He discussed the subject of worship with a Gentile woman from the area. Jesus stated: "...Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, *worship*

the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the **true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him**. God is Spirit, and those *who worship Him* must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21–24).

Later, in a pointed exchange between Jesus and some of the Jews, we find this record in John 8:42: “Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.’” Continuing in this account, Jesus shows that even these Jews, who were a part of the physical lineage of Abraham, were NOT true worshippers of God the Father: “Jesus answered, ‘If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him...’” (John 8:54–55).

How do we come to KNOW God the Father? We come to know the Father only as a result of being called by Him. Jesus provides the explanation in Matthew 11:27: “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, AND the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

Jesus also said, “...I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). He told His disciples that, following His death and resurrection, they were to pray **to the Father—asking in the name of Jesus Christ** (compare John 15:16; 16:23). Jesus opened the way for His followers to pray directly to the Father: “In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God” (John 16:26–27).

In His own personal references about God, Jesus refers to God as “Father,” particularly when praying (Compare Matthew 26:39, 42; Luke 10:21; Luke 23:34, 46; John 11:41; John 12:28; John 17:1). The remarkable truth is that this Father-Son relationship is what has always defined these two members of the God Family, and it is the kind of relationship that Christians are promised throughout the limitless future of eternity! Please refer to our free booklet entitled,

“**God Is A Family,**” for a more detailed explanation.

Jesus told His disciples that He was about to return to His Father, and in this context, He said: “...My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Paul adds this explanation about the plan God is working out: “Then comes the end, when He [Jesus Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15:24). Also, we read in verse 28: “Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

The Book of Hebrews explains: “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Hebrews 8:1). Hebrews also reveals that Jesus Christ opened the way to the Father, and that He continues as High Priest on our behalf when we come before God the Father in prayer: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25; also, compare Hebrews 4:14–16). John writes: “...And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1; also, compare Romans 8:34).

There is absolutely no Biblical basis for praying to anyone but God. Even John, on two occasions, was so overwhelmed and filled with awe by the visions revealed through one of God's angels, he reacted by falling down to worship the angel, but the angel corrected him, saying: “Then he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. **Worship God**’” (Revelation 22:9; compare Revelation 19:10).

There is at least one Biblical example when one of Christ's servants prayed to Christ. We read in Acts 7:59–60: “And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God [note that the word “God” was added, as it is not in the original] and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he said this, he fell asleep.”

We can conclude from this example that it is not wrong to OCCASIONALLY include in our prayers to the Father, a direct

acknowledgement of Jesus Christ [besides the fact that we are to pray “in Christ’s name,” as will be explained in more detail later in this booklet]. After all, Christ is God, and He was even worshipped when He was on this earth, in the flesh.

We receive the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son, so both the Father and the Son live in us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, however, is not God, nor is it a separate person; therefore, **we should never pray to the Holy Spirit** (see our free booklet, “*Is God a Trinity?*”).

Praying to Christ should not be the focus of our prayers. As the Scriptures show, Christ Himself directed us to pray to the Father—the HIGHEST BEING in the God Family—and because the Father accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf, the way is open for us to come, with confidence, to the throne of God for help (compare Hebrews 10:19–22).

Right and Wrong Ways to Pray

Some diligently pray, but they have established for *themselves*, a very precise regimen—praying exactly at the same time(s) of day, for exactly the same amount of time, and are even dissatisfied with themselves when they pray less than their designated time. Others fall into a routine of saying the same words over and over again, without really thinking or meditating about the meaning. Christ told us not to use vain repetition in our prayers. He warned us that we are not heard for our many words (Matthew 6:7).

In Old Testament times, and even at the time of Jesus, people would pray in the Temple in Jerusalem, but Christ said that His true disciples don't need to have a special place for prayer. They can pray to God anywhere. He also said that they are to pray to God the Father in "spirit and truth" (John 4:21, 23–24). For instance, Christ prayed for a long time in the Garden of Gethsemane, before His arrest (compare Matthew 26:40, 44; John 17:1–26), as well as on a mountain, before He chose the twelve apostles (compare Luke 6:12–13).

The Bible shows us the proper way to pray, both publicly and privately. For instance, when we pray in public by giving an opening or a closing prayer in Church services, we must not pray to be "seen by men" (Matthew 6:5). Our motivation must not be to please men, but rather to please God. On the other hand, heart-rending, intimate prayers should be communicated to God the Father privately (Matthew 6:6).

Does it matter how we position our body when we pray? A very common position of praying is to be on our knees (1 Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:45). However, the attitude of the one who prays is much more important than his or her particular "prayer position" (compare Hosea 7:14; Luke 22:44).

What about the length of our prayers? The Bible mentions very successful lengthy prayers, lasting in excess of an hour, as well as highly effective short prayers, lasting only a few minutes (John 11:41–42; 1 Kings 18:36–38).

When is the right time to pray? The Bible speaks of prayers being

given at various times: very early in the morning (Mark 1:35; Psalm 5:3), at noon (Acts 10:9), at midnight (Acts 16:25; Psalm 119:62), and sometimes even throughout the night (Luke 6:12). We read that some prayed three times a day (Daniel 6:10), while others prayed seven times a day (Psalm 119:164). As we will discuss in this booklet, there is really never a time when a Christian should not pray. This does not mean, of course, that the person is to pray on his or her knees all day long, but sometimes short, silent, heartfelt prayers are very effective.

Since it is God to whom we pray, then we are obligated to study the subject of prayer in the Bible so that we can learn to be successful in our communication with Him. We will begin with some very important principles for successful prayers.

Principles for Successful Prayers

The following principles, clearly laid out for us in the Bible, teach us how to properly address our Father if we expect our prayers to be successful. We encourage you to study them carefully if you want to have a closer, deeper, and more meaningful level of communication with Him.

1. ASK

The Bible commands, and, in fact, encourages us to pray. We are told to ASK God to take care of our needs. We have no guarantee that God will give us what we need, unless we ask Him for it. It may even be necessary to ask more than once.

We read in Matthew 7:7–11: “ASK, and it will be given to you; SEEK, and you will find; KNOCK, and it will be opened to you. For EVERYONE who ASKS receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened...your Father who is in heaven [will] give good things to those who ASK Him!”

James tells us that possibly we don't have what we need, simply because we don't ask (James 4:2). Even though God the Father KNOWS our needs before we ask (Matthew 6:8), He still wants us to ASK Him, as this shows Him that we know our blessings come from Him, and that we do appreciate them. God will do much more for us than what we even thought to ask, when He sees we have a right attitude and are thankful for what He IS already doing (compare Ephesians 3:20).

Christ emphasized that God will give us His Holy Spirit if we ASK Him for it (Luke 11:13; compare John 4:10, comparing the Holy Spirit with “living water”). We can even ask God to work in the lives of others who might be sinning, so that they will come to repentance and obtain forgiveness. God says that He WILL do this when we ask Him (compare 1 John 5:16).

2. ASK IN FAITH

When we ask God for something, we must believe that God can, and will, grant our wish. If we doubt that God hears our prayers, how

can we expect an answer? (Compare James 1:5–8.) Christ questioned whether He would find anyone with faith in the otherwise faithless and God-defying generation at the time of His return (Luke 18:8).

We are to pray without doubting (1 Timothy 2:8). Christ even made this astonishing promise, in Matthew 21:21–22: “...Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt...if you say to this mountain [figurative for a big problem in our lives], ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, BELIEVING, you *will receive*” (compare Mark 11:22–24).

This requires MUCH faith. When we have only “little faith,” we WILL doubt (Matthew 14:31). With just “little faith,” we will be afraid and fearful in challenging situations (Matthew 8:26).

We are told that our faith must GROW, but since only God can increase our faith (Luke 17:5; compare Mark 9:23–24), we must ASK Him to give us more faith. Without faith, God will not do mighty works for us (Matthew 13:58; Mark 6:5–6). We read that God dealt with people according to their faith (Matthew 9:29; compare Acts 14:9).

God heals us, when we ask Him, IF we have the *faith that He will do it* (James 5:14–15; Luke 7:50). Christ healed a woman’s child because the mother had “great faith” (Matthew 15:28).

When we find ourselves in trouble or need help in our trials, we are to ask God for help, in faith, without worrying about the circumstances surrounding us; circumstances which might appear to be too difficult to get out of, and even impossible. WITH GOD, NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE (Matthew 19:26), and if we believe, nothing will be impossible for us (Mark 9:23)!

We must learn to walk by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Abraham set a right example of that, who “contrary to [human] hope, in [godly] hope believed,” “not being weak in faith,” without “waver[ing] at the promise of God through unbelief,” but “being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform” (Romans 4:18–21). That is why we read that if we “know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we KNOW that we HAVE the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:15).

Our faith must be such that we know that God will grant our petitions even BEFORE we have actually received them. If we don’t just

have “little faith,” God will give us food, drink and shelter (Matthew 6:30; Luke 12:28).

3. PRAY BOLDLY

When we have the faith that God will hear and answer our prayers, then we ought to appear before God’s throne with “boldness.” If we approach Him in a timid or fearful way, we show Him that we don’t *really* believe that He will do what we ask Him to do.

We are, therefore, encouraged to “come BOLDLY to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16). Paul tells us that since we have *boldness* in Christ, as well as *confidence* through faith in Him, we are not to lose heart and give up, including not giving up in prayer (Ephesians 3:12–13). We are instructed to “draw near [to God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith,” as we have “*boldness* to enter the Holiest [God’s Temple in heaven] by the blood of Jesus [who died for our sins and who grants us forgiveness] ...and having a High Priest [Jesus] over the house of God [the church, representing us before the Father]” (compare Hebrews 10:19–22).

The Greek word for “boldly” or “boldness,” “*parrhesia*,” means “free utterance” or “free spokenness.” “Bold” is defined as “having courage, fearless, daring, or vigorous in...expression.”

Christ spoke BOLDLY to the people, thus showing His unshakable conviction (compare John 7:25–26). So it follows, then, that Christ’s disciples must exemplify the same kind of boldness in their lives (Philippians 1:19–20; compare also 1 Timothy 3:13).

This includes, *standing up boldly for Jesus Christ and for the truth of God* (Ephesians 6:19–20; Acts 4:8–13, 29, 31).

It also includes the right kind of boldness *toward* God. We read, in 1 John 4:17–18, that “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have *boldness* in the day of judgment...There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.” As long as we abide in Christ, we can have confidence [“boldness” in Greek] when He appears (1 John 2:28). We are therefore admonished not to cast away our confidence [“boldness” in Greek] (Hebrews 10:35); but rather, to hold fast the confidence [“boldness” in Greek] firm to the end (Hebrews 3:6).

This kind of boldness needs to be developed and maintained in this life. We read that the righteous person is bold as a lion, and when

we do the will of God, we can have boldness, even when we appear humbly in prayer before His throne to make our requests known.

John concurs, in 1 John 5:14: “Now this is the confidence [in Greek, “boldness”] that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

4. KEEP GOD’S COMMANDMENTS

Even though we ask God in faith and with boldness for His favors and benefits, we cannot count on His positive response if we are living in sin; that is, if we refuse to get rid of sin when it comes to our attention. We all sin and are in need of forgiveness, but we must repent of our sins and forsake the WAY of unrighteousness, by ceasing to PRACTICE it.

We read in 1 Corinthians 13:2 that we are nothing if we don’t have godly love (“*agape*” in Greek), even though we might have all faith to remove mountains. Godly love—the love of God—is defined as keeping God’s commandments (1 John 5:3). 2 John 6 tells us that “This is love, that we WALK according to His commandments.” Romans 13:10 tells us that godly love “IS the FULFILLMENT of the law.” When we practice sin, we do NOT have the love of God within us, and without living in a way that is pleasing to God, we cannot assume that God will answer our petitions.

We read in 1 John 3:22: “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, BECAUSE we keep His commandments and DO those things that *are pleasing* in His sight.”

As long as we walk according to our fleshly carnal desires, we *cannot please* God (Romans 8:8). While we *cannot please* God without faith (Hebrews 11:6), faith without works, or obedience to God’s law, is dead (James 2:17). God requires of us “...obedience to the faith” (Romans 1:5; 16:26; Acts 6:7).

We are to walk worthy of God, “*fully pleasing* Him, being fruitful in every good work...” (Colossians 1:9–10). It is *pleasing* to God when we do good and share (Hebrews 13:16).

If we want to please God, we must give up sin and embrace righteousness. In fact, we are told that God is “far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous” (Proverbs 15:29). God’s eyes are on the righteous and His ears are open to their prayers”

(1 Peter 3:12). We are promised that the “effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

How does the Bible define righteousness? Psalm 119:172 says: “For all Your commandments are righteousness.” So, if we want to be heard by God, we are to live righteous lives, which we do by keeping His commandments, thereby *pleasing* Him.

Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:1–7: “...you received from us how you ought to walk and to *please* God...that you should abstain from sexual immorality...that no one should...defraud his brother... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”

Christ knew that the Father always heard His prayers (John 11:42). He had confidence and conviction that the Father would not leave Him alone, “because,” as He said, “I always do those things that *please Him*” (John 8:29). When we do the same, we can have the assurance that God the Father will always hear us.

Christ also tells us that as long as we abide in Him—by letting Him live His life in us, following His example—and His words or commandments abide in us, we can ask what we desire, and it will be done for us (John 15:7).

5. BEAR FRUIT

When we concentrate on keeping God’s commandments and doing what is pleasing to Him, we WILL produce the fruit of righteous character (compare Galatians 5:22–23). And as we do, we have further assurances that God will answer our request.

Christ told us in John 15:16: “I...appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.”

6. PRAY IN CHRIST’S NAME

We just read that we are to ask God the Father in Christ’s name (compare John 14:13; 16:23–24, 26). We will discuss what this means in more detail later in this booklet.

7. PRAY ALWAYS

Some people are misguided in thinking that we only need to pray to God at certain designated times (perhaps in the morning, before

going to work, or in the evening, before going to bed), and that these kinds of prayers are sufficient for the rest of the day. This is *DISTINCTLY NOT* what the Bible teaches!

Rather, we are to walk with God, like Moses did, who “endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). Actually, we are to walk, or better, “live” with God, and God is to “live” with us, through His Holy Spirit in us. God the Father and Jesus Christ came to make Their home with us (John 14:23).

It follows, then, that we are to pray to God “without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). In fact, we are to pray to God “always” (Ephesians 6:18); that is, we are to have an ongoing prayerful relationship with God, which encompasses even our very thought processes. Christ told us that we “ought to pray always and not lose heart,” and that God will help those who cry out to Him day and night (Luke 18:1, 7). We are to “watch...and pray always” that we may be counted worthy of Christ at His coming (Luke 21:36). Paul reiterated that we are to give thanks “always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). Paul also encourages us to continue “steadfastly in prayer” (Romans 12:12).

David certainly recognized the need to be in touch constantly with God. He prayed in the daytime and in the night season, it says in Psalm 22:2. He prayed “Evening and morning and at noon” (Psalm 55:17). He prayed “all day long” (Psalm 86:3).

Asaph prayed in the day of his trouble and in the night without ceasing (Psalm 77:2), and Heman prayed day and night (Psalm 88:1).

Psalm 32:6 says: “...everyone who is godly shall pray to You In a time when You may be found.”

Sometimes, it may seem as if God does not hear our prayers, but we need to understand that it may be that God is testing our endurance. If so, this would most certainly not be the time to give up praying, but rather to pray more fervently and with persistence (compare Matthew 20:29–31; Luke 11:5–8). We are told to “Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!” (Psalm 27:14).

We have the promise that, when we sow in tears, we will reap in joy (Psalm 126:5), and that weeping may endure for a night, but joy

comes in the morning (Psalm 30:5). So, we are to “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him,” while keeping His way (Psalm 37:7, 34). God acts for those who wait for Him (Isaiah 64:4), and David relates his experience in this way: “I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry” (Psalm 40:1).

In those circumstances, it would not be wrong to plead with God to answer us speedily, all the while never doubting that God is there, that He is aware of our trouble, and that He *WILL* act for us when He deems best (compare Psalm 13:1; 71:12, 14, 20; 89:46; 141:1; 143:7–11).

SUMMARY

In order to pray successfully, we need to: 1) ask; 2) with faith; 3) with boldness; while 4) keeping God’s commandments; 5) bearing fruit; 6) praying in Christ’s name; and 7) praying always. If we do this, we will receive from God the Father, in His due time, what we ask of Him.

The Prayer Outline

If you don't know how to pray or what to pray for, you are certainly not alone. Even Christ's apostles did not know how to pray. We read in Luke 11:1: "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'" Christ then proceeded to give them an outline, which is recorded in Luke 11:2–4 and in Matthew 6:9–13.

Note that this is just an outline—a *guideline*, if you will—on how to pray. It is not a prayer *per se*, to be repeated, word for word, over and over. Most professing Christian churches routinely require their members to recite the "Our Father" prayer, *verbatim*, in their services. Priests may even instruct their parishioners to pray ten or twenty "Our Father" prayers in order to become absolved of certain sins. This is NOT Biblical! Christ never intended such a custom! In fact, He specifically warned His disciples not to use "vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words" (Matthew 6:7).

We find, in John 17, the words of Christ's prayer to the Father, just prior to His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. When reading that prayer, you will see that it does not at all contain the exact words that were recorded in Matthew 6, but it does contain some of the *concepts* listed in that prayer outline.

Christ gave His disciples this prayer as an outline, essentially setting forth the basic *principles for prayer*. We are to expand on those basics and go on to develop a meaningful conversation with God. We are not to present Him with an endless cycle of repetitive words. Think about it! When you converse with friends or family, or if you were to give a speech to a group of people, how long would they listen to you if all that came out of your mouth was a drone-like, repetitive cycle of words *ad infinitum ad nauseum*? How long would you listen if you were on the receiving end? God is no different. He wants to hear what our thoughts and concerns are, from deep inside the core of our being.

We will present herein, the outline prayer from Matthew 6:9–13,

along with a careful, detailed analysis of the concepts that Christ was conveying, so that you can, in turn, incorporate those concepts in your prayers to God the Father.

The well-known prayer outline, as recorded in Matthew 6:9–13, reads:

“Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into
temptation,
But deliver us from the evil
one.
For Yours is the kingdom and
the power and the glory
forever. Amen.”

“Our Father...”

Christ told us to pray: “**Our Father...**” (Matthew 6:9).

When we address God with the words “our Father,” we are telling Him that we **KNOW** we are His children. Acknowledging this entails several important commitments on our part.

1 John 3:1–2 explains that “we are children of God.” Verse 3 tells us that we, as God’s children, “purify” ourselves from unrighteousness. Verse 10 includes the thought that we will “practice righteousness” and we will “love” our brother, because we are “the children of God.”

Romans 8:14 explains that God’s Spirit will lead us if we are His children. This means, we must **ALLOW** the Holy Spirit to lead us. Only then can we truly call God our Father—our dear and beloved Father or “Abba” (compare Romans 8:15). And when God’s Spirit leads us, we will live differently than we lived before our conversion. The Bible calls this, walking in “newness of life” (Romans 6:4). As 2 Corinthians 6:14–18 explains, we will come out of idolatry and the darkness of this world, when we are truly God’s children.

When we pray to God as our Father, we tell Him that we are willing to become a “mirror” of His personality. Christ said in John 14:9 that those who saw Him saw the Father. Can people say this about us? Do they see in us the character of God the Father?

When we call God our Father, we tell Him that we *do believe* and that we *do know* that we **WILL** become a full and “equal” part of His very Family.

In John 5:18, Christ called God His Father. In doing this, He made Himself *equal* with God, as the Scripture says. We also are privileged to call God our Father. This means that we make the same claim as Christ made, in regard to belonging to God as His children.

We read in Romans 8:15 that God gave us His Spirit of “sonship.” The *New King James Bible* inaccurately says “adoption,” but the translation of “sonship” is much better (compare the *New International Version*; the *Revised Standard Version*; *Moffat*; *Rotherham*; and the *New English Bible*).

God does not just adopt us. Rather, when we receive His Holy

Spirit, God the Father makes us a part of His Family by spiritually “begetting” us as His very children. God is reproducing Himself, not just by adoption, but by actually multiplying Himself. He does this by giving His very Spirit to His *begotten* children, so that they can become His *born again* children in the resurrection. At that time, they will become spirit beings—no longer composed of flesh and blood—with all the rights and privileges of God, and also with His very character and nature.

The Greek word, which is translated as “sonship” or “adoption,” means, “placing as a son.” It COULD refer to adoption, but there is more involved here. When we receive God's Spirit, we are not merely adopted children of God. We are actually BEGOTTEN children of God. The Holy Spirit makes us sons and daughters, not by adoption, but by a begettal process that parallels human begettal, gestation, and birth, only on a spiritual plane. WE BECOME GOD'S CHILDREN! We not only acquire rights and privileges as one does when he is adopted, but we also acquire God's very own “divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

And so, we read that just as Christ is equal with God the Father—insofar as His character and nature is concerned—so we also will be equal with Christ when He returns. (Compare, again, 1 John 3:2. See, also, Philippians 3:20–21). It follows, then, that as God's children, we will inherit everything He has created (Romans 8:31–32).

Let's analyze what it means, specifically, when we pray to God as our Father.

1. We are to **honor** God the Father by living according to His instructions. Malachi 1:6–8 points out the principle of honoring our father. If we call God our Father, then we must honor Him. We **dishonor** Him when we offer to Him things that are defiled and worthless. With God as our Father, we owe Him deep respect. He must come first in our lives, every day!
2. We are to be merciful to others and to comfort them, in the same way that our Father is merciful and full of comfort toward us (Luke 6:36; 2 Corinthians 1:3–4).
3. We are to worship God the Father in truth, as John 4:23 points out. This means, that we need to know who and what God is, and what He requires of us, so that we can worship Him in truth.

4. We are to thank God the Father for so many different things, including thanking Him for calling us, for forgiving our sins, and for our future salvation (Colossians 1:12–14). When we fully appreciate the all-encompassing truth that God is our Father, we will show this in the way we live (compare Colossians 3:17).
5. We are to accept God the Father as our highest authority. For us, there is only one (spiritual) Father (compare 1 Corinthians 8:6; Matthew 23:9). When there is a conflict between the requirements of God and the requirements of man, we must always obey God the Father (Acts 5:29).
6. We understand that the Father rewards us for the good things we do (Matthew 6:1).
7. We understand that the Father gives us good things today if and when we ask Him (James 1:17–18; Matthew 7:11). These good gifts include not only physical blessings, but also spiritual blessings (compare Ephesians 1:3: “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...has blessed us with EVERY spiritual blessing...”) And strange as it may seem, these good things also include our chastening when we need to be corrected by our Father for wrong things that we do (Hebrews 12:5–7, 11).
8. We acknowledge that God is *OUR* Father—not just mine *or* yours. This knowledge includes the fact that God the Father judges without partiality (1 Peter 1:17). It also includes our individual personal responsibility for each other; for instance, the general prohibition of a divorce when God the Father united a couple in marriage (Malachi 2:10–16).

THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER IN US

In order to live a life that is pleasing to God, our Father, we must have, *AND put into practice*, the love of God the Father—the same love that God the Father has. It is God’s very love that must live *IN US*, through God’s Holy Spirit! It is God’s love that must prompt us, lead us, and motivate us to live a life of love toward God the Father, manifested by love toward our fellow man.

Matthew 5:43–48 tells us that, if we claim God is truly our Father, we will love our enemies. The Bible uses the Greek word “*agapao*” in expressing our duty to “love” our enemies. This word describes

GODLY LOVE, which is far above human love! It is love of the Father *dwelling in us*, enabling us to have love for people, even our enemies. We are told in 1 John 3:23 to love one another. Again, the Greek word here is “*agapao*.” In 2 John 3–6, we are taught that God the Father **COMMANDS** us to walk in His truth and in His love.

SUMMARY

God is our Father, and we are His children. We are to live in subjection to Him (Hebrews 12:9), striving to become more and more perfect, as He is perfect (Matthew 5:48). When we begin our prayers to God by addressing Him as “our Father,” we must not use this phrase without thinking. Rather, we ought to have a deep respect for, and a good understanding of, all of the elements associated with that great title.

“...In Heaven!”

As an introductory comment, it is important to understand that HEAVEN is not a state, but rather, a literal location. It is, of course, a spiritual location, but nonetheless, a *literal location*. God the Father is in heaven—the THIRD heaven—and that third heaven is in the far North. It is invisible to the human eye because it is spiritual—not physical or made of matter (Isaiah 14:12–14; Psalm 75:6–7). See also 2 Corinthians 12:2–4, referring to the third heaven and to Paradise. Paradise, which is another word for a beautiful garden, is presently in heaven, as Revelation 2:7 shows, but it will come down to this earth, in due time.

There are many spiritual things in the third heaven, which we discuss at length in our booklet, “*Angels, Demons, and the Spirit World*.” For the sake of brevity here, there is an entire city in heaven—the heavenly Jerusalem—in which is the beautiful garden, or Paradise. This city with the garden will ultimately come down to this earth. There is also a heavenly mountain—the heavenly Mount Zion. There is a temple in heaven, an altar, and the Ark of the Covenant with the Ten Commandments. There is a heavenly throne, on which God sits, and a sea of glass. We know that the things Moses built here on earth were patterned after the heavenly things. Of course, God the Father and Jesus Christ live in heaven, as do many of the angelic beings.

Christ told us to pray, “Our Father **in heaven**” (Matthew 6:9). Or, as the *Authorized Version* has it, “Our Father which art in heaven.” After first addressing God as “our Father,” why did Christ insist that we acknowledge that our Father is *in heaven*? What does this fact have to do with the relationship we should have with God?

Psalm 33:13–15, 18–19 sheds some light on what God is doing from His heavenly throne. The Scripture tells us that God sees everything from His dwelling place in heaven; that He considers all of our works; and that He is ready to send help from heaven. This shows how great and awesome God is. Nothing escapes His attention. He fashions our hearts individually. He knows what is in our hearts. He knows what we will pray before we pray it, because He reads our

minds. He knows the thoughts of man. He observes man.

Psalm 14:2 tells us that God looks down from heaven to see whether there are any who seek Him. Verse 3 reveals that nobody seems to be willing to do that, except the ones God Himself calls—those whose minds HE opens to the truth and then gives them a willing heart to seek Him.

Psalm 11:4–6 tells us that God is in His holy temple IN HEAVEN, and that He tests man. He tests, or examines, the righteous, as well as the wicked. He rewards man from heaven. He gives blessings to the righteous and He punishes the wicked.

Why does the great God even observe man? This shows His great love for man, His great humility, and His plan for mankind!

David wondered about the great humility of God that He would even pay attention to man. He asked, in effect, in Psalm 8:4: What is man that YOU—the great powerful God—should be mindful of him—that puny little being, called man—who, in comparison with God, is nothing but a little grasshopper?

All the people of the earth, combined, are nothing more than a drop of water in a bucket, compared to the Almighty God (compare Isaiah 40:15).

And still, God IS mindful of man. He observes man from His Holy heaven. Why?

Because He has something in store for man—something that most people today do not know, nor could they comprehend, unless God chooses to reveal it to them. Simply put, and as was mentioned before, GOD IS REPRODUCING HIMSELF THROUGH MAN! He created physical man in His image and likeness so that man, once he has qualified, can enter the spirit realm of the God Family as an immortal spirit being and a child of God. (For further details of this profound truth, please read our free booklet entitled, “*God is a Family.*”

Psalm 113:4 tells us that God’s glory is “above the heavens.” God created everything, including the heavens and the earth. This includes the spiritual—invisible to man—third heaven, as well. God created that, too, as He created the angelic world. Therefore, He is, of course, high above the heavens. He is the Creator and Maker of the heavens, as well as the physical universe and all life on the earth.

But He humbles Himself to observe His creation—both the spiritual and the physical world (Psalm 113:6). And, He looks down from heaven to this earth to bless those who seek Him. He blesses the poor person to make him a prince—physically and spiritually (Psalm 113:7–8). True Christians—the poor in heart—are to become princes in the world tomorrow—kings and priests. We are to become members of the Family of God. We are to become literal born-again children of God our Father, who is in heaven. THAT is WHY He observes us from heaven! That is why He is mindful of man. That is why He, our Father, takes care of us, His children. It is because WE BELONG TO HIS FAMILY—the Family of God!

God is the Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, as we read in Ephesians 3:14–15. The family in heaven currently consists of the Father and Jesus Christ—both in heaven. The family on earth consists of all those in whom God’s Holy Spirit dwells. They are His *begotten* children, and they will, in a short while, become His *born-again* children.

Deuteronomy 26:12–15 mentions an additional aspect of the way in which God observes us. The context is tithing. God observes us from heaven (verse 15). And when we please Him by keeping His commandments diligently, including His commandments to tithe to Him, He will send us blessings from heaven.

As quoted earlier, James 1:17 tells us that God gives us good gifts “from above”—from heaven. And the greatest gift He has for us, is to allow us to become “a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (verse 18). What does this all include?

God calls us, individually, from heaven. He gives us His law from heaven, which shows us how to live. After all, God—in the Person of Jesus Christ—descended from heaven to this earth to give Moses the tablets with the Ten Commandments, which He Himself had written with His own finger. God sends us His Holy Spirit from heaven, which gives us the power and strength to obey His law and to live the way we should.

And as firstfruits, we know that our names are written in a book in heaven. We know that our inheritance is reserved for us in heaven. We know that we are laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven. We know that our reward is now in heaven, but that Christ will bring it

with Him when He comes down to this earth. We know that when we die, our spirit goes back to God the Father, in heaven, together with the Holy Spirit, that God gave us, to be preserved there until He sends it back to earth when He resurrects us from the dead. (For more detailed information on this subject, please read our free booklets entitled, *“The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults,”* *“Do We Have an Immortal Soul?”* and *“Are You Predestined to Be Saved?”*)

Also, as firstfruits, we are able to enter the heavenly realm, not literally, but in spirit. We can appear, in spirit, before our Father in heaven through prayer (compare Ephesians 1:3; 2:4–6 and Colossians 1:13). We are transferred into God’s kingdom in a spiritual sense, not literally yet, because our literal entrance into the Kingdom of God is still in the future, as many Scriptures prove, such as 2 Peter 1:10–11.

We also read in James 1:17 that the Father, who gives us good and perfect gifts from heaven, is the “Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” This means that GOD DOES NOT CHANGE! His character does not change. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He does not give us good gifts today and bad gifts tomorrow. With God, there is no light and darkness. God is LIGHT. Shadows exist because the earth revolves on its own axis as it moves around the sun. The moon moves around the earth, and it is sometimes positioned between sun and earth. This way, there are “shadows of turning”—shadows existing because of the turning of the earth and the moon. The spiritual analogy is this: The sun can only give light to the earth half of the time. When one part of the earth receives light from the sun, the other part of the earth is in darkness. But God is not like that. He can bless us from heaven at all times. This also shows that James knew, or that he was inspired to write, that the earth and the moon move around the sun.

James is telling us that God is always stable—the same—full of light. There is no darkness in Him. He does not turn away from His holy and righteous character. Notice, too, the connection between the fact that God is light and that He sends good gifts from heaven, and the fact (as expressed in verse 19) that we ought to be swift to

hear, but slow to speak and slow to wrath. As God is good and sends us good gifts from heaven, so we, too, need to live like God lives: Since God is slow to wrath and since He is slow to speak in wrath, we must behave likewise.

This shows what should be in our thoughts when we pray to God as our Father in heaven. We tell Him, in effect: “We know that you are Light; we know that you are slow to anger; we know that we must become like you are.”

In Ecclesiastes 5:1–7, we are warned that we should not promise something that we won’t keep, as “God is in heaven, and you on earth” (verse 2). God watches us from heaven. He holds us accountable for what we say and do. Today, God’s judgment is already on the house of God—those whom He has called (1 Peter 4:17). God in heaven judges us. When we pray to God, calling Him “our Father in heaven,” we acknowledge the fact that He judges us from heaven. When we promise something, we must do it, even if it hurts (Psalm 15:4 explains that God loves us if we promise something to our “own hurt” and still do not change).

In addition, when we call God “our Father in heaven,” we recognize that we can get help from God in heaven in times of need: An outstanding example of God the Father’s help from heaven can be found in 2 Chronicles 20:1–30. (*We encourage you to read the entire account.*) In Verse 6 we are told that *God in heaven* rules over the kingdoms of men. And since nothing happens that escapes His attention and that He does not permit, He can also intervene for us in times of need. We can learn some lessons from this account:

1. There is no need for Christ’s disciples to fight in war. If we rely on God, who has all the power at His disposal, we are safe and in good hands.
2. There is no need for Christ’s disciples to vote in governmental elections, as God rules and gives power and authority to whomever He chooses.

We need to remember Christ’s words to Pilate in John 19:11: “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you FROM ABOVE.” It was God the Father in heaven above, who gave

Pilate down here on earth the power to govern at that time. Now, either God gave Pilate the power directly or He allowed Satan to give Pilate the power. Either way, God was in control, FROM ABOVE, and a vote in governmental elections from Christ's disciples here below would have no effect.

God is in heaven, ABOVE. We are to show God that we identify with Him by seeking to acquire His heavenly characteristics. We have to become what He is—perfect. In Colossians 3:1–17, we are told what things to seek—things that are “above,” where God the Father and Jesus Christ are (verse 1). These things include: tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long suffering, bearing with one another, forgiving one another, love, peace of God, thankfulness, the Word of God, and wisdom.

We are to seek the things that are ABOVE, where our Father in heaven is. We are to seek to attain the things from above, which come down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

James 3:17 also speaks about “the wisdom that is from above,” and encourages us to seek and incorporate it in our lives. And then he goes right on to show us, in James 4:1–2, that wars don't descend from above, but that they are earthly, sensual and demonic. How anybody, reading those Scriptures and claiming to be a Christian, can still advocate fighting in the wars of this world, is absolutely beyond comprehension. (For further details, please read our booklet entitled, **“Should YOU Fight in War?”**)

Notice also 1 Kings 8:22–40, 46–50, where it is emphasized that God, our Father in heaven, forgives us our sins when we repent. Forgiveness became possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who was willing to *come down from heaven* to this earth in order to die for us so that we could live forever.

After His death and resurrection, Christ returned to HEAVEN to function as our High Priest, as He still does today. He IS the Mediator between the Father and us, appearing before God's throne *in heaven* to plead our case, on our behalf, as Hebrews 10:19–22 explains. We can, in prayer, come before God our Father, in heaven, because Christ has made access to the Father possible for us.

SUMMARY

When we pray, “our Father *in heaven*,” we are focusing on things above—not on things down here below. We tell our Father that we want to acquire those things that are in heaven. The Father will, and does, bestow some of them on us now. He will give us the rest when Christ, and ultimately, our Father Himself will come down from heaven to this earth (Revelation 21:3).

When we pray to our Father in heaven, we might want to remember God’s timeless promise in Psalm 20:6–9: “Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God... Save, LORD! May the King answer us when we call.”

“Hallowed Be Your Name”

In Matthew 6:9, Christ tells His disciples to pray: “Our Father in heaven, **hallowed be Your name.**”

Here we will discuss two concepts. First, we need to understand what is meant by “God’s name,” and secondly, we must know what is meant by the word “hallowed.”

WHAT IS MEANT BY “GOD’S NAME”?

God has many names, each of them describing certain aspects of His character and of His being. One of God’s names is “the Almighty”; another one is “the Eternal”; still another one is “the God who heals us.” Then there is the “God of hosts.” Note, however, that Christ did not say, “hallowed be thy *names*,” but, “thy **name.**” He is emphasizing the entirety of God—His entire being—everything He is and stands for.

We read in Isaiah 29:22–23 that Jacob will hallow God’s name and that he will hallow the Holy One of Jacob. God’s name is identified here as the Holy One of Jacob.

Likewise, Isaiah 8:11–13 identifies God’s name, “the Lord of hosts,” with God Himself. We read in verse 13: “The LORD of hosts, *Him* you shall hallow.” God’s name is identified here as the Lord of hosts. But even though God’s name is mentioned, it is obvious that we are to hallow HIM.

A name identifies a person. You may know a person, but can’t, at that very moment, identify him. Then, when his name is mentioned, you immediately say: “O yes, that’s him.” His name identified the person to you. It’s the same with God. His name identifies HIM. Both mean the same. When we pray, “Hallowed be thy name,” we are really saying: “You, Holy Father, are to be hallowed.”

The *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, states on page 905: “God’s name means ‘Himself as revealed and manifested.’”

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORD “HALLOWED”?

The word “hallowed” is derived from the Greek “*hagiozo*.” Both

the *Authorized Version* and the *New King James Bible* do not translate this Greek word as “hallowed” in any other place. It is only rendered that way in the so-called “Lord’s Prayer” in Matthew 6:9 and Luke 11:2.

The word “hallowed” is used twelve more times in the New Testament. Eleven times it is translated as “sanctify,” and one time it is translated as “be holy.” The word “sanctify” has the meaning of “to separate” or “to set apart” for a “holy purpose.” The word “*hagiazō*” is derived from the Greek word “*hagios*,” which means “holy.”

Vine’s Expository Dictionary defines the word “*hagiazō*” as “to make holy...set apart for God, to sanctify, to make a person or thing the opposite of common.”

The *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, states: “Hallowed be, i.e., Be held in reverence, regarded and treated as holy.”

And, the *20th Century New Testament* renders this verse as, “May thy name be held holy.”

With this background, we might better understand what Christ is actually telling us to pray. He is saying, in effect: “Pray to our holy Father in heaven that He be held, regarded or treated as holy.”

THE FATHER IS TO BE TREATED AS HOLY

Generally, insofar as this world today is concerned, God is by no means treated as holy by the overwhelming majority of mankind. However, He will be treated as such in the future, after Christ has returned and set up the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Psalm 145:21 tells us that ultimately, “all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever” (compare, too, Psalm 72:17, 19, and Malachi 1:11).

But what about true Christians today, those who have been called by God to His truth? Christ tells them that they are to hallow God’s name today. They are to regard God the Father, and everything He stands for, as holy.

HOW ARE WE TO DO THAT?

First of all, let’s take note of **what, exactly, is holy to God.** Whatever is holy to God should be holy to us.

1. The **weekly Sabbath** (the time from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) is holy to God. We read in Genesis 2:2–3 that God made the weekly Sabbath and that He “sanctified” it. The Hebrew word for “sanctified” is “*qadesh*,” and it means exactly the same as the Greek word, “*hagiazō*.” God hallowed the Sabbath—set it aside as holy, for a holy purpose. The holiness of the weekly Sabbath is also stressed in Exodus 20:8–11; and Jeremiah 17:21–22, 24, 27.
2. God considers **His annual Festivals** as holy. God made the weekly Sabbath, and He made the annual Festivals or Holy Days. They are also called “Sabbaths” in Scripture. In Ezekiel 20:19–21, the Israelites are reported as refusing to hallow or sanctify God’s “Sabbaths.” The plural word for “Sabbath” is used, referring to God’s annual Holy Days, which must still be kept today and treated as holy.

In Nehemiah 8:9–12, the annual Holy Day of the Feast of Trumpets, celebrated on the first day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar (compare verse 2), is described as “holy to our LORD” (especially verse 10).

When we do not *KEEP holy* what God has *MADE holy*, we *profane* God’s holy things (Ezekiel 20:21, 22, 24). The Hebrew word for “profane” is “*chalah*.” It means, “pollute.”

God says that when we profane or pollute His holy weekly and annual Sabbaths, we profane or pollute His name: “...they profaned My Sabbaths... I withdrew My hand and acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the Gentiles...” (Ezekiel 20:21–22).

3. God has made holy **His entire LAW**—the Ten Commandments, statutes and judgments—including its spiritual application.

Paul tells us in Romans 7:12: “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”

Leviticus 22:31–32 makes it very clear that **we profane God’s holy name when we DON’T keep His commandments**, and in that case, we are no longer sanctified in His eyes: “Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I am the LORD. You shall not profane MY HOLY NAME, but I will be hallowed (margin: treated as holy) among the children

of Israel. I am the LORD who sanctifies you...” Compare, too, Leviticus 20:2–3.

When we profane and pollute God’s holy things, trample them under foot, we thereby profane, pollute or treat as common, God’s holy name—that is, God Himself. People will look at us and say that we are not better than others, and that our God is not better than other gods.

You might want to read the entire record in Ezekiel 36:17–28 for an example of how ancient Israel polluted God’s holy name and how the Gentiles responded to that act of profanity against God.

On the other hand, when we hallow, sanctify or treat as holy, and keep holy the things that God has made holy, including His holy laws and regulations, then we hallow God and treat Him as holy, and we ourselves are sanctified—made holy—in God’s eyes (compare Leviticus 20:6–8).

4. God considers **His Tithe** (10 percent of the increase of our gross income) as holy (Leviticus 27:30, 32).
5. God created **animals for human consumption** (called “clean” in Scripture), and He created animals, which are specifically excluded from human consumption (called “unclean” in Scripture).

When we eat unclean meat, we make ourselves unclean with them. We are defiled by them and are no longer holy in God’s eyes (compare Leviticus 11:43–45).

6. Most importantly, when it comes to our relationship with other Christians, **God regards all of us as holy**. He calls all of us “holy brethren” (Hebrews 3:1). This means that we are not to mistreat, abuse or condemn our fellow brother or sister, but rather to treat them with respect (James 4:11–12).

As has already become clear from the foregoing, **we are to live holy lives**. When we pray to God the Father in heaven, “Holy be Thy name,” we are telling God that we are willing to live holy lives, both in relationship to God and to others.

1 Corinthians 3:16–17 warns us: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone

defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”

Ephesians 1:4 tells us that we should “be holy and without blame” before God. And Colossians 3:12 calls us “holy and beloved.”

We are to be holy for God (compare Numbers 15:40). We have to live a holy life, especially if we are involved, directly or indirectly, in the Work of the living God, and if we are to be a living sacrifice—serving others before self; otherwise, we profane God’s holy name through our wrong conduct.

Proverbs 30:8–9 tells us that we profane the name of God and deny Him when we steal or become proud because of our riches. Ezekiel 43:7–8 explains that we defile God’s holy name when we commit harlotry or idolatry and other abominations.

DON’T USE GOD’S NAME IN VAIN

We also defile God’s name, of course, when we use His name in vain (compare Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12). To casually use expressions such as “My God,” “O my Lord,” or “Jesus Christ,” just to utter surprise or emphasis, is therefore clearly prohibited. So is the casual use of a common German welcome greeting (“*Gruess Gott*” or “*Gott zum Gruss*”—meaning “Greet God” or “God as a Greeting”), or the casual use of the French or Spanish farewell expressions, “*adieu*” or “*adios*” (both meaning, “to God”).

The same prohibition applies when we use “euphemisms.” A “euphemism” is defined as a substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for another felt to be too blunt or offensive. God instructs us to let “no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth” (Ephesians 4:29). This prohibition applies to careless speaking or using slang expressions or euphemisms, which would profane God’s name, such as “gosh” or “gosh almighty” (a substitute for “God” or “almighty God”) or “gee” (a substitute for “Jesus”). It also applies to the careless use of words describing characteristics or concepts clearly associated with God, such as “my goodness” instead of “my God” (compare Matthew 19:16–17) or “by heaven” or “for heaven’s sake” (compare Matthew 5:34; Revelation 13:6).

The same prohibition applies to curse words, such as “damn,” or “go to hell,” or euphemisms, such as “darn” or “go jump in the lake”

(compare Revelation 20:14–15).

God wants us to use language pleasing to Him. Let us note how the *New International Version* translates Ephesians 4:29: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* makes these insightful statements:

“Words are an index of character (Matthew 12:34). Good words are to be chosen over evil talk... Do our words build up the hearer’s character and make him a better man for his having heard your speaking? Do they meet his need? And do they in this way ‘bring a blessing’ by supporting that need?”

Whatever expressions we are inclined to use, we need to make sure that they are helpful, rather than unwholesome, offensive or even blasphemous. Christ warns us in Matthew 12:36–37: “But I say to you that for every idle [careless, thoughtless, useless] word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

As holy people, we are to hallow God and His name through living holy lives. In 1 Peter 1:15 we are told to be holy *in all our conduct*, because God, who is holy, called us to holiness. Revelation 22:11 encourages us to stay holy.

How, then, do we become holy?

1. We are sanctified—set aside for a holy purpose—by God’s Word of truth (John 17:17).
2. We are sanctified by baptism and the receipt of God’s Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:25–26; 1 Corinthians 6:11).

And how can we continue to be holy? God enables us to continue to live holy lives, if we follow His lead.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul prays that “the God of peace Himself sanctify you *completely*...” This involves time and describes a process. We have to DO our part, as especially verses 15–22 point out. We are to “sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts,” as 1 Peter 3:15 tells us. This means, we have to treat God as holy in our lives, even in our

hearts, minds and thoughts, and we have to keep His holy Word.

We hallow God when we live holy lives. We profane God AND His holy name when we live unholy lives—when we violate His Will and His Word; when we, through our conduct, cause others to stumble; when we, through our conduct, give occasion for others to scoff at God and His way, and to blaspheme (compare 2 Samuel 12:14; Romans 2:24).

Isaiah 5:16 tells us that the holy God is to be hallowed in righteousness. We hallow Him, if we are righteous. When we pray: “Hallowed be thy name,” we are praying to God for His gift of righteousness in our lives (Romans 5:17), so that God’s name CAN be hallowed by us IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Revelation 3:12 reveals that Christ will write on us the name of God the Father only if we continue—all the way to the end—to overcome the oppositional pulls of our own human nature, the wiles of Satan the devil, and the temptations of this evil world. We will ultimately be called by the name of God, and we will be God—born-again members of the very Family of God. That is why we read in the book of Hebrews, chapter 2, verse 11 (*New International Version*): “Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family.”

SUMMARY

God’s holy name will, one day, be *our* holy name, too. We hallow His name, and thereby God Himself, when we live holy lives; we profane it when we sin. When we pray, “Hallowed be thy name,” we are saying to God the Father, in effect: Please, give us—Your holy people—the strength and ability to hallow You, by living righteous lives, in obedience to Your Law.

“Your Kingdom Come!”

Christ told us to pray, “Your kingdom come On earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). As there are no commas in the original Greek, the words “...On earth as it is in heaven” can very well refer to the first phrase, “Your kingdom come.”

When we pray to God the Father, asking that His heavenly kingdom come to this earth—in accordance with His plan—we must realize that *the gospel or good news of that kingdom must be first proclaimed on this earth, so that God’s kingdom can come* (compare Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10). Christ commanded His disciples at His time, and He still commands His disciples today—His Church—to “preach the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60). When Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom of God, He also admonished His disciples to “pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:35, 38).

We understand that when God’s kingdom is set up here on earth, it will end all misery, pain, and suffering that plagues mankind today. We must fervently pray to God to establish His kingdom *soon*, by sending His Son Jesus Christ to this earth, so that happiness can begin, and wars, sickness, and heartache can end. When Christ reigns on this earth, we will have true, lasting peace (Isaiah 9:7. Compare, too, Luke 1:33; Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15).

When we pray to God the Father for His kingdom to come, we include the thought that we, if we qualify, will be privileged to enter His kingdom as immortal spirit beings and His born-again children. As long as we are flesh and blood, we are not born-again, and we cannot be in His kingdom. God will change us into immortal spirit beings, thus making possible our entrance into His kingdom (John 3:3, 5; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Matthew 25:34; Luke 12:32; Daniel 7:18).

When we enter God’s kingdom, we will also be given the privilege to rule over all of mankind on this earth, under the direction of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ (Daniel 7:27; Revelation 5:10; Revelation 20:6). Thus begins our ultimate rule under Christ for all eternity, ruling over EVERYTHING that God created (Revelation 22:5).

When we pray to God the Father for the establishment of His kingdom here on earth, and our part in it, it is with the understanding that we must **qualify** for our entrance into His kingdom. In that sense, we pray to God for His help in becoming worthy, and “have a walk” worthy of our calling (1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:5).

What are some of the important characteristics we need to have in order to be counted worthy to inherit the kingdom of God?

1. We must repent of our sins (Matthew 3:2).
2. We must become converted and receive the kingdom with humility, as if we were little children (Matthew 18:3; Mark 10:15). This is another way of saying that we must become “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) and “meek” (Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11).
3. We must seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33; Matthew 13:43). We cannot begin our walk toward the kingdom and then “look back” or desire again the things which we have left behind (Luke 9:62).
4. We must seek first the righteousness of God (Matthew 6:33). This includes a willingness to *suffer* for God’s kingdom and for righteousness’ sake (Matthew 5:10; compare Acts 14:22). We are only righteous if we keep God’s law (Psalm 119:172). It is only the righteous who will be in God’s kingdom (Matthew 13:43; Psalm 37:29). When we break God’s law and teach man that we don’t have to keep God’s law any more, we are not righteous (Matthew 5:19). God will not allow in His kingdom those who teach and practice lawlessness—the transgression of His law (Matthew 13:41). He will not allow in His kingdom those who are disobedient to His will (Matthew 7:21). And finally, He will not allow those who fulfill the desires and works of the flesh to be in His kingdom (Galatians 5:19–21; Ephesians 5:5).
5. We must be diligent to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). If we do, God will supply us abundantly an entrance into His everlasting kingdom (verse 11). To make our calling and election sure, we must give up habits that are detrimental to God’s kingdom (Mark 9:47). We must not put our trust in temporary riches (Mark 10:24). Rather, we must

bear the fruits of God's kingdom (Matthew 21:43).

6. We must develop patience—**learn to wait for God and His intervention** (Psalm 37:9).

When we pray to God for His kingdom to come to this earth, we ask God to give us the heart and mind, as well as the power and strength, to live worthy of His kingdom until it comes. Even though God has not yet established His kingdom on earth, it is already ruling in heaven, and from heaven (Psalm 103:19), in the sense that nothing happens on earth that God does not allow, and nothing happens on earth that would be against His overall will and purpose.

We must already reflect God's kingdom in our daily lives. Paul tells us that God's kingdom is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). He also says that "the kingdom of God is...in power" (1 Corinthians 4:20). When God, through His ministry, casts out demons today, then the power of God's kingdom has come upon us (Luke 11:20).

Paul says that God the Father "has delivered us from the power of darkness [Satan the devil and his demons] and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). This does not mean that God has already established His kingdom on this earth, but it does mean that He has made His true disciples citizens of His heavenly kingdom. Philippians 3:20 tells us that "our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." We are sitting today "in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6); that is, we are to focus our minds on the heavenly things that pertain to God the Father and Jesus Christ. When we seek God's heavenly kingdom (compare Hebrews 11:14–16), we have to reflect His kingdom—as His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20)—in our daily conduct and actions.

Even though we read in Colossians 1:13 that God has freed us from this world and conveyed, or translated, us into His kingdom, we understand that this is figurative language. We are still living in this world, but we are not a part of it, as God's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). We are to be a part of God's kingdom, but His kingdom has not arrived yet here on earth. That is why we are to pray to God the Father, fervently: "Your kingdom COME...on earth!"

SUMMARY

God's kingdom will come to this earth in order to rule over man and to bring peace, happiness and prosperity. Man, composed of flesh and blood, cannot be IN the kingdom. We can only enter the kingdom if we qualify and become born-again (changed from flesh and blood to spirit) members of the very Family of God. Once composed of spirit, we will rule under God the Father and Jesus Christ for all eternity.

Today, we must proclaim the gospel or good news of the kingdom of God throughout the whole world. We need to pray for the work of God's Church in its efforts to preach the gospel worldwide. And, as citizens and ambassadors of God's kingdom, we must live a life worthy of it. We are to show the world how citizens of God's kingdom are to behave.

Your Will Be Done!

Christ taught us to pray, in Matthew 6:9–10: “Our Father in heaven. Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. **Your will be done** On earth as it is in heaven.”

Why is this line included in the outline for prayer? Doesn’t God see to it that His will is going to be done, anyway? Yes, indeed. We read that God does whatever He wants to do (Psalm 135:6; compare Isaiah 46:9–10), and that not even a sparrow falls to the ground apart from the Father’s will (Matthew 10:29). But understand this: Even though God is in ultimate control and more powerful than any other being, including Satan and his forces of darkness, He *has allowed* Satan to continue to rule this world. God intervenes when there is a need for certain aspects of His plan to be accomplished, according to His will, as foretold in prophecy. But generally, He is letting Satan rule over the earth, until Christ returns to replace Satan.

God does not force us to do His will. He allows us to sin against Him, and to reap the bitter consequences (compare Deuteronomy 30:19). When we pray to God for His will to be done, especially in our lives, we realize it does not happen automatically.

We have to ask God for His help and intervention “according to His will” (1 John 5:14). This requires that we understand what His will is (Ephesians 5:17). In other words, God needs to *REVEAL* His will to us (Ephesians 1:9).

Once we understand what God’s will is for us, we need to carry out God’s will. As we do, our action and conduct will lead to further understanding of God’s will for us. Romans 12:2 tells us: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Throughout the course of our conversion, we become more and more in tune with God’s will for us. The German *Elberfelder Bible* translates this phrase as follows: “...that you may prove what is the will of God: what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

GOD'S WILL FOR US

What, then, exactly, IS God's will for us?

In a *general way*, we are told that God called us **according to His own purpose or will** (2 Timothy 1:8–9); that we have become begotten children by the **WILL of God** (John 1:10–13); that we were delivered from this present evil age **according to the will of God** (Galatians 1:3–4); that **by the will of God**, we became the firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18). Those who are called into the ministry are placed there, not by the will of man, but **by the will of God** (2 Timothy 1:1. Compare Romans 10:14–15).

More specifically, God tells all of His disciples that they are to live in a certain way, **according to His will**. We read in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7: “For this is **the will of God**, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality... For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.”

God wants us to become a sanctified people, a holy people—His people—reflecting Him in our lives. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 explains this further: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the **will of God in Christ Jesus FOR YOU.**”

1 Peter 2:15 gives us additional insight information: “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

It is God's will that we do good—even to people who are evil—because righteous actions reflect His righteous character. God says He gives rain to the just and the unjust, alike. God lets the sun shine over the just and the unjust, over those who thank Him and those who don't (Matthew 5:44–45; Luke 6:35).

When we pray to the Father that His will be done, we ask Him to reveal to us the understanding of the mystery of His will; to give us the right kind of discernment to prove or test what His will is in a given situation; to permit Him to work in our lives, so that we can become sanctified and holy, responding to God's will in our lives by abstaining from sexual immorality, by rejoicing, by praying and thanking God, and by doing good, even to those who hurt us.

WHAT IS NOT GOD'S WILL FOR US

2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is “longsuffering toward US, not

willing that any [of US who are in the truth] should perish but that all [of US] should come to repentance.” Matthew 18:14 adds that it is not “the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones [who believe in Christ, verse 6] should perish.”

It is God’s DESIRE and WILL that ALL men be saved! (1 Timothy 2:4). This means that WE must have that same kind of a desire and will! As we work diligently on our own conversion, we must be sure that we really WANT others to come to repentance, just as God does. We must be mindful, then, that our involvement in preaching the gospel as a witness is also for the REASON of helping others to come to repentance (Luke 24:46–48; 2 Kings 17:13).

Further, we must remind ourselves of God’s presence, and meditate on His will for us in *our* lives, regardless of what we may or may not want to do. We should always ask ourselves when contemplating a major decision in our lives: Is this God’s will? We should not approach the issue with the attitude of: I know it is God’s will, because that is what I want to do. James 4:15 tells us, instead: “...you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’”

Whatever we do, we must subject it to God’s will, as revealed in Scripture. In other words, we must AGREE with God’s will, and abide by it.

Paul and the other disciples set a right example in wanting to conduct their lives by always submitting to God’s will for them (compare Acts 21:10–14; 1 Corinthians 4:19; Hebrews 6:3).

When we are facing a serious trial, or when we are experiencing suffering and persecution, we are especially called upon to pray to God: “Your will be done!” 1 Peter 3:17 tells us: “For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.” 1 Peter 4:19 adds: “Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.”

It is God’s will to do good to others, as we previously read in 1 Peter 2:15. It is also God’s will that we suffer for doing good, at times, because it proves to God that we are convinced that doing good to others is God’s WAY of life and that we are willing to live God’s Way of life, even if it results in suffering. And finally, it is God’s will for us to *continue doing good*, while we are suffering.

But, we have a human will, and our human will does not like to suffer. Further, our human will may not always be the same as God's will for us. That is, our human will may not even theoretically or ideologically agree with God's will, let alone submit to it if it means enduring suffering, pain, and persecution.

Prior to our conversion, our human will was totally contrary to God's will, because our carnal human mind was hostile to God and His Way of life. But even after our conversion, we still have to overcome human desires and weaknesses. After his conversion, Paul sinned, and although he had begun the process of transforming his way of thinking, he said that he still fulfilled, from time to time, the desires of his flesh. He said: "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (Romans 7:19).

Even Jesus Christ, when He was here in the flesh, had to *strive* to always seek and submit His will to God's Will (John 4:34; John 5:30; John 6:38).

When in the Garden of Gethsemane, shortly before His arrest, He prayed to God the Father that He would not have to go through the terrible ordeal ahead of Him, but He still submitted to the Father's Will (Matthew 26:39, 42). He was hoping, perhaps, that there could be another way to accomplish the same purpose. He never WILLED to do something that would have constituted sin. He had come to do God's Will, so whatever God decreed He had to do, He was WILLING to do it (Luke 22:42).

AGREEING WITH GOD'S WILL

Understanding the Will of God is not enough. We must also accept His Will in our lives and agree with it, even though it may be difficult. When we pray to God that His Will be done, we must accept and agree with His Will when it is done.

STRENGTH TO DO GOD'S WILL

When we ask God that His Will be done, we are essentially asking God for understanding of His Will and the ability to agree with His Will, as well as the will-POWER and the strength to actually *carry out* His Will in our lives.

We are told that we must DO God's Will (Matthew 7:21;

Matthew 12:50; Luke 12:47; 1 John 2:17; Hebrews 10:36). But doing God's Will is not enough, unless we agree with it, identify with it, and **wholeheartedly and joyfully** accept it.

David had this attitude toward God's Will when he wrote in Psalm 40:8: "I **delight** to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart."

But even with a delightful acceptance of God's Will, we still may not have the strength to carry out and do what God wills. We need God's help. When we pray to God: "Your will be done!", we are asking Him to give us the desire, as well as the strength, power, ability, and opportunity to DO His Will.

Hebrews 13:20–21 tells us: "Now may the God of peace...make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ..."

And Philippians 2:12–13 adds: "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

SUMMARY

When we pray: "Your Will be done," we pray for understanding from God to determine what His Will is; for the ability to accept His Will and agree with His Will for our lives; and the strength and desire to do His Will, even though it might not be easy. When we are facing difficult situations in our lives, we are asking God to help us not to make hasty decisions out of impatience or frustration, but to reveal His Will to us and give us the will-power to accept His Will, agree with it, submit to it wholeheartedly, and DO whatever God may require of us, knowing that God will help us. We are saying with Jesus, when He was facing the most difficult situation in His life: "Not My will, but Your Will be done."

“Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread”

Christ taught us to pray: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11).

Some claim that this prayer addresses our *spiritual* needs and the daily supply of God’s Word. They reason that Christ spoke about Himself as the real bread (John 6:48–51), and that we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4).

It is true, of course, that we must look foremost toward the Kingdom of God and God’s righteousness, but Christ’s admonition in Matthew 6:11 to pray for our daily bread CLEARLY refers to our *physical* needs. To teach differently would mean to read something into the text, which was obviously NOT intended. We should note that Christ’s reference to Him being the “bread of life” (John 6:48) introduces the annual New Testament Passover symbols of bread and wine (verses 53–58). But, we are not to partake of those symbols on a daily basis, but *only once a year*, as a memorial of Christ’s death. So, we see that Christ’s admonition to us to ask the Father for our “*daily bread*” applies foremost to our *physical* needs.

For instance, *Lamsa* translates Matthew 6:11 as follows: “Give us bread for our needs from day to day.” Some translators point out that the request includes the bread for today *and for the next day*. For instance, the *Elberfelder Bible* says: “Our daily bread—that is, the bread needed for today and for tomorrow—give us today.” *Rienecker’s Lexikon zur Bibel* states: “The fourth plea is, according to Matthew: ‘Our bread for tomorrow give us today’... It is to protect us from serious wants, but also from wrong worries. We are to ask of God whatever is necessary for the sustenance of physical life, but we are to do so every day for the next day, as God alone wants to be our giver and our assurance of His gifts.”

Even though we are to pray to God the Father for our daily physical sustenance, including food, clothing and housing, we should not be too concerned about the things we need for our daily lives. God knows about them, and He will supply to us what we need.

Christ told us in Matthew 6:25–34 that we are not to worry or to

have anxious thoughts about what we will eat or drink, or how we will clothe our body, because our “heavenly Father knows” that we “need all these things” (verse 32). Christ continued, in verses 33 and 34: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. [*Lamsa*: “Tomorrow will look after itself!”] Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

We find a parallel passage in Luke 12:22–32. Christ tells us that we have little faith, if we worry about our physical needs (verse 28). He also tells us, in verses 29–32: “And do not seek [*Lamsa*: “So do not be anxious about”] what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind [*Lamsa*: “and let not your mind be disturbed by these things.”]. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and *your Father knows that you need these things*. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Christ is not saying that we should just sit at home, doing nothing and waiting for God to miraculously send us food and clothing. We must take care of our needs. We are commanded to work so that we have enough to eat (compare 2 Thessalonians 3:10, 12). But if we have our priorities right, then God will help us, by providing opportunities for us to act upon, so that we will have enough food, clothing and shelter, and we will experience the fulfillment of other needs. Christ says that God wants to share with us His very kingdom—how much more, then, the mere necessities of life?

GOD PROMISES THAT HE WILL GIVE US WHAT WE NEED

We read in Ephesians 3:20–21 [*Lamsa*]: “Now to him who is able by power to do for us more than anyone else, and to do for us *more than we ask or think*, according to his mighty power that works in us, Unto him be glory in his church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end.”

Yes, God is able to provide for us in ways that we cannot even imagine!

Philippians 4:19 adds: “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ.” Notice, it does not

say that God will provide us with everything we *want*. He is talking about what we *need*. Many times, we might ask for things that may not be good for us, but only God, in His wisdom and foresight, may be able to see this. We read, in Proverbs 30:8, that we should not ask God for “poverty nor riches,” but that He would feed us “with the food allotted” to us.

We are admonished to be content with what we do have, especially if we have “food and clothing” (1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5).

When Jacob blessed his son Joseph, he acknowledged that God had sustained him throughout his life. He said, in Genesis 48:15: “...God...has fed me all my life long to this day...”

Notice, too, this assurance in Psalm 34:9–10: “Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him. The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.”

God wants us to enjoy life, and so He promises that He will give “us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). But God’s physical gifts are not just for us. God shares with us so that we can share with others. 2 Corinthians 9:8 tells us: “God is able to make all grace abound toward you that you, *always having all sufficiency in all things*, may have an *abundance for every good work*.”

Many times, God miraculously intervenes for His people, including provision of necessary physical things. He did so for His people Israel in the wilderness, and He is most certainly capable of doing so for you and me today.

Deuteronomy 8:3–4 tells us that God fed Israel with “manna” and that “Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell *these forty years*” (verse 4).

Nehemiah 9:20–21 adds: “You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, And did not withhold Your manna from their mouth, And gave them water for their thirst. *Forty years* You sustained them in the wilderness; They lacked nothing; Their clothes did not wear out And their feet did not swell.”

ASK GOD TO SUPPLY YOUR NEEDS

As mentioned earlier in this booklet, we are to ask God the Father to give us what we need. Even though God wants to satisfy our physi-

cal needs, and even though He promises that He would provide us with what we need, He still wants us to ASK Him. In doing so, we show Him that we understand where our help comes from. James 4:2 tells us that we may not have what we need, *because we do not ask*.

Philippians 4:6–7 tells us: “Be anxious for nothing [Lamsa: “Do not worry over things”], but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

This most certainly includes our physical needs. In fact, it echoes Christ’s admonition not to be anxious about food, drink, or clothes.

1 John 5:14–15 reassures us that God WILL provide us with the physical necessities of life, if we ask Him: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask *anything* according to his will, he hears us [and we just saw that it IS God’s Will to meet our physical needs]; For if we beseech him to hear us concerning the things that we ask of him, we are assured that we have already received from him those things that we desire” (Lamsa translation).

WAIT FOR GOD’S ANSWER

Sometimes, God tests our patience. He wants to see if we will remain faithful if our desired answer does not come immediately.

Psalms 37:4, 7 encourages us: “Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the *desires of your heart* [even physical things that we don’t necessarily need, but which are nice to have]... Rest in the LORD, and **wait patiently** for Him.”

SUMMARY

God knows that we need bread and other physical necessities of life to sustain us, but He wants us to ask Him for them, day by day. He has promised that He will provide us with what we need if we look first and foremost to Him, His kingdom, and His righteousness; but He may test our patience and He may withhold something from us that would not be good for us. He wants us to learn to be content with what He gives us.

“Forgive Us Our Debts...”

Christ taught us to pray: “And forgive us our debts...” (Matthew 6:12).

One of the greatest attributes of God’s character is His willingness to forgive us our sins. The consequence of every sin we commit is ETERNAL death (Romans 6:23). But God the Father sent His Son to the earth to DIE for us—to pay OUR penalty—so that we can be forgiven and our death penalty be removed (compare Matthew 26:28; Acts 5:31; Colossians 1:13–14; Colossians 2:13; 1 John 1:7).

The Bible contains many promises of God’s forgiveness. We read in Psalm 103:3, 12 that God “forgives all [our] iniquities” and that He removes “our transgressions from us.” Psalm 130:4 tells us that there is forgiveness with God, so that He may be “feared” or deeply respected and worshipped. Exodus 34:7 reveals God’s willingness to forgive our iniquities, transgressions and sins. Even when we “rebel” against God, He is still willing to forgive us (Daniel 9:9). God is willing to “pass over” our transgressions (Micah 7:18); to “cover” our sin (Psalm 32:1); and to “cleanse” us from sin (Psalm 51:2).

However, in order to be granted forgiveness of sins, certain conditions have to be met.

WE MUST CONFESS OUR SINS TO GOD

1 John 1:8–9 says: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Psalm 32:5 adds: “I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said: ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

WE MUST ASK FOR FORGIVENESS

When we confess our sins to God; that is, when we acknowledge our sins to God and admit our mistakes to Him, we need to ask God at the same time to forgive us our sins. Even though God is more

than willing to forgive us, we still need to ask Him.

In Psalm 25:18, David asked God for forgiveness, when he prayed: “Look on my affliction and my pain, And forgive all my sins.” He stated in Psalm 86:5: “For You, LORD, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in *mercy to all those who call upon You.*”

WE MUST ASK IN FAITH

When we ask God for forgiveness, we must firmly believe that He WILL forgive us. We read that “through this Man [Jesus Christ] is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified” (Acts 13:38–39).

WE MUST FORSAKE OUR SINS

Proverbs 28:13 says: “He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”

When we forsake our sins, we actually turn away from them. We read in Jeremiah 36:3: “It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.”

WE MUST REPENT OR RETURN TO GOD

It is not enough to turn away from our sins. We must at the same time **turn, or return to**, God. This is another way of saying: We must REPENT of our sins. That is, we must forsake or turn from our sins—cease doing what is wrong—and we must turn to God by doing what is right.

John would not baptize people who had not shown in their lives “fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8). Christ came to call sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:13). He also said that we will perish, if we don’t repent (Luke 13:3, 5). He said that Nineveh was spared, because they repented (Matthew 12:41). Paul said that he might have to mourn for many “in the church” who did not repent of their sins (2 Corinthians 12:21). Of course, Christ’s message to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation (chapters 2 and 3) is filled with the admonition to repent, and He shows the consequences if they don’t (compare Revelation 2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:3).

Isaiah 55:7 tells us: “Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”

Jeremiah tells us in the Book of Lamentations: “Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the LORD; Let us lift our hearts and hands To God in heaven” (chapter 3, verse 40). Jeremiah goes on to explain that God did not pardon them for their transgression and rebellion (verse 42). Why not? Obviously, because they had not turned back to God—they had not yet repented of their sins.

Solomon understood that God will forgive us our sins if we “pray... and confess...and turn from [our] sins...and return to [God] with all [our] heart and with all [our] soul” (2 Chronicles 6:26, 38–39; compare 1 Kings 8:33–40). Notice, too, Daniel’s prayer, asking for forgiveness after repentance, in Daniel 9:1–20, especially verse 13.

In Acts 26:18, Christ tells Paul that forgiveness is predicated on turning from darkness to light. Compare, too, Peter’s admonition to Simon Magus, in Acts 8:22: “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.”

GOD DOES NOT FORGIVE WITHOUT REPENTANCE

God does not forgive us if we *REFUSE* to repent—*refusing* to admit and confess our sins to God, *refusing* to ask for His forgiveness in faith, and *refusing* to forsake and turn from our evil ways by turning to God and living His Way.

God is calling only a comparatively few out of this world, and is not yet judging the rest of the world. This means that God has not yet forgiven those who are in the world, as they have not yet repented. Their minds have not yet been opened to the truth, and they do not understand the basic element of repentance, so God does not hold them accountable, at this point in time. This is not to say that sin does not have built-in penalties that a sinner will have to pay automatically. In other words, wrong decisions produce a wrong outcome, and problems compound themselves.

Those who are not called and thus not forgiven yet, are described in Acts 17:30–31: “Truly, these times of ignorance God **OVERLOOKED** [not, forgave!], but now **COMMANDS ALL MEN**

[those called in this day and age] EVERYWHERE TO REPENT.” We have to REPENT of our sins before baptism (in addition to accepting Christ’s sacrifice as payment for our sins), even though we might have committed sins in ignorance (compare 1 Peter 1:13–15; Ephesians 4:17–18; 1 Timothy 1:12–13; Acts 3:17). God offers us the gift of repentance when He calls us, but we must respond to it and accept it (2 Timothy 2:24–26; Romans 2:4).

When the people realized that they had killed Christ, the Son of God, they asked Peter what they needed to do. His response was: “REPENT, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ FOR THE REMISSION [FORGIVENESS, see margin] OF SINS...” (Acts 2:38). Forgiveness of sins FOLLOWS repentance!

It is true that Christ prayed on the cross: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). Some have said that this Scripture proves that God forgives even though there is no repentance. This is false. Christ was not asking God to forgive them AT THAT MOMENT. When they killed Christ, whether they were directly involved or whether they consented to His murder, they did not KNOW who Christ was. Note Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 where he explains Christ’s identity to them. They did not willfully and maliciously kill Christ, *as the Son of God*. When Peter explained to them what they had done, they “were cut to the heart” (v. 37); in other words, they came to realize the gravity of what they had done. Peter told them that, UPON REPENTANCE AND BAPTISM, they would obtain forgiveness of their sins, not before then! He did not contradict Christ—they both agreed. Peter did not say, God has ALREADY forgiven you, since Christ asked for forgiveness of your sins. Rather, Peter understood what Christ meant, in essence, asking the Father, Don’t remember their sin forever. Once they come to repentance, forgive them.

The same is true for Stephen’s prayer in Acts 7:60: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” *Moffat* says, “Lord, let not this sin stand against them.” (Compare also: *New International Version*; *Revised Standard Version*; *New American Bible*; and the *New Jerusalem Bible*). Stephen was essentially saying the same thing that Christ had said: Don’t treat this as the unpardonable sin, for which there is no forgiveness. Don’t let this sin stand against them forever. Once they come

to repentance—a realization what they have done—forgive them. In effect, both Stephen and Christ did NOT ask God to forgive these people right there and then. In fact, Stephen had just told them in verse 51: “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”

Stephen also told them, just as Peter did, that they had become “the betrayers and murderers” of “the Just One” (verse 52). While Peter’s audience repented, Stephen’s audience did not. Rather, they compounded their sin by murdering Stephen. So then, we see that Stephen did not ask God to forgive them—people who were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit—at that moment in time. He asked God to forgive them *ONCE THEY CAME TO REALIZE THEIR SIN AND THEN REPENTED OF IT*. We also see that Stephen did not contradict Peter either, who had required repentance *BEFORE* forgiveness.

In fact, we find numerous Scriptures where God has refused to grant forgiveness, because there was no repentance. Note that these examples include the way God dealt with Old Testament people to whom He had not offered the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Compare Jeremiah 18:18–23 and Isaiah 2:9.)

God does not forgive us our sins if we refuse to repent of them, but He is quick to forgive, once we realize our sin and truly repent of it.

Since we are to pray, “Forgive US OUR debts,” this prayer includes not only the forgiveness of our personal individual sins, but also a request to God to forgive the sins of others (compare Numbers 21:7; 1 Samuel 12:19, 23).

SUMMARY

Because of Christ’s Sacrifice, we can ask God the Father to forgive us our sins. But we must acknowledge and confess our sins to God, and we must ask and pray in faith for His forgiveness while turning to Him and forsaking our evil ways. If we refuse to repent of our sins, we cannot expect that God will forgive us.

But that’s not all. There is yet another condition that we must fulfill in order to obtain God’s forgiveness of our sins. This condition is taught in the next sentence of the prayer outline.

“...As We Forgive Our Debtors”

When Christ asked us to pray in Matthew 6:12: “And forgive us our debts,” He did not stop there. Rather, He continued to say, in the same verse: “...**As we forgive our debtors.**”

The Bible is very clear that we cannot expect God to forgive our sins if we refuse to forgive others their sins and trespasses against us! We read in Matthew 6:14–15: “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Christ added this admonition in Mark 11:25–26: “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.”

Paul admonishes us in Ephesians 4:32 to be “kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

When we forgive, we must also forget, as God does (Jeremiah 31:34). Many may have a problem eradicating from their memories the bad things that someone has done to them. Without God’s help, it is clearly impossible to totally forget. However, with God’s help, all things are possible, and when we truly forgive someone his or her *sins against us*, we must make every effort to totally forget and we must pray to God that He gives us that ability.

FORGIVENESS WITHOUT REPENTANCE?

As we saw earlier, God forgives us our sins when we repent. In the same way, God requires of us to forgive a sinner his or her sins or trespasses **AGAINST US**, when he or she repents.

We read in Luke 17:3–4: “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”

HARBORING GRUDGES

Many times, however, we may not know whether a person has repented of his or her sins against us. The Bible instructs us as how to deal with such a situation. We should always have a forgiving attitude and a willingness to immediately forgive upon repentance, as this can be the start of any reconciliation process. We must never develop and harbor grudges against another person (Leviticus 19:18). We must hate the sin, but we must never hate the sinner. If we begin to hate the sinner, and develop resentment against the sinner, then we may find ourselves in a position where we might not be able to forgive the sinner when he or she does repent, and/or when his or her repentance comes to our attention.

Further, harboring grudges against someone is not spiritually or physically healthy for us. It can deprive us of the inner peace and joy of God that we are supposed to have (compare John 14:27; 15:11; 16:24; Colossians 3:15). God is always willing and ready to forgive, and so must we. It has been correctly said that we must do everything we can to establish peace (Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 3:11), and to help a person to repent, realizing at the same time that repentance is a gift from God (compare again Romans 2:4).

FORGIVE OTHERS AS GOD FORGIVES YOU

God tells us that we must forgive others in the same way that God has forgiven us (compare again Ephesians 4:32). This requires us to develop and have the same kind of mindset that God has. We are to become as God is—perfect (Matthew 5:48; Genesis 17:1).

For example, we are told that we need to love one another, *AS Christ loved us* (John 15:12). We know that Christ loves us with the same love that the Father has for Him (John 15:9). Actually, **it is Christ's love in us that enables us to love others in the same way** (John 15:10). We are to develop and have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5) and God the Father. When Christ said that we have to love each other *AS He loved us*, this is to be understood quite literally, of course.

Although God does not forgive a sinner without repentance, He still loves the person. In fact, we read that God loved the WORLD

(when they were still unrepentant sinners) so much that He gave His only-begotten Son so that everyone who BELIEVES in Him (having come to repentance and having accepted the sacrifice of Christ for payment of his or her sins) does not have to perish, but CAN have everlasting life (John 3:16). God may “overlook” sinful conduct (not forgiving it), as we read in Acts 17:30, and so can we (compare Proverbs 19:11: “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression.”)

BE ALWAYS READY TO FORGIVE!

God is ALWAYS READY and WILLING to forgive (Psalm 86:5), and so must we forgive others. When someone sins against us, or if we know that someone thinks that we have sinned against him or her, we are to talk to the person in an attempt to reconcile. God’s Word does NOT instruct us to WAIT until the person who has sinned against us comes to us and asks us to forgive him or her. God gives us the freedom—and many times the responsibility and **obligation**—to go to our brother or sister in an attempt to reconcile the relationship. We read in Matthew 5:23–24: “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother HAS SOMETHING AGAINST YOU, leave your gift there before the altar, AND GO YOUR WAY. First be RECONCILED to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

IF our brother has sinned against us, but is motivated by love and chooses to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit, he WILL respond to our attempt to reconcile with him. We read, in Matthew 18:15, that if he “hears” us, we have gained a brother. That is, he needs to hear—to repent of the sin that he committed against us. Conversely, if we find that we have sinned against our brother, we need to confess and repent of that, as well (compare James 5:15–16).

But, if he REFUSES to hear us, then what? Are we still commanded to forgive him? No. That is not what Christ says. He tells us, “But if he will NOT hear, take with you one or two more... And if he REFUSES to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:16–17). In other words, let him be to you as an “unclean person,” disfellowshipped from the community of the body of Christ.

THEN WHAT?

Upon his repentance, we are to “restore” such a person (Galatians 6:1), though we might have to make a “distinction” as to how to go about doing it (Jude 20–23). Upon repentance, Paul asked of the Corinthians to restore the sinning brother back into the fold (2 Corinthians 2:5–8). Restoring the person to the fellowship MUST include the concept of repentance, as otherwise there would be no point in disfellowshipping the person in the first place.

In Luke 15:11–32, we read the moving parable of the “lost son.” When the lost son returned to his father’s house, the father saw him coming (verse 20). He actually had been WAITING for his return. He ran to him and kissed him tenderly (as the original has it), showing him that he was willing to take him back (same verse). The fact that he saw the son RETURNING was already sufficient for him to grant him forgiveness. He SAW that the son was showing fruits worthy of repentance—he was returning. This is, of course, a parable that illustrates the fact that God the Father is WAITING for our repentance (compare 2 Peter 3:9), and that He is READY to forgive, when we are ready to repent and show Him that we *want His forgiveness*. God looks at our hearts. The son admitted to himself, before he had ever reached his father, that he had sinned (Luke 15:18–19), and when he reached his father, he acknowledged his sin to his father (verse 21).

GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Having a forgiving attitude sometimes requires GIVING THE BENEFIT OF DOUBT. Only God can look into the heart of a person. (God has, however, given His ministers a certain degree of discernment to ascertain whether someone is repentant or not, compare John 20:22–23. In addition, Christ tells all of His disciples to carefully analyze the conduct of false ministers, compare Matthew 7:15–20). When a person seems to express or show repentance, that must be sufficient for us to willingly grant forgiveness. A person, who sins against us and comes to us seven times “in a day” and says, I’m sorry, needs to be forgiven every time (compare Luke 17:4). Christ even said that we must forgive him “up to seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21–22), implying that there is no limit to forgiveness. On the other

hand, a person who continues in wrongdoing, showing no signs of regret whatsoever, and does not ask for forgiveness, proudly claiming that he has nothing to repent of, does fall into a different category. If in doubt, we are to show mercy, regardless. We might have a hard time believing that a person who asks us seven times in a day to forgive him has truly repented. Still, Christ said, if he comes to you seven times in a day and says, I repent, you must forgive him (compare again Luke 17:3–4).

We sometimes may not know whether a person has repented, especially if he or she lives far away from us. Nevertheless, we are admonished to be tenderhearted (Ephesians 4:32) and merciful (Luke 6:36). If a person initiates contact with us, even if it is by sending a card, or calling on the phone, or if the person does respond to us when we try to initiate contact, we should act mercifully and with compassion, with the goal of restoring the relationship. We need to always give the benefit of doubt! After all, if we are unwilling to forgive others their trespasses, God will not forgive us our trespasses either (Matthew 6:15). In the parable of the “lost son,” the father was willing to give his son the benefit of doubt. He saw him coming back, and while still afar off, he RAN to him!

As we read in Leviticus 19:18, we are not to hold grudges or anger against a person, and we are not to refuse to communicate with him or her, because we don’t know yet, FOR SURE, whether the person has repented. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:5, we must not be “too severe.” After the punishment had been inflicted (compare verse 6), he admonished the brethren: “...you ought rather to forgive and comfort him” (verse 7).

We need to become perfect, as God in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Even though God does not forgive “the bad” without their repentance, He still “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). If we have that same kind of a godly attitude, we will be “sons of our Father in heaven” (same verse), striving toward perfection (verse 48). That is why we are to love our enemies and to do good to those who hurt us, and even hate us (verse 44). We are to pray to God FOR them (same verse), so that God would, perhaps, grant them repentance and a change of heart (compare 2 Timothy 2:24–26; Acts 8:20–24).

A “character description” of the converted Christian can be found in Colossians 3:12–15. It discusses forgiveness in the context of a much bigger picture: “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even AS Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love [which covers all sins, compare Proverbs 10:12], which is the bond of perfection. And let the PEACE OF GOD rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

SUMMARY

God requires us to forgive others if we expect God to forgive us. We have to forgive others in the same way God forgives us. God does not forgive an unrepentant sinner, and neither are we required to. But, we are to give the benefit of the doubt, and we must always *be ready to forgive and to forget*. We must never hate another person and we must not harbor grudges against him or her. When we ask God to forgive us our sins, we must, in turn, forgive others their sins.

“Lead Us Not Into Temptation”

Most people in the professing Christian world are acquainted with this very familiar phrase. Many say it in church every Sunday. Some may even say it in prayer every day. But do they really understand what they are saying? If they did, perhaps they would not want to say it that way.

This phrase is commonly attributed to Jesus Christ. Quoting from the *Authorized Version*, Christ told His disciples to pray to God the Father: “**Lead us not into temptation**” (Matthew 6:13). But, DID Christ actually tell us to pray to the Father in that way, with that exact wording?

As translated, this would be a strange request of God the Father. After all, why would God tempt us? Why should we ask God not to tempt us?

We have seen then, that the problem is that the translation of the *New King James Bible*, as well as the *Authorized Version*, is misleading.

The Bible is very clear that God does NOT tempt us to sin (James 1:13). Therefore, He would never actively do something to induce us or tempt us to sin. Christ did not intend for us to pray to the Father: Don’t tempt us to sin! or, Don’t bring temptations into our lives.

God does, however, allow things to happen in our lives, even though He may not approve of our actions. In other words, He allows us to do as we please, simply because He created us with the ability to make decisions. He does not *force* us not to sin, and He does not, at this point, change the society around us; nor has He removed Satan from his earthly throne (compare Revelation 2:13). This means that we are often subjected to influences in our lives, which may tempt us to sin. And so, we are to ASK GOD TO RESTRAIN THOSE INFLUENCES, *so that we are not tempted to sin*. The best way to prevent sin is to not allow ourselves to be put in a situation where we are tempted to sin. We are told to “**abstain** from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22), and to “**flee** fornication” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Godspell translates Matthew 6:13 in this way: “Do not subject us to temptation.” The *Lamsa Bible* writes: “Do not let us enter

temptation...” In other words, prevent us from entering or walking into tempting situations that might lead us to sin.

In the Greek, the word for “lead into” is “*eisphero*,” which can also mean, “to bring into” (compare 1 Timothy 6:7), or, “to be driven into” (compare *Strong’s*, #5342).

The Commentary on the Whole Bible, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, states: “We incline to take it as a prayer against being drawn or sucked, of our own free will, into temptation, to which the word used here seems to lend some countenance—‘introduce us not.’”

OUR OWN DESIRES TEMPT US TO SIN

James 1:14–15 tells us that we are tempted when we are drawn away by our own desires and enticed by them. Then, when we give in to our desires, rather than fight and overcome them, we will sin. The temptation of our own desires causes us to sin because we are unable, or unwilling, to resist.

Christ admonished His disciples in Matthew 26:41 to “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” He added that the spirit, or mind, might not be willing to sin, but the flesh is weak. We need additional strength from God so that we don’t give in to the temptations of our own flesh and subsequently sin. We must pray that we don’t enter into temptation (Luke 22:40).

For instance, Paul warned us not to have a strong desire to become rich, as “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9).

We might even be tempted to sin, by our own desires, if we fail to look at ourselves and our own spiritual condition, and become proud or self-righteous while trying to help someone else overcome his or her spiritual problems (Galatians 6:1).

SATAN TEMPTS US TO SIN

Paul was concerned that the Thessalonian Christians had been influenced by Satan to such a degree that they had lost their faith because of their trials and problems. He says in 1 Thessalonians 3:5 that “I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.”

While God never tempts us to sin, Satan likes nothing more than to induce us to sin. Paul warns married couples of Satan's evil devices. He says in 1 Corinthians 7:5: "Do not deprive one another [of sexual affection] except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." Paul tells a married couple not to allow Satan to tempt them to commit a sexual sin, including the sin of adultery, when both partners don't show mutual sexual affection for each other in their marriage.

We also know that Satan tempted Jesus Christ in the wilderness. We read that when the tempter (Matthew 4:3) had "ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13).

THE SOCIETY TEMPTS US TO SIN

The Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians tempted Christ on numerous occasions. We read that they came, "tempting Him that He would shew them a sign from heaven" (Matthew 16:1, *Authorized Version*). Later, they tried to ask Him a trick question, whether or not to pay taxes, and Jesus responded: "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" (Matthew 22:18, *Authorized Version*).

BUT...GOD TESTS US

While God never *tempts* us to sin, He does *test* us, to help us NOT to sin. Sometimes His tests can be very difficult. And so, this is another way we can understand Christ's admonition to us regarding our prayer to the Father.

For instance, in the *Jewish New Testament*, by David H. Stern, it is written: "And do not lead us into hard testing..." This is also an accurate translation in the context, and here is why:

The New Testament Greek word for "temptation" ("*peirasmos*"), and the Greek word for "to tempt" ("*peirazo*"), can also mean, "trial" and "to test." The same is true for the Hebrew words in the Old Testament, "*massah*" and "*nasah*," which can mean "temptation" and "tempt," or, "trial" and "test." The context of the passage dictates the correct usage, and in most cases, the correct rendering is very clear.

As we will see, we should *want* God to test us so that we grow stronger in a spiritual sense, so that we will become approved in His eyes. We know, however, that we can ask the Father not to make it too hard for us, as Christ indicated in the outline prayer. Jeremiah once prayed: “O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing” (Jeremiah 10:24). So did David (Psalm 6:1; Psalm 38:1).

In addition, especially insofar as end-time Christians are concerned, they should also pray, “...do not subject us to the final test” (Matthew 6:13; *New American Bible*). This refers to the Great Tribulation—“the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10). Christ says that those who follow Him diligently will be able to escape that hour of final test (same verse).

WE SHOULD NOT WANT TO ESCAPE GOD’S TESTS

Though we can ask God not to test us too hard, we should never ask God not to test us at all! We should know that God HAS TO test us and correct us when we need correction. David *wanted* God to test him. We read his words in Psalm 26:2: “Test me, LORD, and try me; search my heart and mind” (*New American Bible*).

God tested Abraham (Genesis 22:1; Hebrews 11:17).

Jesus tested Philip (John 6:5–6).

God told Moses that He would “test” the nation of Israel, “whether they will walk in My law or not” (Exodus 16:4). He explained that He might even allow a dreamer, who would teach wrong doctrines, to enter the community or congregation of Israel, “for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 13:3). At the time of the Judges, God tested Israel through pagan nations (Judges 2:21–22).

God tests you “to do you good in the end” (Deuteronomy 8:16), and “so that you may NOT sin” (Exodus 20:20).

That is why you are to “count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience” (James 1:2–3). Later, in verse 12, James says: “Blessed is anyone who perseveres when trials come. Such a person is of proven worth and

will win the prize of life, the crown that the Lord has promised to those who love him” (*New Jerusalem Bible*).

And Peter tells us: “...now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6–7).

DO NOT TEST GOD!

We should ask God to help us never to sin against Him by “testing” Him. We cannot tempt God, as “God cannot be tempted by evil” (James 1:13), but we could test or try Him exceedingly—however, we should NEVER do this!

The Bible contains many examples where people tested God (compare Hebrews 3:8–9).

They “tested God again and again” (Psalm 78:41, *New Revised Standard Version*) by doubting Him and limiting His powers in their minds (verses 41 and 42).

They “tested God in their heart” by wondering whether He was willing and able to help them (Psalm 78:18–19).

They tested God by wondering whether He was even among them. Exodus 17:7 says (*New Revised Standard Version*): “He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’”

The Bible tells us never to test God in such manner. Christ’s famous reply to Satan in the wilderness should be correctly translated in this way: “Jesus said to him, ‘Again it is written, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”’” (Matthew 4:7; *New Revised Standard Version*. Compare also the *Revised English Bible*; the *New American Bible*; and the *New Jerusalem Bible*).

We are not to put God to the test by trying to force Him to do something in accordance with *our will*. Satan tempted Christ to sin against God, suggesting that He throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple and forcing God the Father to intervene and help Christ. Christ knew that if He had done this, He would have sinned against the Father by “putting Him to the test” (Matthew 4:5–7).

We are admonished in 1 Corinthians 10:9: “We must not put

Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents” (*New Revised Standard Version*). They “tested” Christ—the Personage in the God Family who dealt directly with ancient Israel in Old Testament times—by questioning God’s purpose for their lives and complaining that Christ had not provided them with food and water (Numbers 21:4–6).

Finally, Peter asked certain Church elders why some wanted to “test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples” by insisting that Gentiles must become circumcised and keep the Old Testament rituals of the sacrificial system (Acts 15:10, compare verse 1). They tested and questioned God who had already admitted Gentiles into the Church, by giving them His Holy Spirit, *without* requiring of them to be circumcised. We all ought to pray that the ministry not create rules and regulations for the membership that test God and that are not in accordance with God’s Will.

SUMMARY

When we ask God the Father to protect us from temptation, or serious and sore trials, we understand that God never *tempts* us to sin. Rather, temptation to sin comes through our own desires, the society around us, and Satan the devil. Christ tells us to ask the Father to protect us from the temptation to sin.

We also understand that God *tests* us to get to know us better. His tests are for the purpose of strengthening us and enabling us **not** to sin. We should not ask God the Father to withhold tests from us, but rather, as Christ tells us, ask the Father not to allow the trials we go through to be too difficult for us to bear. Conversely, we should ask the Father for strength and wisdom not to test *Him*, by doubting Him and His powers, by limiting—in our minds—His ability to help us, by trying to force our will upon Him, and by even questioning His involvement in our lives.

“Deliver Us From Evil”

What are we to do if we find ourselves in temptations and sore trials?

God does help us not to get into temptations if we do our part to resist, but if we do fall into temptations or serious trials, God is also willing to help us to endure and get out of them, no matter how we got into them.

We might have entered the realm of temptation because we gave in to our own selfish desires, or maybe we did not resist the influences of Satan the devil or the society that surrounds us. Or perhaps God *allowed* Satan to tempt us, but is using the occasion to test us. For example, Satan wanted to tempt Job, solely for the purpose of causing him to break down and sin. God allowed Satan to tempt Job, but at the same time, God used it as an opportunity to test Job, solely for the purpose of making him spiritually stronger—quite a different goal than Satan.

Christ not only instructed us to pray to God to not “lead us into” or permit “temptation,” including “sore trials,” but He also told us to pray: “...but deliver us from evil” (Matthew 6:13, *Authorized Version*).

As we have seen, temptation can originate through Satan the devil, or our own carnal and selfish desires, or the society around us. Since all of them may lead to sin, they are evil, and in order to prevent sin, we must be delivered from them.

DELIVER US FROM OURSELVES

Oftentimes we sin because we follow our own evil desires and the demands of our sinful human nature. We need to pray to God the Father to deliver us from the same.

The Bible is very clear that in us, that is, in our flesh, nothing good dwells (Romans 7:18). Our human heart is described as “deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). We are also told that the “imagination of man’s heart is EVIL from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). And so, the natural human being [not just his heart] is “evil” (compare Matthew 7:11; 12:34), because the person IS what

he thinks—what is in his heart—and his actions show it. Christ said that out of the human heart “proceed evil thoughts,” leading to all kinds of evil actions (Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21).

But Paul understood that God the Father and Jesus Christ “*deliver*” us from “the body of death” (Romans 7:24–25). If we follow our sinful human nature, we are headed toward eternal death (Romans 6:23), but we obtain *a new heart and a new mind* through the indwelling Holy Spirit. When we pray to the Father to deliver us from our evil self, we are, in effect, asking Him to give us *more* of His Holy Spirit, through which we can have the power and strength to overcome ourselves, thus creating in us a new, godly mind.

And so, Paul encourages true Christians to “draw near [to God] *with a true heart* in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22). When Jesus Christ rules this earth and gives mankind a new heart, a remarkable change will occur. We read in Jeremiah 3:17: “...No more shall they follow the dictates of their evil hearts.” (Compare, too, Ezekiel 11:19–20.)

DELIVER US FROM SOCIETY

We may also yield to sin because of following the examples of the evil society we live in, which is filled with temptations.

We are warned that “Evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Corinthians 15:33), and that we should “not follow a crowd to do evil” (Exodus 23:2).

As mentioned before, Paul tells us to “abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The *Authorized Version* renders this verse: “...abstain from all appearance of evil.” In addition, we are to **abhor** what is evil (Romans 12:9) and to depart from evil (Psalm 34:14). Job was “blameless and upright, and one who feared God and **shunned** evil” (Job 1:1). The margin of the *New King James Bible* says that Job literally “turned away from evil.”

And so, we need to ask God the Father to deliver us from those evil influences and to give us the strength to resist them. Proverbs 2:11–12 tells us that godly “Understanding will keep you, *To deliver you* from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things.”

Even though we understand these principles when we read them,

we still sometimes just don't follow wise counsel and, instead, end up in tempting situations that ultimately overpower us. But still, we can cry out to God for deliverance. Paul tells us in Galatians 1:4 that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that *He might deliver us* from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father..."

We should ask God to deliver us from evil circumstances and surroundings, brought about by evil men, as they could also discourage us and provoke us to sin against God. Remember, too, that even apart from the possibility of sinning, it is perfectly fine to ask God to give us rest and peace by delivering us from the evil of this society in all its various forms.

Paul was convinced that God would "deliver [him] from every evil work and preserve [him] for His heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18). He tells us that God delivered him out of all his persecutions, adding that all those who want to live godly will suffer persecution in this God-defying world (2 Timothy 3:11–12).

He also testified in 2 Corinthians 1:10 that God "delivered us from so great a death [the danger of certain death that was brought upon them by evil men], and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will *still* deliver us."

He added in 2 Timothy 4:17 that he "was delivered out of the mouth of the lion," reminding us of how Daniel was delivered by God "from the power of the lions" (Daniel 6:27). In addition, Peter points out how God "delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked" (2 Peter 2:7). Also, Jeremiah proclaims that God "has delivered the life of the poor From the hand of the evildoers" (Jeremiah 20:13).

God even tells us that He is willing to deliver us from all sickness, in His due time (Deuteronomy 7:15). In fact, we are told that God "shall preserve you from [or, deliver you out of] all evil" (Psalm 121:7).

Sometimes, God delivers the righteous from this evil society by letting the person die. Isaiah 57:1 tells us: "The righteous perishes... While no one considers That the righteous is taken away [or delivered] from evil."

The whole point in this discussion is that we must **never forget to pray to God the Father for deliverance.**

Consider the example of David in Psalm 140:1–2: “Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; Preserve me from violent men, Who plan evil things in their hearts; They continually gather together for war.”

Paul never forgot the importance of prayer for deliverance, either, including mutual prayer and intercession for others, asking the Christians in Thessalonica to “pray for us...that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:1–2).

DELIVER US FROM SATAN

The *New King James Bible* translates Matthew 6:13 as, “...but deliver us from the evil *one*,” emphasizing that the main culprit of evil is Satan the devil. After all, it is Satan who influences us, including the society around us. God did not create us with an evil heart. When God created Adam and Eve, He said that His creation was very good (Genesis 1:31). Ecclesiastes 7:29 confirms that “God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes.” They did so because of Satan. We became evil because of Satan’s evil devices, which we absorbed and followed from our early days. Because of Satan and our acceptance of his influence, our flesh became sinful. And the more we follow Satan’s direction, the more we become carnal and hostile toward God.

It is God’s wish that we “escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26). Christ prayed to the Father, not to take us out of this world, but “that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). Paul confirms, in 2 Thessalonians 3:3, that “the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.” Christ has come to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8), and we are told that the “God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20).

Generally speaking, Christ has already “delivered us from the power of darkness” (Colossians 1:13), by dying for our sins and offering us the possibility of forgiveness, so that we don’t have to succumb to eternal death. We are told that “through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those [or, deliver those] who through fear of death were all their lifetime

subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14–15).

God’s Church has been given the commission to preach this glorious news to others (Mark 16:15). As Christ sent Paul to the nations, so He is asking His Church today, “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18).

But Satan is still on his throne, walking around like a roaring lion to see whom he can devour (1 Peter 5:8). We need to be on guard, and we need God’s help to resist Satan and to be delivered from his evil devices. That is why we need to pray to God for His help and deliverance—to be constantly rescued from Satan, the evil one. We also need the strength to resist the devil (1 Peter 5:9; compare Ephesians 4:27; 6:11; James 4:7); and so, we are to pray to God for such strength as well.

HELP IN SORE TRIALS AND TEMPTATION

We have seen that Christ tells us to ask God to deliver us from evil, including temptation originating from our own selfish desires or from Satan the devil or from the societal influences we are subjected to every day. And God promised that He would do that, if we really want Him to.

We read in 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

In this case, rendering the words “tempted” and “temptations” as “tested” and “trials” would also make sense. Remember, the Greek words allow for both renditions.

For instance, the *Revised English Bible* states: “So far you have faced no trial beyond human endurance; God keeps faith and will not let you be tested beyond your powers, but when the test comes he will at the same time *provide a way out* [i.e., deliverance] and so enable you to endure.”

We are also told that God “knows *how to deliver* the godly out of temptations” (2 Peter 2:9) and/or “their trials” (compare the renditions of the *Revised English Bible* and the *New Jerusalem Bible*).

And finally, we read that Jesus Christ was “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15); and that He is “able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18), since He was “tempted” Himself. “Tempted” is the most likely meaning here, as the context is sin (“yet without sin”), and Christ could be tempted as a human being because He had given up His divine nature and *became* a human being here on earth (John 1:1, 14). At the same time, Christ was also tried and tested in all points, and He passed all tests without ever sinning. So, then, in that sense, Christ was both tempted *and* tested, and He can help us in, and deliver us from, our temptations and trials.

When we ask God the Father to deliver us from evil, including temptations or very serious trials in our lives, we also realize that Jesus Christ is there to help us in those times of need.

SUMMARY

When we pray to God the Father to deliver us from evil, we are asking Him to deliver us from our own evil nature; the influences of the evil society around us; and the evil one, Satan the devil. In addition, we can ask God to deliver us from very serious trials, which might include sickness and the possibility of death—always subject, of course, to God’s Will in a given situation.

“For Yours Is the Kingdom...”

Christ continued to ask us to pray: “**For Yours is the kingdom... forever**” (Matthew 6:13).

One of the early requests of God in this prayer outline in Matthew 6 was the coming of His kingdom to be established here on earth (“Your kingdom come,” verse 10). In approaching the final words of the outline prayer, we are to remind ourselves and express the thought that the kingdom belongs to God the Father, and that He will give it to whomever He wants. Christ expresses this in Luke 12:32: “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

But God will always be THE king over His kingdom. Psalm 22:28 reminds us that “the kingdom is the LORD’S”; and even now, although this is Satan’s world, nobody rules without God’s express permission (Daniel 4:17; John 19:11; Romans 13:1–2).

When we say to God the Father that His kingdom is forever, we are telling Him that we understand that there will never be a time when God will not rule over His creation—including us. We read in Daniel 2:44 that the “God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed...and it shall stand forever.” Compare, too, Daniel 6:26; 7:14.

Even when God’s plan for mankind has been fulfilled, God the Father will still be the highest ruler over His kingdom. We read that at the very “end,” Christ will deliver the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24). The time will come when God’s kingdom will rule over all there is (Psalm 103:19).

“For Yours Is the Power...”

Christ continued to ask us to pray: “**For Yours is...the power... forever**” (Matthew 6:13).

It was the day of Pentecost that marked the birth of the New Testament Church. It was on that very day that God gave His Holy Spirit to His converted sons and daughters. God sent His Spirit with a sound, from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind (Acts 2:2).

Jesus Christ compared God’s Spirit with a mighty powerful wind, in John 3:8, when He talked to Nicodemus. We find, then, that the Holy Spirit of God is many times described as a Spirit of POWER (compare 2 Timothy 1:7).

The Greek word for “power” is “*dunamis*,” from which come our English words “dynamo” or “dynamic.” It means “full of energy” or “energetic.” It is certainly not “a spirit of fear” or a spirit that motivates us to be ashamed or afraid. God will not allow us to enter His kingdom if we remain so fearful that we are never willing to fight the fight of salvation. Revelation 21:8 tells us that the cowardly and the unbelieving will end up in the lake of fire [signifying the second or eternal death], because they did not allow God’s Spirit within them to work through them. They remained filled with fear and timidity. They failed to reach their goal—the hope of salvation. So, then, it is God’s Spirit of power that must motivate us in a DYNAMIC way!

Paul was never afraid to make use of God’s power. He explains in Romans 15:18–19 that he accomplished tremendous things by the power of the Holy Spirit in him. He did not do this on his own. He KNEW that it had to be done through the power of God. He knew that “the power of Christ [did] rest upon” him (2 Corinthians 12:9).

We read that it is through the power of God the Father that Jesus Christ was resurrected (Ephesians 1:19–20). And God will resurrect His Spirit-begotten children with the same power He used to resurrect Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:14). But God will only resurrect us to the godly “power of an endless life” (Hebrews 7:16), if His Spirit of power was in us at the time of our death (Romans 8:11).

It was Paul’s greatest goal and desire to attain the power of

the resurrection, as we can read in Philippians 3:10–11. And so, when God resurrects us with His power, we will be raised in power (1 Corinthians 15:43). To put it differently, God, to whom belongs all power, is willing to share His power with us.

Let us therefore review in more detail the marvelous truth about the power of God.

ALL POWER BELONGS TO GOD

We read in 1 Chronicles 29:12: “In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.”

Psalms 62:11 exclaims: “God has spoken once, Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God.”

God is “great in power” (Nahum 1:3), and no one is able to withstand Him because of His power and might (2 Chronicles 20:6).

We will be mistaken and deceived if we don’t know the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29). Our faith must be in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 2:5), as it is God’s divine power that “has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).

GOD IS POWER

In Matthew 26:64, Christ identified God the Father as “*THE* Power.” God’s Spirit of power emanates from God, because God IS power!

Christ, too, is identified with the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). Christ received the power from God the Father when He was resurrected (compare 2 Corinthians 13:4). The Father shared, and still shares, His power with Christ, and through that power, Christ upholds all things today, including the entire universe, as Hebrews 1:1–3 explains.

GOD CREATED EVERYTHING THROUGH HIS POWER

Jeremiah 10:12 tells us: “He has made the earth by His power.” Romans 1:20 adds: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” Jeremiah 27:5 explains that God “made the earth, the man

and the beast that are on the ground, by [His] great power...” In fact, He “made the heavens and the earth by [His] great power... There is nothing too hard” for God (Jeremiah 32:17).

Job 26:12–13 points out that God “stirs up the sea with His power...[and] By His Spirit He adorned the heavens.”

GOD’S POWER IS REVEALED

We saw earlier that God’s power is revealed through His creation (compare again Romans 1:20). However, it is also revealed through the gospel, as Paul explains in Romans 1:16: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”

And, as the Church of God has a commission today to preach the gospel to prepare a people for Christ’s return, so John the Baptist went before Christ to prepare the people for His First Coming. He was able to do that “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17).

GOD’S GIFTS THROUGH HIS POWER

We read that God’s divine power gives us all things that pertain to eternal life (compare 2 Peter 1:3). In fact, we are kept or preserved today “by the power of God through faith for salvation” (1 Peter 1:5). In addition, God helps us in many different ways today, through His power, to preserve us from, or “deliver” us out of, physical harm (Isaiah 50:2). He gives us today physical things and opportunities by His power; for instance, the power to attain wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18).

GOD HEALS THROUGH HIS POWER

God promises to heal us from our sicknesses. Christ performed many miracles of healing when He was on earth. He did it through the power of God the Father, which had to be present in order to heal (Luke 5:17).

There was a woman who was suffering from a serious sickness and, when she touched Christ, she was healed. Christ commented that He noticed that power had gone out from Him (Luke 8:46; compare Mark 5:30). It was the power of God’s Holy Spirit, which was in Him, that healed the sick woman. Christ had laid aside all divine

attributes, so, as a man, He needed the power of God the Father in His life. And so, Christ was anointed “with the Holy Spirit and with power” by God the Father, and He was able to do good and to heal and cast out demons, “for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38).

GOD GIVES US HIS POWER TODAY

We read in Isaiah 40:29 that God “gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength.” He gives strength and power to His people (Psalm 68:35). For converted Christians, the gift of God’s power reaches an additional important dimension: God shares His very power already today with His begotten sons and daughters through the Holy Spirit dwelling within them:

Micah exclaimed in Micah 3:8: “I am full of power BY the Spirit of the LORD.” Christ promised His disciples that they would be “endued with power from high” (Luke 24:49) and that they would “receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon” them (Acts 1:8).

Once we have received God’s Holy Spirit, the power that we might potentially enjoy is beyond all human comprehension. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 4:7: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

He adds in Ephesians 3:20–21: “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church.”

Paul explains that God the Father lives in us through the Spirit of His mighty power, the same power mentioned before, which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead (Ephesians 1:19–20).

With God’s power working in our lives, “nothing will be impossible” for us (Matthew 17:20). Even though it may be impossible for ordinary and unconverted men, it will not be impossible for God’s converted people, because GOD will be with them, and we KNOW that “**with God all things are possible**” (Matthew 19:26; compare Luke 1:37). But, we must believe it (Mark 9:23)! We must BELIEVE that all things are possible for God (Mark 14:36) and that, therefore, all things are possible for us, since God lives in us.

As God created and fashioned the universe and the earth with

His mighty Spirit of power, so WE will also participate in future creative acts, since God will share His power with us, when we become born-again members in the Family of God. He already does so to an extent today, but **He will share ALL of His power with us, when we enter His kingdom** (For more information, please read our free booklet, “*God Is A Family.*”)

We must learn today to apply God’s power in our lives—to use that portion that God has given to us in order to overcome. God wants to see how we handle it today. He needs to be sure that He can entrust us with limitless power later without running the risk of misusing that power and turning against Him, as Lucifer and his angels once did, ultimately becoming Satan and demons (For more information, please read our free booklet, “*Angels, Demons and the Spirit World.*”)

How are we to prove to God today that we will never abuse His power in the future?

By allowing His Spirit in us to motivate and enable us to keep God’s law (Ezekiel 11:19–20; Numbers 14:24). God’s Spirit in us enables us to obey the truth, as Peter explains: “...you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...” (1 Peter 1:22).

GOD’S POWER LASTS FOREVER

Christ mentioned that God’s power will last forever. When we pray to God the Father, we should be cognizant of this fact.

Psalms 66:7 tells us that God “rules by His power forever.” Revelation 5:13 adds: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne [God the Father], And to the Lamb [Jesus Christ], forever and ever.” Compare, too, Revelation 7:12.

SUMMARY

God created everything by His power and He sustains everything through His power. God’s power is revealed to man through His creation, and also through the true gospel. God has power to help us in physical ways, and He offers us the gift of His Holy Spirit of power. As God the Father raised Christ from the dead through His power, so He will raise us up by the same power.

Christ, who sits at the right hand of God’s power, will return to

this earth with great power (Mark 13:26). At that time, He will be clothed with a powerful spiritual body and He will rule in God's kingdom of power (1 Corinthians 4:20). God the Father offers us the possibility to rule with, and under, Christ in His kingdom, with a powerful body that will be equal to the body of Christ (1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:21).

“For Yours Is the Glory...”

Christ continued to ask us to pray: “For Yours is...the glory...forever” (Matthew 6:13).

What should we be thinking and meditating about when acknowledging to the Father that *His* is the glory?

GOD OUR CREATOR

First, we are to realize that God is our Creator; that nothing would exist without Him; and that nothing would continue to exist without Him.

Romans 11:36 tells us: “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

God the Father, who is the highest in the Godhead (1 Corinthians 11:3; John 14:28; 20:17), created us physically, and He continues our *spiritual* creation today, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, by freeing us from the evil world.

Galatians 1:3–5 explains this aspect of our *spiritual* creation for which we should glorify God, in this way: “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

We also read that not only God the Father, but also Jesus Christ, deserves all glory, now and forever (2 Peter 3:18). This is so, as Jesus Christ had all glory BEFORE He became a Man, and He has all glory today (John 17:5; Luke 24:26; 1 Timothy 3:16). And we read that Christ, *in His glory*, will return to this earth (Matthew 25:31).

We must understand that both the Father and Jesus Christ are God. Christ tells us, however, that we are to pray to the Father, as He is greater, in authority, than Christ.

GOD’S GLORY TOO GLORIOUS FOR MAN

We cannot look with our human eyes at the glory of God and live. God had to cover Moses with His hand, so that he would not see God’s glorious face and die; but God did allow him to see the glory of His back (Exodus 33:18–23). Stephen was permitted to see

God's glory in a vision, just before he died (Acts 7:55).

We find described a glimpse of God's glory in Revelation 15:8, where we read that the heavenly temple was filled with smoke from the glory and power of God. Even when the Israelites looked at God's glorious appearance from afar, the "sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel" (Exodus 24:17).

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S GLORY

Those who have been called by God into His Way of Life can understand the truth about the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:6). To some extent, God's glory could and can be appreciated by all men (Psalm 19:1), but most have refused, and still refuse today, to consider it (Romans 1:22–23). Even in Christ's time, and at the time of the early New Testament church, most people refused to give glory to God (Luke 17:18; Acts 12:23). Man's rejection of God's glory will continue until Christ returns (Revelation 16:9).

This must not be the case for those in God's Church! Rather, we are instructed by God to *declare* His glory to all nations. Revelation 14:6–7 describes the time when God will judge the nations. Just before that time, an angel will appear with the everlasting gospel, which is to be preached to those who dwell on earth. He will introduce the message with these words: "Fear God and give glory to Him (verse 7)." 1 Chronicles 16:24 commands God's people to "Declare His glory among the nations." Paul asked the brethren to "...pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified" (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Ultimately, "the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR LIFE

It is the commission of *God's Church* to proclaim the gospel of God, which includes a message about His glory, but we also have a personal responsibility to proclaim the glory of God *in our own lives*, by the way we live. When we conduct our lives within the parameters of God's principles, we are actually ambassadors—*representatives* of God—to those who observe us. They will ultimately learn from us

how to glorify God—how to give glory to Him.

Matthew 5:16 tells us: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Compare 1 Peter 2:12.)

John 15:8 adds: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” (Compare Leviticus 10:3.)

Our right example of Christian living should lead others to glorify God, as Paul says in Galatians 1:24: “And they glorified God in me.” Whatever we do, say, and even think, should be to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Corinthians 6:20). Even when we are persecuted for the name of Christ, God is glorified, as it will become apparent that we loved God more than anyone or anything else (compare 1 Peter 4:14–16). This may even include death, if we are put in a position to die for the faith (compare John 21:19).

We are to live for the glory of God, NOT for our own glory or for the glory of other men (John 7:18). Even Christ did not seek His own glory (John 8:50). He said, in John 17:4, that He had glorified the Father on earth. We also read that Paul did not seek glory from men (1 Thessalonians 2:6). Proverbs 25:27 says that it is not even glory when one seeks his own glory.

SEEK GOD IN TIME OF TROUBLE

When we are in trouble and ask God for help, we can remember the plea of the psalmist in Psalm 79:9—the way in which he approached God—and we can do likewise: “Help us, O God of our salvation, For the glory of Your name; And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins, For Your name’s sake!”

God tells us, in Psalm 50:15: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

We must know that God will not leave us alone. We can, therefore, say confidently with Paul: “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18; compare Philipians 4:19–20).

WE ARE TO RECEIVE GOD’S GLORY

When we pray to God, “Yours is the glory forever. Amen,” we are

acknowledging that He is the “Father of glory” (Ephesians 1:17). At the same time, we need to realize that **God has created US, so that we can obtain His glory!** This may sound unbelievable, but Scripture reveals that God *WANTS* to share His glory with you and me!

Since physical man was created in the image and likeness of God, he does possess a certain glory, though it is only temporary, of course. Christ said in Matthew 6:29 that Solomon had this glory. We are told in 1 Peter 1:24 that the glory of man is like the passing and temporary flower of the grass, and also in Isaiah 28:1, that man’s “glorious beauty is a fading flower.”

It is God’s purpose to share His eternal glory with us. However, human beings, left to themselves, could never obtain it. One reason is that they sin, and unless sin is repented of and forgiven, man “falls short of the glory of God” (compare Romans 3:23).

But the good news is that Christ died for us so that through Him—through His death *AND* through His life *in us*—it becomes possible for us to obtain God’s very own glory! Romans 8:18 tells us that the sufferings of this world shrink into insignificance in comparison with the glory which shall be revealed in us. We are already “being transformed into the same image [of Christ] from [man’s] glory to [God’s] glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

We read in 1 Thessalonians 2:12 that we must “walk worthy of God who calls us into His own kingdom and glory.” We are, in fact, to inherit “the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 2:14). 1 Peter 5:10 confirms that God called us “to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus,” and Romans 5:2 emphasizes that we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Philippians 3:20–21 leaves no doubt in this regard: “the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.”

To reiterate, when we pray to the Father and refer to His glory, it should be a reminder to us that God’s glory *could* be ours.

SUMMARY

As God’s Church, we have a responsibility to make the mystery of God’s glory known to others (compare Colossians 1:27). Individually,

we need to live a Christian life and set a right example so that others will glorify our Father in heaven.

Glory belongs to God. God's glory will last forever. God's glory is too bright for human beings to behold. Christ shares the glory of His Father. God the Father resurrected Christ in glory, and Christ will return in glory. But God wants to share His very glory with man. God has revealed to us the mystery of His glory—that it is obtainable for us, and that we will actually inherit it, if we walk worthy of His calling. We are to live our lives to God's glory, so that others can glorify God as well. Ultimately, the earth will be filled with the glory of God. When we ask God the Father for help, we can refer to His glory, which He promised to give to us.

In the Name of Christ

Christ tells us that we are to pray to the Father in “Christ’s name” (compare, for instance, John 16:23: “...whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.”). What, exactly, does it mean to pray to God the Father *in Christ’s name*?

We will review several interesting passages where the concept of praying, speaking or acting in Christ’s name is used. Notice what those passages actually convey to us.

THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST’S NAME

When we pray in Christ’s name, we must always be mindful of the *GREATNESS* of His name.

Ephesians 1:20–21 reveals to us that Christ is above every name that is named. Philippians 2:9–11 adds that God exalted Christ and gave Him the name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. There is no other name given to man by which we can be saved, but the name of Christ (Acts 4:12). And, finally, Hebrews 1:4 explains that Christ became so much better than the angels, as He has, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they.

WE BELONG TO CHRIST

The mere fact that someone says or does something “in Christ’s name” does not mean that he will be heard, or that he will be accepted by God. Matthew 7:22–23 says that people prophesied in Christ’s name, casting out demons and doing many mighty works in Christ’s name, but Christ says that **He never knew them**.

In Mark 9:38–41, someone, who was not one of the Twelve Apostles, cast out demons in Christ’s name. Christ tells the apostles who objected to such practice, not to prevent him from working miracles in His name. He went on to explain that if someone gives a glass of water to His disciples in His name, because the disciples belong to Him, “he will by no means lose his reward” (verse 41).

We see that the concept of “in Christ’s name” includes the fact that one “belongs to Christ.” The people who are mentioned in

Matthew 7:22 did not belong to Christ, so their words or actions “in His name” were meaningless.

Note another example in Acts 19:13–17, showing that the phrase “in Christ’s name” cannot be used as just some kind of a routine or a magical phrase, not even in prayer. Neither can it be used in vain repetition. In that passage, sorcerers tried unsuccessfully to cast out demons by calling the name of Jesus over those who were possessed because they noticed that Paul did it in the name of Jesus (compare Acts 16:18). However, they were unable to do so, as they did not *belong* to Christ. They were simply trying to use the phrase “in Christ’s name” as a “magical formula.”

CHRIST’S NAME IDENTIFIES AND DESCRIBES CHRIST

When we speak of Christ’s name, we actually speak of Christ Himself. When we understand **how great HIS NAME is**, we can begin to comprehend just **how great HE is**, and when we realize that we can only be saved **through the name of Christ**, we can then recognize that we can only be saved through **Christ Himself**.

Matthew 12:21 says that Gentiles will trust in Christ’s name [trust in Him]. Matthew 18:5 says that when we receive a little child in Christ’s name, we receive Him. And Matthew 18:20 says that when two or three are gathered together in His name, He is among them.

Matthew 28:19–20 quotes Christ’s words as follows: “...make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of [in the possession of] the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit [the God Family, currently consisting of the Father and the Son who are both working through the power of the Holy Spirit], teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” But we also read that we are to be baptized into the name of, or possession of, Jesus Christ. That is, we are baptized in, or into, Him. We are baptized into Christ’s death (Romans 6:3), and when we are baptized into Him, we have put Him *on*, as Galatians 3:27 explains.

For those of us who have been properly baptized, we were buried with Christ in baptism, and we were resurrected with Christ (Colossians 2:12–13). We died with Christ, and were raised with Christ (Colossians 2:20; 3:1). So, again, we see that being baptized in, or

into, *His name* means being baptized in, or into, *Him*.

Acts 21:13 tells us that Paul was willing to die for the *name* of the Lord Jesus; i.e., all that Christ stands for. Or, we might say, Paul was willing to die for *Christ*.

Romans 10:13–14 makes an equivalent statement: Those who call on God (verse 14) call on the name of the Lord (verse 13). Further examples can be found in the Book of Revelation. We are told in Revelation 13:6 that the beast opens “its mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name.” Revelation 15:4 tells us: “Who should not fear YOU, O Lord, and glorify YOUR name?...all nations shall...worship before YOU.” Revelation 16:9 states: “...they blasphemed the name of God...and did not give *Him* glory.” Verse 11 says that they “blasphemed the God of heaven...and did not repent.” Also, verse 21 says that they “blasphemed God.”

To pray “in Christ’s name” means to pray “in Christ.” But what, exactly, does it mean to “pray in Christ”?

IN THE NAME OF CHRIST MEANS ‘THROUGH HIS PRESENT POWER’

When we do something in the name of Christ, we recognize His great power through which He works.

Acts 3:6 says that Peter healed a lame person by telling him to rise up and walk “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” Acts 3:16 says that Christ’s Name, “through faith in His Name,” has healed a person—the faith which comes through Him did it.

Acts 4:7 quotes the high priest asking Peter, “By what power [*du-namis* in Greek; a reference to the power of God’s Spirit] or by what name have you” healed this man? Acts 4:10 quotes Peter’s answer: I did it “...by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth..., by Him this man stands here before you whole.”

Christ did the healing. Peter told the lame man, in effect: I command you in the name of Christ to rise; that is, I command you to rise, knowing that Christ will do it.

We also read in 1 Corinthians 5:4–5 that Paul said: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together...with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,” to disfellowship someone. Paul referred to the fact that the power of Christ was present. That is,

CHRIST was present through the power of the Holy Spirit. Knowing this, Paul could tell them to do a certain thing, *in the name of Christ*, because Christ's power and presence was there. To put it differently, Paul was telling the elders that *Christ* would disfellowship the person, through them. It is the same principle at work when God's ministers baptize someone in, or into, the name of Christ. It is actually *Christ who performs the baptism*, while using His human servants as His instruments.

WHEN WE PRAY IN CHRIST'S NAME, CHRIST WILL DO IT

John 14:13–14 says that whatever we ask in Christ's name, Christ will do it.

The *Ryrie Study Bible's* comments on this verse are: "This is not a formula to be tacked on to the end of prayers, but means praying for the same things which Christ would desire to see accomplished. It is like using a power of attorney which a very dear loved one has given you."

The *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, explains: "...whatever you ask in My name—as Mediator—that I will do."

Matthew Henry's Commentary points out: "They were to plead his merit and intercession, and depend upon it... Christ's is a good name, well known in heaven... By faith in his name we may have what we will for the asking."

The *Broadman Bible Commentary* adds that we are to pray "consistent with His character."

But HOW will Christ do it? WHY will HE do it? And WHAT, exactly, will He do?

IN HIS NAME MEANS "THROUGH CHRIST"

John 14:26 says that the Father will send the Holy Spirit in the name of Christ. Titus 3:5–6 says that the Father gives us the Holy Spirit through Christ. It is actually Christ who receives the Holy Spirit from the Father, to then pour it out on us (Acts 2:33; John 15:26).

When the Father gives us the Holy Spirit in Christ's name, He is actually giving us the Spirit through Christ. When we pray to the Father *in the name of Christ*, we pray to the Father *through Christ*. But

how does that happen, and what does it mean?

We read in Romans 7:25 that Paul thanked God *through* Jesus Christ our Lord. He adds in 1 Corinthians 15:57 that God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, somehow, Christ DOES something. When we pray to the Father in the name of Christ, we expect Christ to do something!

Notice Hebrews 13:20–21, where we read that God will make us complete through Jesus Christ. Philippians 4:13 states that Paul could do all things through Christ who strengthened him.

John 16:23–24 says that whatever we ask the Father in Christ's name, *the Father will give it to us*, and when we ask in Christ's name, we will receive it. However, we had read earlier that *Christ will do it*. So, we see, then, that ***the Father does it through Christ!*** Simply put, the Father gives it to Christ, and Christ passes it on to us.

Amen

Christ instructed us to close our prayer with the word “Amen” (Matthew 6:13). But as is the case with praying “in Christ’s name,” the use of the word “Amen” can also become a vain repetition if we are not careful. Again, to avoid this, we need to have a good understanding of what it means to say “Amen.”

Rienecker’s Lexikon zur Bibel explains that the Hebrew word “Amen” literally means “this is certain” or “so shall it be.” It also carries the meaning of “true or truth, reliable, permanent, faith and faithfulness.” For instance, we read in Jeremiah 28:6: “...and the prophet Jeremiah said, ‘Amen! The LORD do so; the LORD perform your words which you have prophesied...’”

The commentary continues to point out that the Greek, and later the Latin, English and German, adopted the Hebrew word “Amen” without translating it.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament apply this word sometimes to God. We read in Isaiah 65:16 about the “God of truth.” The Hebrew word for truth is “Amen.” In Deuteronomy 7:9, we read about “the faithful God.” Again, the Hebrew word for “faithful” is “Amen.” In Revelation 3:14, Christ describes Himself as “the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning [better: Beginner] of the creation of God.”

The solemn meaning of the word is also emphasized in 2 Corinthians 1:20: “For all the promises of God in Him [Christ] are Yes, and in Him Amen [or better, according to the literal text: “...and therefore also through Him the Amen...”], to the glory of God through us.”

The commentary concludes with these important observations: “The ‘Amen,’ which the praying person says at the end of the prayer, is empty of meaning and a misunderstanding of its Biblical use, if it does not appear in a lively connection with the contents of the prayer.”

SUMMARY

When we conclude our prayer with the word “Amen,” we must not use it as a routine empty phrase. It is a very important and meaningful word, a confirmation, if you please, that we actually meant every

word we said in the prayer. It must never be used thoughtlessly, as one of its uses is in reference to God Himself.

Conclusion

The Bible tells us that we need to pray, and it tells us how to pray, and to Whom we are to pray. As we said in the introduction, it is the purpose of this booklet to help you pray *effectively*. It is our sincere desire that, after you have read the booklet, you will feel inspired to incorporate the Biblical principles mentioned herein, and begin to realize how interactive God is with you on a very personal level.

In applying the keys for successful prayers, as well as using the outline in Matthew 6 as a guide, you can be confident that God will hear your prayers! His answers to your prayers will be gratifying, far beyond what you can imagine!

Just go ahead and try it!

Appendix A—Ask for More of God’s Holy Spirit

Is it possible for a Christian to receive more of God’s Holy Spirit?

Yes it is, and the way in which this occurs involves personal growth, as well as God choosing someone to fulfill a special function in His service.

First of all, understand that **God gives man His Holy Spirit as a GIFT**. Peter explains this in context in Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission [margin: forgiveness] of sins; and you shall receive the **gift** of the Holy Spirit.’”

Paul further describes the purpose of God’s **gift**: “In Him [Christ] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, [which] is the guarantee [margin: down payment, earnest] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:13–14; also compare 2 Corinthians 5:5).

God’s Holy Spirit is also God’s power, and through it, Christians are able to live a converted life. We find a dramatic contrast of two ways of living explained in Romans 8:5–6: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

Just repenting and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is not enough. This is not the complete process that God has established in order for mankind to enter into eternal life. There is some effort required on our part. In His message to the seven churches found in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus Christ summarizes His instructions to each group with these words: “To him who overcomes...” (Compare Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21).

Consider how Paul encouraged Timothy, a young minister under his guidance, to use the gift of the Holy Spirit: “Therefore I remind you to **STIR UP** the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power

and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:6–7).

Power, love, and a sound mind are all areas in which Christians are to grow, and that **growth comes through using God’s Holy Spirit to overcome**. Each of us WILL experience the necessary growth and change if we heed Paul’s admonition to the Christians in Philippi: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2:5).

Even if we have God’s Spirit in us, if we don’t use it to overcome and grow, we may find ourselves left behind. Jesus taught a parable concerning a fig tree that was not bearing fruit (compare Luke 13:6–9). Ultimately, it was to be cut down because it was worthless as a fruit tree. The spiritual analogy for us is that we must use the Spirit God gives us to produce the fruit of conversion, which is manifested by our character becoming more and more like the Father and Jesus Christ—righteous in every aspect (compare Matthew 5:48).

King David understood that his own actions of adultery and murder had separated him from God. In deep and bitter repentance he acknowledged his mistakes. David’s prayer is recorded in Psalm 51, and in it, he makes this startling request: “Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (verse 11). He understood that if God took His Holy Spirit away from him, it was equivalent to God actually casting him away!

Christians are accountable to use what God gives them. Jesus taught in the parable of the talents that we will be judged, and rewarded, according to how productively we incorporate God’s power into our lives (compare Matthew 25:14–30)! Here is how Peter presents this challenge: “...but GROW in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

A good example of some individuals who did just that, were the seven members who were chosen to fulfill needed roles in the Church. A requirement was that the men were to be “full of the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 6:3). These men were chosen based on the *fruits* of God’s Holy Spirit, manifested in the way they conducted their lives (compare Galatians 5:22–23).

In 1 Corinthians 12, we learn that spiritual gifts were given for the purpose of directing the Church of God: “There are diversities [margin: allotments or various kinds] of gifts, but the same Spirit”

(verse 4). Paul goes on to name those gifts in verses 27–28: “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”

These various kinds of gifts are further explained in Ephesians 4:11–13: “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...”

Numbers 11 shows that God actually took some of the Holy Spirit He had given to Moses and gave it to the elders in Israel, in order to empower them to assist Moses (compare verses 17, 25–26). In another example, Elisha received a double portion of the Holy Spirit that Elijah had (compare 2 Kings 2:9–15).

However, in regard to God giving of His Holy Spirit to Christ, we find this statement from John the Baptist: “For he [Christ] whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him [Christ]” (John 3:34, *Authorized Version*). Also, in the example of John the Baptist, the angel, Gabriel, told Zacharias: “...He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15).

Generally, God gives us only a small portion of His Holy Spirit at the time of our proper baptism. But ***God expects us to use His Spirit to GROW in His way of life, so that He can give us MORE of His Spirit!*** That is why we need to be consistently RENEWED in the spirit of our mind (Ephesians 4:23). Paul addresses converted Christians in Romans 12:2, when he tells them: “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...” This is a continuous process, and the *supply* of the Holy Spirit helps us to accomplish this change (Philippians 1:19).

We read in the New Testament, in the Book of Acts, that Paul and Barnabas were ordained for a special work in the Church of God (Acts 13:1–4). The Biblical record shows that God will use zealous individuals for His special purpose. In explaining the qualifications

of an elder, Paul states: “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop [margin: overseer], he desires a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1). In these instances, when a man is ordained to the ministry, God grants help through His Holy Spirit (compare Luke 10:17–20; Mark 16:15–18).

Finally, if you desire to have more of God’s Holy Spirit, simply **ask!** Luke 11:13 says: “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more* will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those **who ask Him!**” We have this further assurance: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14). “And *whatever* we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).

Appendix B—What Is Christ’s Name?

It is very important that we know Christ’s name and fully understand the meaning of it. The Bible reveals who Jesus Christ is, and by what name we should address Him. Peter, in speaking before the Sanhedrin in defense of healing a lame man, said: “let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole” (Acts 4:10). Continuing in verse 12: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

On another occasion, Peter addressed the Gentile household of Cornelius, explaining the power and significance of Jesus Christ’s name. “To Him all the prophets witness that, THROUGH HIS NAME, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

Indeed, the Old Testament does speak of the coming of the Messiah (compare Daniel 9:25–26), and it also tells something about Him, through the name that would be given to Him: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL” (Isaiah 7:14). Immanuel literally means, “God with us!”

From the *“Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible,”* by Herbert Lockyer, Senior Editor, we find this explanation: “The word MESSIAH comes from a Hebrew term that means ‘ANOINTED ONE.’ Its Greek counterpart is CHRISTOS, from which the word CHRIST comes. Messiah was one of the titles used by early Christians to describe who Jesus was (emphasis added).”

Just as in the Old Testament there were many names that were applied to God, so also in the New Testament were various names or titles used that pertained to the Messiah.

In Luke 1:30–33, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she would be the one to bear the Messiah: “Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a

Son, and shall CALL HIS NAME JESUS. He will be great, and will be CALLED THE SON OF THE HIGHEST; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” In answering Mary’s question as to how this birth would occur, the angel said to her: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be CALLED THE SON OF GOD” (verse 35).

When this announcement was given to Mary, she was betrothed to Joseph; that is, she was legally married to him in accordance with civil laws, but the marriage had not yet been consummated. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream to reassure him. He said of Mary: “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall CALL HIS NAME JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Continuing in verses 24 and 25: “Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him *his wife*, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he CALLED HIS NAME JESUS.”

We also find this testimony in Luke 2:21: “And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, HIS NAME WAS CALLED JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”

To understand the meaning of the name “Jesus,” let’s again refer to what the angel said to Joseph: “...and you shall call His name Jesus [margin: “Lit. SAVIOR”], for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). In this instance, the angel tells Joseph what to name the Child, and he also defines what the name “Jesus” means. In the Old Testament, the name “Joshua” similarly means “Jehovah-saved.” It is quite likely that the Greek transliterated word “Jesus” has arisen from the Hebrew form of “Joshua,” the name that most Hebrew-speaking Jews would have used at the time of the Messiah’s earthly life.

During His ministry Jesus was called Rabbi (teacher) by both those who were His disciples (compare John 1:38) and by those who did not truly accept Him for who He was (compare Matthew 22:34–36).

Following the resurrection of Jesus Christ, one of His disciples made this revealing statement in regard to who He was: “...Thomas

answered and said to Him, ‘My LORD and my GOD!’” (John 20:28). Several times Jesus is referred to as “LORD,” which conveys the sense of “MASTER,” or the One we need to OBEY. Jesus Christ is our LORD, our MASTER, our sovereign CREATOR (compare John 1:1–4), and our REDEEMER. Aside from that, Lord may also serve as a polite term of addressing someone, in the sense of “Sir.”

Note how Peter concluded his powerful witness on the Day of Pentecost: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both LORD and CHRIST” (Acts 2:36). Even at the very conclusion of the Book of Revelation, in chapter 22, verse 21, we find this statement: “The grace of our LORD Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

The Roman ruler, Pilate, did something that gives us more understanding concerning how we are to address the Messiah: “Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS” (John 19:19). He actually wrote this title in more than one language: “Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in HEBREW, GREEK, AND LATIN” (John 19:20). The significance of this deed is also reflected in the miraculous events surrounding the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2. The crowd assembled there represented many different countries, but they all heard the disciples of Jesus speaking in their own native tongues—not just Hebrew, or Aramaic, or Greek, or Latin. In verse 11 of Acts 2, this testimony is given: “...we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.”

What was said in those various languages would have also included appropriate names for Jesus Christ. These people truly understood what they heard, because it was presented to them in their own languages.

When Saul—later to be named Paul—was called, Jesus revealed Himself to him. Saul asked: “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, ‘I AM JESUS, whom you are persecuting...’” (Acts 9:5).

Even the demonic world knows about the Messiah, as recorded in Mark 1:23–24: “Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying, ‘Let us alone! What have we to do with You, JESUS OF NAZARETH? Did You come to destroy

us? I KNOW WHO YOU ARE—THE HOLY ONE OF GOD!” Another incident involved the seven sons of Sceva who tried to exorcise an evil spirit: “And the evil spirit answered and said, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’” (Acts 19:15).

There are also those who use the name of Jesus Christ in false ways even today. Jesus gave one of the major warnings for the end of this age: “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:5). Jesus also warned about those who think that they are doing things in Christ’s name: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21–23).

As we can see from the foregoing, using the name of Jesus Christ must be with His approval.

We see that God, the Father of Glory, has seated the Lord Jesus Christ at His own right hand “far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:21).

Note, also, this statement from Philippians 2:9–11: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that EVERY TONGUE should confess that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD, to the glory of God the Father.”

In the last days of this age, Jesus promised His help and protection to those who truly recognize who He is. In Revelation 3:8, we find this promise of hope from Jesus Christ: “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, AND HAVE NOT DENIED MY NAME.” Continuing in verse 10: “Because you have kept MY COMMAND to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

Then, in Revelation 3:12: “He who overcomes, I will make him

a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.”

How we address the Messiah must be based on our understanding of who He is, and what He represents! His very name gives us access to the Father and to answered prayers! Whatever language we may speak, we must come to recognize the preeminence of Jesus Christ in our lives. Finally, whether we refer to Christ as the Messiah, Jesus, Christ, Jesus Christ, Lord, God, Son of God, Master, Teacher, King, Savior, Redeemer, or any number of other names and titles that the Word of God applies to Him, we **MUST understand the deep meaning conveyed with these expressions, and we must back up all that we do by making certain we are doing the Will of our Father in heaven!**

The following booklets are available, upon request:

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The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?

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