



TEACH US
HOW TO
PRAY

LUTHER ON PRAYER
ALONE



LUTHER ON PRAYER

- Luther wrote several treatises on prayer throughout his life and career.
- Several of his sermons on prayer were gathered in *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen* (1519).
- According to Luther, the Lord's prayer teaches *how* to pray and *what* to pray for.



HOW TO PRAY

- In relation to how, Luther thought that the fewer the words the better the prayer.
- Content and meaning of the words matters most.
- The Lord's Prayer is both economical and meaningful.
- For Luther, the key concept is sincerity; sincerity needs few words.



WHAT TO PRAY FOR

- Now, concerning what to pray for: we pray for our needs and those of others.
- Everything that a person needs, that is, forgiveness, blessing, and every good thing, are already conveyed by the Lord's Prayer.
- Therefore, all prayers are to embrace and express the meaning of that one prayer taught by Jesus himself.



MORE ON PRAYER

- In 1522, Luther published a *Personal Prayer Book*.
 - There he included besides the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, Apostle's Creed, a few Psalms... and the Hail Mary.
- Eventually, with the publication of the *Large and Small Catechism* (1529), he included a detailed exposition of the Lord's Prayer.
- Later Luther added *A Simple Way to Pray* (1535), at the request of his barber.



TEXT AND EVENT

- Bear in mind that Luther's Catechism is divided in two parts: first, the *texts*; second, the *events*.
- The Lord's Prayer is both *words* (text) and *action* (event).
- In this sense, the Prayer is at the center or heart of the catechism.
- It means that prayer, and prayer alone, is the link between faith and life, between belief and experience.



WHY PRAY?

- First, it is our duty, because God has commended it: prayer means to call upon God, acknowledging our dependence on God: we call upon God for every need.
- Second, to pray is a sign of our trust on God, calling God trustworthy: that trust is founded on God's promise: God has promised to hear us.
- Thus, all Christians need to pray daily.



PRAYER ALONE

- Christians will experience spontaneous prayer, especially when they feel their need.
- By “need,” Luther often speaks of “temptation” or even of the “devil’s attack,” which we are not capable to resist on our own.
- The only effective protection of defense against such attack is prayer alone.



THE LORD'S PRAYER

- Luther divided it into two parts: first, the introduction, and then seven petitions.
- The introduction is its opening words: “Our Father in heaven.”
 - Father, or parent, is more intimate than judge, creator, or God.
 - It also describes Jesus’s own intimate relation with God, and now ours because of Jesus.
- Moreover, we say “our” and not just “my” because when we pray to God, we also pray for one another.



SEVEN
PETITIONS
1-4

1. “Hallowed be your name,” that is, that God’s name alone be holy. This means to honor and praise God in word and deed.
2. “Your kingdom come,” that is, that God’s reign may come to us and prevail among us.
3. “Your will be done, on earth as in heaven,” that is, that God’s will be done in us; that through the reception of Word and Sacrament, through daily life and even suffering, we see the fulfillment of God’s will in our lives.
4. “Give us this day our daily bread,” that is, we pray for everything that pertains to life: food, clothing, shelter, family, and all social relations.



PETITION
5


5. “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us,” that is, that being a Christian and submitting to God’s will does not mean that we are without sin. Therefore, we claim to God daily for forgiveness.

In this petition, there seems to be a conditional clause: if we forgive, then we are forgiven. Or, maybe, if we are forgiven, then we forgive others. Either way, God teaches us to forgive others. Forgiveness is an ongoing experience and activity.



PETITIONS 6-7

6. “Lead us not into temptation,” that is, the Gospel has not taken us out of the world. Thus, we are under attack. Luther includes here trials and the anxieties of daily living. Also, those things that makes us follow our own will rather than God’s. Temptations will always come, among other reasons, because they show us that we are not really in control.
7. “Deliver us from evil,” that is, we ask God to intervene and deliver us from anything that separates us from God.



THREE FORMS OF PRAYERS

In the Lord's Prayer, all traditional forms of prayer are included:

- Vocal Prayer, which address God from the heart.
- Meditation, which reflects on God's Word and our experiences of God, the activity of the mind.
- Contemplation, which means to look at someone or something, paying attention, in the presence of someone, a face-to-face encounter.