

THE LORD'S PRAYER
A Dialog Sermon

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Person lines are spoken by a person praying at front of sanctuary.
God lines are spoken by, an unseen voice.

Person: Our Father who art in heaven.

God: Yes?

Person: Don't interrupt me. I'm praying.

God: But – you called Me!

Person: Called you? No, I didn't call you. I'm praying.
Our Father who art in Heaven.

God: There – you did it again!

Person: Did what

God: Called Me. You said, "Our Father who art in Heaven..." Well, here I am. What's on your mind?

Person: But I didn't mean anything by it. I was – you know – just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, kind of like fulfilling a duty.

God: That's not the way it is supposed to work but we'll deal with that later. Start again.

Person: Our Father who art in Heaven.

God: So what does that mean "in Heaven"?

Person: I don't know how to phrase it. It's hard to explain.

God: I can buy that. Just don't think I'm up above the clouds somewhere, separate from your world on earth. Please continue.

Person: Okay, Hallowed be thy name.

God: Hold it right there. What do you mean by that?

Person: By what?

God: By "Hallowed be thy name"?

Person: It means, it means ... good grief, ... I don't know what it means. How in the world should I know? It's just a part of the prayer.

(An afterthought.)

By the way, what does it mean?

God: It means honored, holy, wonderful.

Person: Hey, that makes sense. I never thought about what 'hallowed' meant before. Thanks.

(Returning to prayer)

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven.

God: Do you really mean that?

Person: Sure, why not?

God: What are you doing about it?

Person: Doing? Why, nothing, I guess.

I just think it would be kind of neat if you had more control of everything here. We have mess up our world a lot you know.

God: Yes, I know; but do I have control of you?

Person: Well, I go to church.

God: That isn't what I asked you. What about your bad temper? You've really got a problem there, you know.

And then there's the way you spend your money -- all on yourself.

And what about the unhealthy food you eat and the exercise you don't get?

Person: Now hold on just a minute! Stop picking on me! I'm just as good as some of the rest of those people at church!

God: Excuse Me. I thought you were praying for my will to be done. If that is to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. (Brief pause.) Like you – for example.

Person: Oh, all right. I guess I do have some hang-ups. Now that you mention it, I could probably name some others.

God: So could I.

Person: I haven't thought about it very much until now, but I really would like to cut out some of those things. I would like to, you know, be really free.

God: Good. Now we're getting somewhere. We'll work together – You and Me. I'm proud of you.

Person: Look, Lord, if you don't mind, I need to finish up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does.

(Returning to prayer)

Give us this day, our daily bread.

God: What do you mean by "bread"?

Person: Hey, wait a minute! What is this? Here I was doing my religious duty, and all of a sudden you break in and tell me I'm saying it wrong. That's the way I learned it.

God: But did you learn the meaning or just the words.

Person: What's the difference?

God: Time and translations change the meaning of words. Rather than a long discussion, could we just agree to use the words "daily bread" but think of its meaning today as "daily needs."

Person: Sure.

God: That's needs you understand; not wants.

Person: Got it.

God: Now, remember, you don't have to use the right words just think the right meanings. I'll understand.

Now, let's get back to your praying.

(Pause)

Well? Go on.

Person: I'm afraid to.

God: Afraid of what?

Person: Afraid of what you'll say.

God: Try Me.

Person: Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

God: What about Ann?

Person: See? I knew it! I knew you would bring her up! Ann hurt my feelings, and she's told lies about me, spread stories. I was very generous with her when she needed money, and I don't understand why she didn't pay me back.

God: But -- your prayer. What about your prayer?

Person: I didn't -- mean it.

God: Well, at least you're honest. But, it's quite a load carrying around all that bitterness and resentment isn't it?

Person: Yes, but I'll feel better if I knew why?

God: Instead of building up that wall, why don't you ask Ann. That miss trust and resentment can make you feel very uncomfortable.

Person: Really?

God: Really. You know how unhappy you are? Well, you can change that.

Person: I can? How?

God: Forgive Ann. (Pause) Like I've been forgiving you. Maybe if you talk to her you can come to an understanding.

Person: The money debt, too, or just the other stuff?

God: The money, too, if that's what's best. You need to balance her self-respect against her ability to pay. But definitely the "other stuff" as you call it.

Person: Oh, you know, you're right. You always are. I want to be right with You and hopefully have a better relationship with Ann.

(Sigh).

All right.

God: All right what?

(Now with conviction not condescension.)

Person: All right. I forgive her.

God: Wonderful!

(Pause)

So, how do you feel now?

Person: Hmmmm. Well, not bad. Not bad at all! In fact, I feel pretty great!

You know, I don't think I'll go to bed uptight tonight. I haven't been getting much rest, you know.

God: (With understanding not condemnation.)

Yeah, I know. But, you're not through with your prayer, are you? Go on.

Person: Oh, all right. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

God: Good! Good! I will do that. Just don't put yourself in a place where you can be tempted.

Person: What do you mean by that?

God: Think about where your choices may lead before you make them.

Person: Not as easy as it sounds but I'll try.

God: That's all I ask. Go ahead. Finish your prayer.

Person: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

God: Do you know what would bring me glory? What would really make me happy?

Person: No, but I'd like to know. I want to truly follow you. I can see now how great that would be.

So, tell me ... How do I make you happy?

God: You just did.

(Pause)

Now before I go, do you have any questions?

Person: Yes, this using the right words thing. I don't have to use them; I just have to think the appropriate meanings; right?

God: Right. Use the words that make you comfortable. If the ritual and routine of the familiar words give you comfort, use them. Just think about their meaning as you say them. Here are the thoughts I heard from a young brother and sister just the other day. Maybe they will help.

(If possible, have a child read these next lines.)

Daddy in Heaven

Your name has a special place in our hearts. Help us fill the world with love and caring. Then, it will be more like the world you want for us.

Provide us with our needs for today. Like you forgive us, we will try to forgive others.

Help us to avoid poor choices and help us to find good ones.
The way you want us to live is the best way.

Amen

Person: I like that. It makes more sense to me. But you are right. I do get some comfort from the old words. Now I can have both. Thank you.

God: You're welcome. That's what I'm here for. Before I go do you have any other questions?

Person: Yes, one more for now. Then I'll have to ponder all this for a while. If I have more, I'll be in touch again later.

God: That's what I like to hear. Now, what's your question?

Person: Why didn't you jump on my words when I said "Our Father who art in Heaven" right at the beginning?

God: Why do you think I should have?

Person: It's the "Father" thing. I don't always see you as a loving father. Sometimes I see you as a compassionate mother, sometimes a wise old uncle. At other times I see you as a needy child, the Statue of Liberty or the Scales of Justice. Which one are you?

God: I'm all of them and more. As I continue to speak to you, you will begin to see me in more and more ways. It means you are growing in your faith.

Person: I'm not sure I understand.

God: That's okay. We'll talk about that another time. Right now you have enough to think about. Get some sleep tonight and call me again sometime soon.

Person: (Laughing)

I thought you were going to say "Take two prayers and call me in the morning."

God: Very good. I like that line. I might use it some time.

Person: Any way, I will think about all this. And I will be in touch.

God: Do that. Good night.