

Prayer can bring about a future
that otherwise may not exist!



Ivelchester Deanery 2026

The Lord's Prayer

Study and Reflections

Prayer—where do we begin?

I suspect this is your question as you use this short guide. Prayer is something we often do without thinking too much about it, like breathing! Most of the time we pray simply, as if we are chatting, but sometimes it is hard to breathe or maybe it flows and won't stop; a bit like breathing—we work ourselves so much sometimes we get short of breath and at other times are so exuberant we breathe fast as well.

Prayer is a natural thing for all humans, part of our 'spirituality' and provides for connection with God. Prayer is about dwelling in God's presence, it is about talking with God, it is about making petition for things on our hearts and minds, and it is also about listening; to God and to ourselves.

Prayer is both corporate and very personal. Prayer is most often very personal, shaped by the heart.

You may be new to formalised prayer, or you may be very long in the tooth (or better worn of bended knee), however, as disciples we are always learning, always growing in our relationship with God and everything is always 'work in progress'.

So, this year, across Bath and Wells diocese, the offer is to look to our prayers again, personally and corporately. With that in mind Ivelchester Chapter and the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group have thought to offer a series of reflections on the Lord's Prayer which we hope may be a blessing for you or a study/prayer group over the year.

From February through to November we will offer up a reflection on part of the Lord's Prayer for use in that month. We hope each might bring you closer to God and to yourself. It may be you are moved to art, music, or writing other prayers. Maybe you will find new ways to engage with this prayer, walking, quiet meditation, whilst doing some task or work, on your own or with a group.

Here are the anticipated sections and months:

February — Our Father in heaven

March — Holy is your name (perfect for Lent)

April - Your Kingdom come, and will be done on earth as in heaven (what better for Easter)

May — Give us this day our daily bread

June —Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

July— Lead us not to the time of trial

September — Deliver us from evil

October - for the kingdom, power and glory are yours, now and always

November —Amen

Session 1: Our Father in Heaven

Four small words loaded with potential and meaning!

The Lord's prayer comes to us from Matthew and Luke's gospels where Jesus is asked by his disciples for teaching on prayer. Every line of the prayer is packed with meaning, but maybe these first 4 words say the most to us about God, about being human, and point to the aim of Jesus' ministry.

Many centuries later from the first request to 'teach us to pray, as John taught his followers' we would be forgiven for missing something of the radical nature of the prayer; after all this is simply the Lord's Prayer which most people know. Unlike our largely secular age Jesus gives these words to his disciples in an Israel both alive with the Jewish faith, but also with great exposure to the Greco-Roman pantheon of deities with their class defining, life defining practices and expectations.

Whether Jew or pagan gentile, prayer was not an alien concept, but the prayers said, the gods you prayed to, came with expectations of both the words to be used, of what could be prayed for, and what the person praying might have to pay to receive an answer. In many respects this was transactional prayer, if you prayed the correct way, or even paid the right amount of money or gave the correct offering, then you could expect an outcome; if you fell short the gods would not grant your petitions.

Here is the first bombshell, the prayer Jesus gives is not simply a set of the correct words for us to say, it points us to a way to live and exercise our faith in everyday life. This is not a transactional existence, it is instead relational, based on our identity as those in relation with God and the world around us.

So we begin with a very big word - 'Our'. Whilst the classic nature of salvation espoused by St Paul in Romans is personal, here the word 'Our' reminds us that Christianity is a corporate matter. It also sets the scene for the remainder of the prayer—note throughout the use of the words 'our' and 'us'; there is no use of 'mine' or 'I'. Even the talk of sin has a corporate dimension as we pray for forgiveness from 'our sins'. We pray with words like 'we' and 'us' because of who we are in relation to God, who we call 'Our Father'.

Our corporate identity is found in relationship with God who is 'Abba', Father and as such makes us family, brother and sisters. The term 'father' points to a nurturing, caring God, but more, it points to a creator, an originator and through Christ, a redeeming God.

The early Saxon English Lord's prayer places the 'our' and 'father' differently to the prayer of today. It begins 'Fæder ure, þu þe eart on heofonum', or for our ears today 'Father of us all, thou who art of heaven'. 'Father of us all' points us to our common origins as humanity, as narrated in Genesis. It reminds us that all humanity has a common origin in God, a shared inherited identity, a calling to bear the image of God in the world about us. If our father is life giving, nurturing, caring, gracious, just, righteous, and loving then we who bear the image are called to mature into that identity.

Before we get carried away with being children of God, calling God 'Abba', literally 'daddy' we are gifted the words 'in heaven', or 'who is of heaven'.

The word 'Heaven' brings to mind majesty and authority. It highlights God's sovereignty. Whilst God is close to us in Christ Jesus this word reminds us of his overarching reign above creation, of His transcendence.

God transcends earthly limitations and is present everywhere, embodying the concept of omnipresence. We are reassured that whichever language we say the Lord's Prayer in, or from whichever corner of the globe we recite the words, God hears our prayers.

The word 'Heaven' also points to something apart from the earth, a 'holiness' and calls for us to have reverence in our in praying. We pray with a humility, for whilst God may be our father, and we His children, that does not makes us gods.

We are also brought hope of our ultimate identity, as those sanctified in Christ we now have a new dignity, a new citizenship, not of the earth, but of heaven. This was a powerful concept indeed for those who found themselves subjugated by Rome, as today it still does for those find themselves subjected to tyranny and injustice.

Four small words, with so much to say and for us to reflect on. In the coming month.

1. Take time to ponder on you being a child of God, on being called 'beloved', on not being an orphan or an imposter in the world.
2. Being of one family in Christ, how might this impact the relationships you have with your Christian brothers and sisters (of whatever denomination they may be)?
3. Father of all, originator of humanity. What are the implications of being bearers of the image of God? How is this image 'marred' in us, in our society and nation?
4. The Lord's prayer would have been given to the disciples in Aramaic. It then was translated into Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and in any number of languages as it went abroad. Through the ages it had its form in Anglo Saxon English, Middle English, each taken to heart and lived, 'enfleshed' in each age. How might it be enfleshed today, in this age, in each of our localities.
5. Heaven or Earth—which do we think of as home?
6. God our father, we are his children! Maturity in Christ is to be childlike to be creative, to make discoveries, to play - all a far cry from being childish. How might you be more childlike today?