

RE material: the Lord's Prayer

These sessions are offered as complimentary enrichment to RE in schools they are not intended to replace any part of an RE curriculum. We have included some references to Understanding Christianity and to the diocesan RE Scheme.

In all sections you may find it helpful to use parts of the Collective Worship resources too.

The activities are largely built around explorations of text. This is mostly from the Bible, but other material is included too.

The questions are designed to be useable with pupils in KS 2 and above. You may wish to adjust the wording a little to fit into your own context. We use the Good News Bible throughout. The extensions however are more demanding.

For KS 1 children we suggest that things are kept very simple. The Lord's Prayer is read and then for each of the stories the following from a children's Bible¹ are used:

Week 1 – The Prodigal (lost) Son (Running Away p272)

Week 2 – The creation story (The Beginning: a perfect home p18)

Week 3 – The feeding of the 5000 (Filled Full p244)

Week 4 – Jesus in the Desert (Let's go! p208)

Week 5 - The Lord's Prayer (How to pray p222)

Each story can be discussed as you might deal with any story-time. This will allow the children to become familiar with the text and begin to associate it with other parts of the Bible.

The Lord's Prayer: Notes for teachers

The Lord's Prayer is in the gospel of Matthew (6:9-13) and Luke (11: 1-4). It is one of a number of prayers of Jesus but is the only one which is for others to say. In that sense it is a teaching prayer and indeed Luke puts it in the context of the disciples asking how to pray. The prayer can be seen as a pattern for creating prayers, something like this:

<i>Address</i>	Our Father in heaven,
<i>Adoration/recognition of relationship with God</i>	Hallowed be your name Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, On earth as in heaven.
<i>Supplication (material need)</i>	Give us today our daily bread.
<i>Confession</i>	Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us
<i>Supplication (spiritual need)</i>	Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
<i>Praise/doxology²</i>	For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours Now and forever. Amen

¹ The references here are to 'The Jesus Storybook Bible' by Sally Lloyd-Jones.

² Recognition of God's glory, more literally 'speaking glory'. Many church prayers end with a doxology.

These aspects of prayer do not always fall in quite the same order – and some prayers might conflate some of them.

However, the Lord's Prayer also stands as a prayer in its own right, which the five sessions explore. The Lord's Prayer as it is used today has developed from the kernels in Matthew and Luke into the version above. This form developed very early in the life of the Christian Church; it was practically complete by the end of the 1st century and has been used by Christians ever since.

The prayer is noticeable in its use of the word Father. This was a rather more familiar address for God than the Jewish culture of 1st-century Palestine was used to. There are links to the word Abba, which in its modern form is still used as the first form of address many Palestinian children learn for their male parent, though it has rather more weight than our word 'daddy'. The implied intimacy with God may well have been quite shocking to some of Jesus' first hearers.

Another feature of the prayer is its use of plurals. Jesus did not, in this situation, encourage the disciples to pray individually. So, it is not, 'my Father', or forgive 'my sins'. This plural dimension is often overlooked but is worth bearing in mind when composing prayers and considering which pronouns best suit the way in which a prayer might be used. Jesus spoke about prayer at other times - perhaps the most famous is in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector in Luke 18: 9-44. In this parable the prayers use singular pronouns - so Jesus cannot be saying that prayers should always be plural.

For more on creating prayers download the [Developmental Prayer File](#) from the ODBE website.

We hope that through these sessions you will appreciate this very precious Christian prayer and find ways in which it can enrich the life of your school.

One: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name

'Our Father' – the implication is that Christians are a family. In the New Testament the father was the householder, the one with responsibility for the wellbeing of the household. When the Gospels were written this person would always have been male. So, one way of looking at the Lord's Prayer is as being the beginning of a conversation with the head of the family.

Look at the many allusions to family in these quotes:

"Family is not an important thing. It's everything." – Michael J. Fox

"The family is one of nature's masterpieces." – George Santayana

"You don't choose your family. They are God's gift to you, as you are to them." – Desmond Tutu

"In time of test, family is best." – Burmese Proverb

"Rejoice with your family in the beautiful land of life." – Albert Einstein

"What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family." – Mother Teresa

"Life is beautiful. It's about giving. It's about family." – Walt Disney

Questions to explore

- What do you feel about these – do you agree with them?
- Do you disagree?
- Are all families comfortable places?³

Of course, fathers are not always the 'head' of the family today, parents and carers and relatives have all sorts of different arrangements. What are the important things that go into making a good parent⁴?



Eyes that twinkle with mischief

Mouth that smiles and says hello

Feet that are steady and will keep us going even if we are tired

Make a parts list for a parent.

- If we compare our lists, do they all say the same thing?

³ As always, care and discretion are needed in using these questions.

⁴ Or carer or whatever term may be most appropriate.

The Lord's Prayer also mentions some of the things that are expected in the 'Christian' family, such as forgiveness and receiving daily bread. The Bible gives some more indications of what it is to be in a family with God as a parent.

Bible quotes

As a father is kind to his children, so the Lord is kind to those who honour him. **Psalm 103: 13**

My child, pay attention to what your father and mother tell you. ⁹ Their teaching will improve your character as a handsome turban or a necklace improves your appearance. **Proverbs 1:8**

Wise children make their fathers proud of them; foolish ones bring their mothers grief. **Proverbs 10**

But you are our father, Lord. We are like clay, and you are like the potter. **Isaiah 64:8**

... become the children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil. **Matthew 5:45**

Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father in heaven takes care of them! Aren't you worth much more than birds? Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it? **Matthew 6: 26-27**

He purifies people from their sins, and both he and those who are made pure all have the same Father. **Hebrews 2: 11**

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. **Galatians 1:3**

I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me! **Matthew 23:37**

- What do you like or dislike about these ideas?
- Are there any quotes that you find puzzling? Why?
- How many of the quotes use metaphors? Do you think that they are good metaphors?
- Is God as *Father* a helpful way to think of God in our modern society?
- Is parenthood a more helpful idea?

Extension: While people (Christians and non-Christians) commonly speak about God as being 'he' the Bible is more circumspect than this and gives some images of God which are not male. There are also some figures from the history of Christianity who have spoken of God as female. – see *the Extra Text Source – Text Source 6*

- Do you think that these texts help Christians to understand God better?
- What would you say to someone who insists that the Father is a man? (Jesus=God=a man)

RE Cross References

Understanding Christianity 2B.1 *What does it mean if God is Holy and loving?*

Understanding Christianity 3.3 resource 5, *Feminist Theology*

Two: Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven

The idea of things on earth being like heaven is not easy to grasp. Let's start by thinking about heaven.

In a minute write as many words as you can which go with the idea of heaven. Even if you don't believe heaven really exists there are still many features of heaven that people think of when the word is spoken.

Share the suggestions and comments as appropriate, you may choose to record them on a whiteboard.

RE Text Source 2 has this section of Revelation:

The Holy City ... shone like a precious stone, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates ... There were three gates on each side: three on the east, three on the south, three on the north, and three on the west. The city was perfectly square, as wide as it was long. The angel measured the city with his measuring stick: it was fifteen hundred miles long and was as wide and as high as it was long. The wall was made of jasper, and the city itself was made of pure gold, as clear as glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with all kinds of precious stones. The first foundation stone was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh yellow quartz, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chalcedony, the eleventh turquoise, the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls; each gate was made from a single pearl. The street of the city was of pure gold, transparent as glass.

The city has no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it, because the glory of God shines on it, and the Lamb is its lamp. The peoples of the world will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their wealth into it. The gates of the city will stand open all day; they will never be closed, because there will be no night there. The greatness and the wealth of the nations will be brought into the city. But nothing that is impure will enter the city, nor anyone who does shameful things or tells lies.

The angel also showed me the river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal ... and flowing down the middle of the city's street. On each side of the river was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

From Revelation Chapter 21 and 22

- Is this a picture of heaven that you recognise?
- Does it include any of the suggestions that you have just made?

In the Lord's Prayer the expectation is that heaven is a good place – the prayer was originally shared with people who viewed God as good and consequently God's dwelling place too would be good.

The prayer talks of 'on earth as in heaven' – how is this supposed to *happen*? It clearly isn't going to happen by God forcing it to. If we look carefully at some of the things that would have been in the minds of Jesus' first hearers we might get some clues. The 1st-century people whom Jesus shared this prayer with would know the stories and Psalms from what we often call the Old Testament.

There are two small sections from the Christian Old Testament on RE Text Source 2 (download at odbe.org.uk/the-lords-prayer.php). Start with Psalm 8 and then Genesis 1.

- Are there any challenging words or ideas in these texts?
- What do you think that the texts mean when they use terms like 'rules over', 'placed them over', 'power over', 'under their control', 'in charge of'?

These phrases seem to suggest that people have a special role to play in the world.

Activity

Make your own 'World Control handbook'.

Write a handbook of guidance for controlling the world: what might it look like?

- What are your guidelines for exercising power?
- How will you rule over all creation?
- How will you control the earth - the soil and the water?
- What will you do to be in charge of the animals and fish?

It might be best to divide pupils up into 'departments', one to think about power and other about ruling etc. Ask the group if they need any other 'departments'.

Note that 'ruling' is probably best understood in terms of creating limits or regulations - French 'règle' = 'ruler'

Extension: Explore the four reasons of the Christian organisation [A Rocha](#)

Are these good things to do for the world?

Do the Bible references help us understand why the A Rocha organisation does what it does? Is this only for Christians?

RE Cross References

Diocesan RE Scheme Year 1 Unit 3 Spring 1 *Does creation help people understand God?*

Diocesan RE Scheme Year 5 Unit 6 Summer 2 *What's best for our world?*

Diocesan RE Scheme Year 6 Unit 6 Summer 2 *Does it matter what we believe about creation?*

Three: Give us today our daily bread

This might be a little surprising. It is not written as a request, it is almost a demand – it is effectively that which would be expected of a parent. Bread is sustenance, not indulgence.

Let's begin by looking at a story in which Jesus gives bread to a large gathering of people, often called the feeding of the 5000. (RE Text Source 3a)

... his disciples came to him and said, "It is already very late, and this is a lonely place. Send the people away and let them go to the villages to buy food for themselves."

¹⁶ "They don't have to leave," answered Jesus. "You yourselves give them something to eat!"

¹⁷ "All we have here are five loaves and two fish," they replied.

¹⁸ "Then bring them here to me," Jesus said. ¹⁹ He ordered the people to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks to God. He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ Everyone ate and had enough. Then the disciples took up twelve baskets full of what was left over. ²¹ The number of men who ate was about five thousand, not counting the women and children.

Matthew 14

- Look carefully at the 'action' in this story, what does Jesus do with the bread? (look at the verbs)
- Let's wonder – is there something special about these actions?
- Perhaps we can find them somewhere else in the gospel?

Now read Matthew's telling of the Last Supper (RE Text Source 3b)

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. "Take and eat it," he said; "this is my body."

²⁷ Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God, and gave it to them. "Drink it, all of you," he said; ²⁸ "this is my blood, which seals God's covenant, my blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Matthew 26

The actions appear again taking, blessing/thanksgiving, breaking, sharing.

Now look at this prayer from the Anglican Communion (Eucharist) service, what do you notice about the actions in the words of the prayer?

On the night before he died,
he came to supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he gave you thanks.
He broke it and gave it to them, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

At the end of supper, taking the cup of wine,
he gave you thanks, and said:
Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Great is the mystery of faith:
Christ has died:
Christ is risen:
Christ will come again.

Father, we plead with confidence
his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross;
we remember his dying and rising in glory,
and we rejoice that he intercedes for us at your right hand.
Pour out your Holy Spirit as we bring before you
these gifts of your creation;
may they be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.
As we eat and drink these holy things in your presence,
form us in the likeness of Christ,
and build us into a living temple to your glory

As part of this service the priest will also 'act out' the actions.

- Why do Christians repeat these words each week?
- What might the actions represent?

There are Eucharist services on YouTube – quite a lot actually because of the pandemic. You may be able to get a member of the local clergy to come and take the pupils through the Eucharistic prayer. Note that this is not the whole service, just the way in which the actions and words of Jesus have come into the 21st century.

Extension: Have a look at the other versions of the last supper – Mark 14: 22-25, Luke 22: 14-20 and 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26. (Note that the earliest (oldest) of these texts is 1 Corinthians, the letters of the New Testament were, for the most part, written before the Gospels)

A further extension would be to read Luke 24: 13-33. Look especially at verse 30.

What did the stranger who had walked with them do that made them recognise him as Jesus?

Why do you think that all these stories are repeating the same thing?

RE Cross Reference

Diocesan RE scheme Year 3 Unit 1 Autumn 1 *Does taking Bread and Wine show that someone is a Christian?*

Four: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

This part of the prayer is really two parts. This session looks at temptation and evil – you may wish to use the material in the worship section to think about forgiveness.

Discuss, briefly, what temptation is and that there are differing kinds – the worship materials suggest a cake where we can be quite innocently tempted (in the sense of wanting) to enjoy some cake or we can be tempted to steal a piece of cake. The Gospels use the same word for temptation as is used in the Lord's Prayer, it can mean testing or possibly trial.

Start with textual comparison – Matthew's and Luke's texts of Jesus in the wilderness. Divide the pupils into groups to look at one or other of the accounts. Give as little information about the text as possible.

Questions to explore

- How long was Jesus in the desert? (*There is some ambiguity, especially in Matthew where it is after 40 days that the Devil came. There is no actual indication of how long Jesus spent with the angels once the Devil had left.*)
- Does the sequence of the temptations matter? Do they build up from less important to greater temptations?
- Is the story helpful to Christians when they are trying to understand the danger of temptation?
- Does the story help you to understand temptations and their dangers?
- Does it matter that Jesus resisted the temptations? Why?

Once the activity is completed give the pupils some background.

In the Gospel this story comes immediately after the baptism of Jesus. Jesus goes off into the 'wilderness' – a lonely, dangerous place.

The story mentions 40 days – 40 is an important number, the rain fell on Noah for 40 days, the people of Israel spent 40 years in the desert following Moses. Jesus goes into the wilderness, a place where John the Baptist appears.

Compare the groups' findings

- Are the temptations more challenging as the story goes on?
- Does the different order matter?
- Does the different order show us that the writer of the Gospel wants us to think in a particular way?
(*For example, does Matthew want us to think that turning away from God is the worst temptation whereas Luke is encouraging us to think of 'testing' God as being the worst?*)

There is a sequence of 'bad' or 'sinful' things that appear in the Lord's Prayer - not forgiving, temptation or testing, and evil. These can be seen as having a growing effect as the prayer proceeds, rather like the temptations themselves.

- What is controlled by us? People can choose to forgive, this is under our control.
- What is dangerous for us? Temptation can be dangerous, people need to take care that temptation does not get the better of them. Christians believe that God guides their lives and so can lead in the right direction – away from testing.
- What might overwhelm us? ‘Evil’ can come in many guises but often we can find ourselves unable to deal with it on our own. Christians believe that God can help to cope with evil (bad) things or situations.

Gather in some of the pupils’ own responses to these three questions.

Make your own stories of temptation. These would work very well as a drama which has two endings; one where the temptation is resisted and the other where it is succumbed to.

RE Cross References

Understanding Christianity 2B.8 *What kind of king is Jesus?*

Diocesan Scheme of Work Y4 U6 Summer 2 *Does prayer change things?*

Understanding Christianity 3.5 *Evil game*

Five: For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen

For Christians the last line of the Lord's Prayer really works like a summary of the whole prayer:
It is God's kingdom that is to come – the kingdom of compassion and charity;
It is God's powerful care that is to be seen in the way that we are to behave towards the whole earth;
It is to glorify God that these things are to happen rather than for our own gain.

Look again at the passage from Revelation on text source 2. Is this about what heaven is or is it also about how people will behave and how people will be treated there? Read the story from Matthew 25 (RE Text Source 5)

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes as King and all the angels with him, he will sit on his royal throne, ³² and the people of all the nations will be gathered before him. Then he will divide them into two groups, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will put the righteous people at his right and the others at his left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to the people on his right, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. ³⁵ I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, ³⁶ naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ The righteous will then answer him, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? ³⁸ When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?' ⁴⁰ The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me!'

Matthew 25

- How do you respond to this story?

This is seen as a call for all Christians to show compassion wherever it is needed.

However, when we thought about 'kingdom' in session 2 (your Kingdom come...) we saw that this could be understood as being about the whole earth not just people. Christians have understood these ideas in various ways.

RE Source Sheet 5, available to download from odbe.org.uk/the-lords-prayer.php, includes two of these: the Five Marks of Mission from the Anglican Church and the Calling of the Methodist Church.

- Compare these two – what are their similarities and differences?
- Are there any similarities with your school vision and/or values?
- Are there any of these things that you would like to do? How would you go about doing them?

RE Cross References

Understanding Christianity 2A.6 resource *Kingdom of God on Earth*

Understanding Christianity 2B.3 resource 3 *Proclaiming the kingdom - 5 marks of mission*

Understanding Christianity 2B.3 *How can following God bring freedom and justice?*

Understanding Christianity 3.2.7 *Is Christianity to blame?*