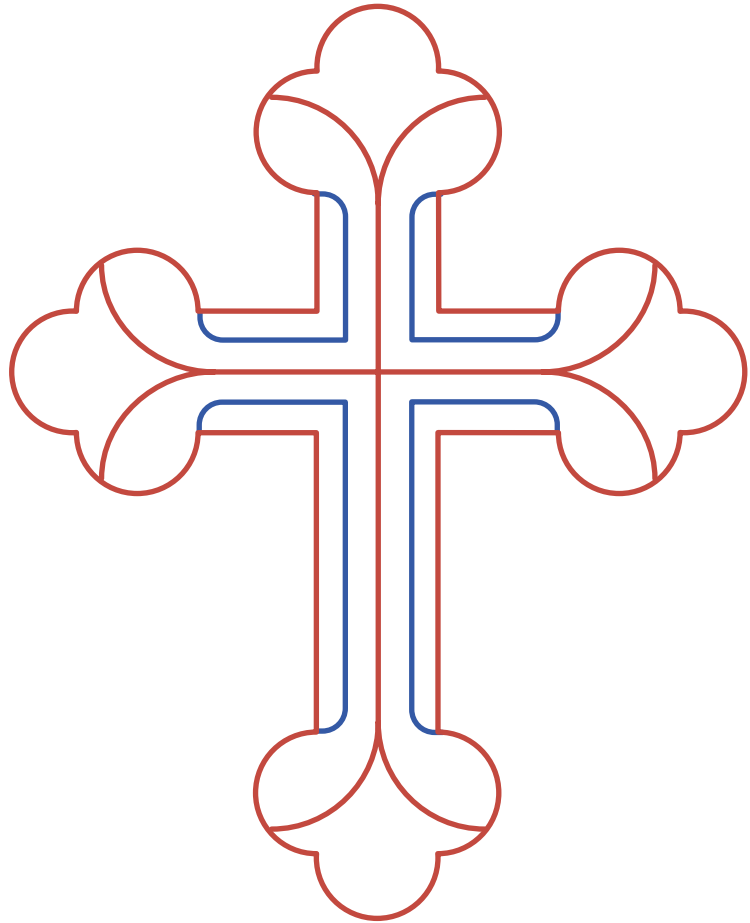


LENTEN STUDIES - 2021



Based on a meditation on
the Lord's Prayer
By Dr Patrick Sookhdeo

Studies prepared by
Canon Vinay Samuel

INTRODUCTION

Our Lenten studies for 2021 are based on an amplified and paraphrased version of the Lord's Prayer that is written by Dr Patrick Sookhdeo of Barnabas Fund and the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life.

The Prayer is divided into seven petitions and the seven Lenten studies will study and reflect on each petition. There will be two Bible passages that we will study each week, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament.

The suggested format is as follows: The study leader introduces the theme drawing on the notes provided. The passages are read and then participants reflect on the Bible passages focusing on the themes that the notes identify as key themes for the study. The questions provided in the notes can be a basis for reflection and study of the Bible text.

After 35 to 40 minutes of study including group reflection, there will be 20 minutes of prayers and intercession. We recommend use of the Lenten liturgy that is also attached. It can be used at the beginning or at the end.

Meditation on the Lord's Prayer

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo

Our Father in heaven,
Who alone knows our brokenness and pain,
Who honours us by making us Your children
Equal members of Your family,
And gives us a new identity
As Your beloved chosen people,

Hallowed be Your name,
For You are pure and sinless,
You are the great I AM,
Before whom we stand in awe,
God of truth and righteousness,
God of mercy and justice.

Your kingdom come.
Let Your glorious rule
Cover the earth
And banish all injustice,
Cast out all corruption
And right all wrongs.
Set Your people free from oppression
And let Your reign begin in us.

Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Help us to accept Your purposes,
Your good and perfect plan for our lives,
As one day all creation will submit
And bow before You
In Whom is perfect peace and freedom.



Give us today our daily bread,
For we are poor and needy,
And we depend on You.
Father, provide our food and water,
Our clothing and shelter.
Day by day, our eyes look to You.

And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors.
Father, forgive our many sins
Through the shed blood of Your Son
Who died for us and rose again.
Release us from the burden of our debts
And give us grace to forgive
Those in debt to us.
Father, make us generous and merciful.

And lead us not into temptation.
Father, give us faith to overcome
Our fears, doubts and worries.
Father, do not test us more than we can bear.
Give us the strength to endure patiently,
The grace to accept and persevere.
Give us a life of godliness and contentment.
But deliver us from the evil one.
Father, rescue us from Satan's wiles,
Free us from bondage,
Snatch us from calamity, death
And the injustice of evil men.

For yours is the kingdom,
The power and the glory.
Father, establish Your sovereign rule.
Glorify Your name and keep us safe
For now and eternity.

Amen

Based on Matthew 6:9-13





LENTEN STUDY 1

**Our Father in heaven,
Who alone knows our brokenness and pain,
Who honours us by making us Your children
Equal members of Your family,
And gives us a new identity
As Your beloved chosen people**

Bible passages for study: Psalm 103:13-22; 1 John 3:1-10

Psalm 103:13-22

¹³ As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.
¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass,
they flourish like a flower of the field;
¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.
¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children's children—
¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant
and remember to obey his precepts.
¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.
²⁰ Praise the LORD, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.
²¹ Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,
you his servants who do his will.
²² Praise the LORD, all his works
everywhere in his dominion.
Praise the LORD, my soul.

1 John 3:1-10

¹ See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴ Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. ⁵ But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. ⁶ No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

⁷ Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. ⁹ No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. ¹⁰ This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

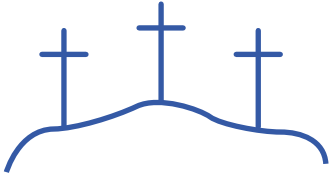
Notes:

1. This is a prayer that Jesus teaches his disciples. It is a prayer where he sets the pattern for how his disciples should approach God in prayer. He says to his disciples "in this manner pray". This is a pattern for the way his disciples should pray to God. What Jesus said here was not necessarily addressed to all human beings. We must note that the disciples of Jesus were ordinary working people. They were not the rich, powerful and wealthy people of Palestine. They struggled to make a living daily. They would be like the lower rungs of the ladder in our society. Though they would have prayed to God frequently, it would likely have been just as subjects pleading with a distant all powerful ruler. In asking his disciples to address God as Father, as he himself did, Jesus was enabling them to relate to God in a new and intimate way as a child speaking to a parent.

2. The opening statement is acknowledging a relationship. God is our Father - not “can be” or “will be” our Father. God as our Father created us in his unique image. Though we display brokenness, sin and pain, we are still his children. As individuals, families, communities, cultures and nations our daily experience is feeling separated and alienated from God. We are asked to address God as Father and recognise that, as Father, he knows our condition.
3. As Father, God knows that some of us are far more broken by the sin, injustice, selfishness and greed that dominate our societies. He knows the pain we bear and carry.
4. If God is our Father we are members of the family. We have the honour of belonging to God’s family. At the heart of God’s love for us is the honour he gives us to be his children. As parent he takes pride in us as those who belong to him and as those chosen by him to be his family.
5. In addressing God as Father, as he himself did, Jesus was making the disciples see that as members of God’s family they enjoyed an equal status. In a world of asymmetrical relationships, of high and low status, Jesus stressed their status as equal members of God’s family. Being members of the Father’s family was the disciples’ new identity. They were not just new disciples of Christ but new members of God’s family and should see that as their primary identity.

Questions for reflection:

1. As faithful Jews what did the disciples know and understand about God as their Father and what was the new understanding of that relationship which Jesus brought to them?
2. What does the Bible say about the impact of knowing and relating to God as Father in our daily lives as individuals, family members and citizens?



LENTEN STUDY 2

**Hallowed be Your name,
For You are pure and sinless,
You are the great I AM,
Before whom we stand in awe,
God of truth and righteousness,
God of mercy and justice.**

Bible passages for study: Psalm 100:1-5; Revelation 4:4-11

Psalm 100:1-5

¹ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

³ Know that the LORD is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness
continues through all generations.

Revelation 4:4-11

¹ After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. ³ And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. ⁴ Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. ⁶ Also in front of the throne there was what looked like

a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. ⁷ The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. ⁸ Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

“Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.”

⁹ Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

¹¹ “You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.”

Notes:

1. Calling God our Father confirms and affirms the relationship that defines us. God is “Our Father”. Not only is God our Father, near to us like any father, but also he is also exalted and in Heaven. We lift and exalt his name. We appeal to his name that is set apart and holy.
2. God’s name reveals who he is. God’s name also shows us why he acts as he does. That is why we not only exalt his name, we also appeal to his name when we pray and say “in his name” or “in Jesus’ name”.
3. Our God is a holy God. He is pure in his thoughts, in his attitudes and actions. God’s holiness sets him apart from us who are not holy. His purity and sinlessness also set him apart from us.

4. We stand before God in awe. We recognize his purity, his perfection, his beauty and we bow in respect. We stand and gaze on him with wonder at all that he is. As we gaze on him and exalt him in worship we begin to see and understand wisdom, truth, righteousness and mercy. All these qualities are perfected in God and only make sense in relation to him.
5. God described himself to Moses at the burning bush as “I am”. There is no beginning to God and no ending. He existed always. Behind everything we see and experience in the world, God is there. God cannot be understood by human categories. Human words and descriptions can never fully describe or explain who God is. Throughout our lives we keep discovering new things about our God as we worship him.

Questions for reflection:

1. What are the names of God that are significant in the Old Testament and how do God’s people appeal to God’s name?
2. In worship we celebrate God’s holiness and his righteousness. How should God’s holiness and righteousness shape our daily lives as followers of Christ?



LENTEN STUDY 3

**Your kingdom come.
Let Your glorious rule
Cover the earth
And banish all injustice,
Cast out all corruption
And right all wrongs.
Set Your people free from oppression
And let Your reign begin in us.**

Bible passages for study: Psalm 62:1-12; Luke 10:1-12

Psalm 62:1-12

¹Truly my soul finds rest in God;
my salvation comes from him.
²Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will never be shaken
³How long will you assault me?
Would all of you throw me down—
this leaning wall, this tottering fence?
⁴Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place;
they take delight in lies.
With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse.

⁵Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.
⁶Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
⁷My salvation and my honour depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
⁸Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

⁹ Surely the lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie.
If weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.
¹⁰ Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods;
though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.
¹¹ One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard:
“Power belongs to you, God,
¹² and with you, Lord, is unfailing love”;
and, “You reward everyone according to what they have done.”

Luke 10:1-12

¹After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.
⁵“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. ⁷Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.
⁸“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

Notes:

1. This petition in the Lord's Prayer acknowledges that God is the King who rules his creation. Creation was designed for God's rule. The entrance of sin defies God's rule and defiles God's order of righteousness and justice. In our daily prayer we recognize the need of God's rule even in this fallen world and pray that God will establish his rule on earth now.
2. Jesus teaches the disciples to pray for God's Kingdom to be instituted on earth. The Gospels confirm Jesus began his ministry on earth by announcing the arrival of God's Kingdom (Matthew 4:23-25). The disciples were aware that the work of Jesus and their own work was to do with the Kingdom of God's presence and activity in the world.
3. The Kingdom of God on earth is the fulfillment of God's purpose for the world. It is God's rule that manifests justice, righteousness, mercy, grace and truth. It is God's rule that rights all the wrongs that dominate human life: the injustice against powerless people, the corruption of those in power, human greed, oppression and violence. God's rule not only sets the standards for our life on earth but also restores God's purposes on earth.
4. Jesus invited people to enter God's Kingdom, to become those in whose lives God's rule operates and is visible. So even as Christians pray for God's rule to be manifested on earth they are seeking God's rule within their lives and the community of God's people. The Church must not only pray for God's rule to come on earth but also demonstrate God's rule in its own life.
5. This petition is also a plea that God's rule must be clearly evident among God's people who make the petition. It is a plea for empowerment by God's Spirit to make God's people, the Church, to show God's rule in their lives now, even as they wait for its fulfillment in Christ's return.

Questions for reflection:

1. How is God's rule expressed in our world now? How do we identify its presence in our world?
2. Think about how local churches, or any other local group of Christians, can become instruments of God's rule on earth.



LENTEN STUDY 4

**Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Help us to accept Your purposes,
Your good and perfect plan for our lives,
As one day all creation will submit
And bow before You
In Whom is perfect peace and freedom.**

Bible passages for study: Psalm 143:1-12; I Thessalonians 4:1-12

Psalm 143:1-12

¹ LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for mercy;
in your faithfulness and righteousness come to my relief.
² Do not bring your servant into judgment,
for no one living is righteous before you.
³ The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground;
he makes me dwell in the darkness like those long dead.
⁴ So my spirit grows faint within me;
my heart within me is dismayed.
⁵ I remember the days of long ago;
I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.
⁶ I spread out my hands to you;
I thirst for you like a parched land.
⁷ Answer me quickly, LORD; my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me or I will be like those who go
down to the pit.
⁸ Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love,
for I have put my trust in you.
Show me the way I should go,
for to you I entrust my life.
⁹ Rescue me from my enemies, LORD,
for I hide myself in you.

¹⁰Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;
may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

¹¹For your name's sake, LORD, preserve my life;
in your righteousness, bring me out of trouble.

¹²In your unfailing love, silence my enemies;
destroy all my foes, for I am your servant.

I Thessalonians 4:1-12

¹As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. ²For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. ³It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable, ⁵not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; ⁶and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. ⁷For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. ⁸Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit. ⁹Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. ¹⁰And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, ¹¹and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, ¹²so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

Notes:

1. The previous petition appealed for God's rule, with God's laws and standards, to be established and operative in our world. This petition asks for God's purposes and plans to be fulfilled in his creation, particularly among the People of God.
2. God wills as well as rules. He implements his plans and purposes for creation, for his Church and for us as individuals and families. When praying we attempt to align our requests with God's own purposes and plans for us. God's creation is ordered by God's rule and is designed to fulfill his purposes and plans.

3. After teaching the Lord's Prayer to his disciples, Jesus directed them to 'seek' the Kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). As we pray we seek God's will for the world, for our society, families and ourselves. We ask God to teach us his will through the gifts and working of his Holy Spirit in us.
4. The Bible also teaches us that God has made his will for us known. His will is that his people are sanctified, set apart and made holy (1 Thessalonians 4:2), to live a life of thanksgiving to God (1 Thessalonians 5:18), to do good (1 Peter 2:15). We turn to God's word to find his will for our world and our lives.
5. To know God's will, the Bible teaches that we must turn to him in submission. We must turn to him and decide to do his will. We must turn to him in trust and not expect to understand everything (Proverbs 3:5-6).
6. The Bible teaches that God gives us his Holy Spirit to lead us into his truth that includes his will for us. As children of God, we are led by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:14). God equips us with everything we need to do his will (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Questions for reflection:

1. What does the Bible teach us about God's plans and purposes for his creation, and for his Church?
2. How can we differentiate between our desires, our will and God's will for us?



LENTEN STUDY 5

**Give us today our daily bread,
For we are poor and needy,
And we depend on You.
Father, provide our food and water,
Our clothing and shelter.
Day by day, our eyes look to You.**

Bible passages for study: Psalm 145:8-21; John 6:1-12

Psalm 145:8-21

⁸The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
⁹The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
¹⁰All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you.
¹¹They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
¹²so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.
The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.
¹⁴The LORD upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
¹⁵The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.
¹⁶You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.
¹⁷The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.
¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹ He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰ The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹ My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

John 6:1-12

¹ Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), ² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing the sick. ³ Then Jesus went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples. ⁴ The Jewish Passover Festival was near.

⁵ When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" ⁶ He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

⁷ Philip answered him, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

⁸ Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, ⁹ "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and they sat down (about five thousand men were there). ¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

¹² When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."

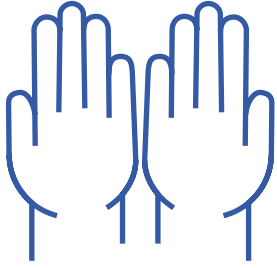
Notes:

1. After appealing to God's holiness, his rule and his will, the Lord's Prayer moves to the practical needs of the one who is praying. In this petition the focus is on basic human need.
2. This petition recognizes our total dependence on God our Father for all our needs, beginning with the most basic ones of food, water, shelter and clothing. Again there is an echo here of what God provided the first couple Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They had all their needs met. The Fall sent them out to meet their own needs through toil and hard labour. Jesus is affirming in his prayer that we can turn to God for our basic daily needs.

3. We turn to God by acknowledging that we are poor and needy. Our security is not in ourselves, our health, our strength or even our hard work. Our security is in God himself. Without him in our lives, poverty and sickness will always affect us. In this prayer we are admitting our dependence on God for our daily needs. The Psalms affirm that God's children can turn their eyes on God, look up to him as God the Provider, Jehovah Jireh, to his children, the members of his household.
4. Jesus told the disciples that human beings should not live by bread alone. He described himself as the bread and water of life. The food and drink he provides, Jesus said, will bring eternal satisfaction. Those who receive his food and water will never hunger and thirst again. But Jesus was also quick to respond to the food needs of the thousands who came to listen to him and feed on his words. The feeding of the multitudes in John's Gospel (chapter 6) clearly affirms that our daily needs are also God's concern.
5. Jesus challenged the disciples to meet the food needs of the multitudes by drawing on their own resources. This became part of the early Church's practice as the first disciples also recognized that providing basic needs of people was a part of God's plan.

Questions for reflection:

1. Which promises and actions of God found in the Bible help us understand how God provides for us and gives us security in our life?
2. What does the Bible teach us about the role of prayer in asking God to meet our needs?



LENTEN STUDY 6

**And forgive us our debts,
As we also have forgiven our debtors.
Father, forgive our many sins
Through the shed blood of Your Son
Who died for us and rose again.
Release us from the burden of our debts
And give us grace to forgive
Those in debt to us.
Father, make us generous and merciful.**

Bible passages for study: Psalm 32:1-11; Ephesians: 4:25-32

Psalm 32:1-11

¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
² Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.
³ When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
⁴ For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.
⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD."
And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.

⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them.
⁷ You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.
⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.
⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.
¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Ephesians: 4:25-32

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.
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. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Notes:

1. This petition focuses on our relationship with others. It is our plea that God will deal with the breakdown which is persistent in our relationship with others and which reflects the brokenness of our relationship with God.

2. In this petition we recognize that our relationships are marked by sin, by the promises we break, by the hurt we inflict, by the disappointments we create and by the fear and even loathing we generate. The wrongs of our relationships put us in a state of indebtedness to others that must be dealt with if any of our relationships are to bring blessing.
3. In this appeal we begin with the recognition of our state of indebtedness, sin and wrongdoing. We then turn to the One who paid the price to deal with it.
4. We recognize that the Bible teaches God sent his Son primarily to be our Saviour. Jesus sheds his blood, giving his life to obtain forgiveness for our sins. Forgiveness for all our sins is available for us in Christ. We turn to him and receive it.
5. The forgiveness that Jesus brings to us deals with the guilt of the past and also releases us from all the accumulated indebtedness to others and to God resulting from our wrongdoing. We are forgiven and released.
6. As released people we now have the capability to forgive others who have wronged us and are indebted to us. We are given the grace to forgive, to set right the wrongs done to us and to restore relationships and enable mutual flourishing. Released from our own burden of sin and wrongdoing, we can also bear the burdens of others and become generous channels of grace, mercy and peace.

Questions for reflection:

1. What are the Biblical resources we have that help us in examining ourselves?
2. How should individual Christians and churches demonstrate forgiveness today?



LENTEN STUDY 7

**And lead us not into temptation.
Father, give us faith to overcome
Our fears, doubts and worries.
Father, do not test us more than we can bear.
Give us the strength to endure patiently,
The grace to accept and persevere.
Give us a life of godliness and contentment.
But deliver us from the evil one.
Father, rescue us from Satan's wiles,
Free us from bondage,
Snatch us from calamity, death
And the injustice of evil men.**

Bible passages for study: Psalm 73:1-28; Ephesians 6:10-19

Psalm 73:1-28

¹ Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.
³ For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
⁴ They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.
⁵ They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.
⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
their evil imaginations have no limits.
⁸ They scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.
⁹ Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession of the earth.

¹⁰Therefore their people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance,
¹¹They say, “How would God know?
Does the Most High know anything?”
¹²This is what the wicked are like—
always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.
¹³Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
and have washed my hands in innocence.
¹⁴All day long I have been afflicted,
and every morning brings new punishments.
¹⁵If I had spoken out like that,
I would have betrayed your children.
¹⁶When I tried to understand all this,
it troubled me deeply
¹⁷till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.
¹⁸Surely you place them on slippery ground;
you cast them down to ruin.
¹⁹How suddenly are they destroyed,
completely swept away by terrors!
²⁰They are like a dream when one awakes;
when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.
²¹When my heart was grieved
and my spirit embittered,
²²I was senseless and ignorant;
I was a brute beast before you.
²³Yet I am always with you;
you hold me by my right hand.
²⁴You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.
²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
²⁷Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
²⁸But as for me, it is good to be near God.
I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.

Ephesians 6:10-19

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

Notes:

1. These last petitions shift the focus to the challenges and threats that God's children face to their spiritual life both internally and externally.
2. The world in which we live and practise our Christian faith tempts us. Jesus identified how worrying about our needs, particularly basic needs, attacks us (Matthew 6:25). The world and society that has developed independent of God induces desire and fear in the Christian. The world tempts the Christian with the desires of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of status (1 John 2:15-17), and the fear of failure and rejection.
3. Jesus did not want his disciples to be separated from the world and the attacks of evil one (John 17:15). He expected them to face the temptations of the world and such attacks. Jesus affirms that, as the disciples face temptations and attacks, he prays and intercedes for them. He is with them as they are tempted.

4. The Bible teaches that, while God permits his children to be tempted, he will never allow the temptation to be something beyond the capacity of his children to resist. Every temptation and attack on God's children can only happen if God permits. God also ensures that we have all the necessary resources to resist temptation.
5. The greater threat to the disciple is the planned and intended attack of the evil one to unsettle our faith, to damage our confidence, to enslave us again in doubt and sin. God provides all the armour we need to resist those attacks of evil spiritual forces.

Questions for reflection:

1. What are the Biblical resources and Christian practices that strengthen us inwardly against temptation?
2. How do we fight a battle with spiritual forces of evil that seek to destroy us?



CLOSING REFLECTIONS

**For yours is the kingdom,
The power and the glory.
Father, establish your sovereign rule.
Glorify your name and keep us safe
For now and eternity.**

The closing ascription takes us back to affirming that we live in God's creation and in the presence of his Kingdom.

Eternity has already entered our world in the coming of Christ and is moving us to the consummation of God's work in the world that will be complete on Christ's second coming in glory.

So we acclaim God's presence and his rule, and feel safe in the knowledge of its establishment, as we await Christ's return.

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