

Note to Teachers:

There is no way you will be able to cover all this in one class period. Think about five or ten minute bits that you can come back to in the weeks that follow.

In terms of our theme for this season, the most important part of this prayer is "Give us this day our daily bread."

Praying Together

We are going to be praying together every Sunday, so please share your prayer requests with us, and the class will pray. Also, if you would like, we can feel out a prayer request card and our congregation will pray for you at 11:00 and our Stephen Ministers will pray throughout the week.

Sometimes in church we pray together by writing things down and giving them to the pastor to say in the Prayers of the People. Sometimes we pray together silently. We don't know what other people are praying, but God hears it all and listens as we open our hearts and want good things for one another. We do not always need words to pray. God knows us so well that words aren't required.

Sometimes we like to pray words together -- in unison, it's called. We do the first part of our Prayer of Confession this way in church.

One of the prayers that Christians have been praying all over the world for more than two thousand years is the one Jesus taught the disciples to pray.

There are two slightly different versions of it -- one in Matthew and one in Luke, and the one we pray has some extra lines. If you go to a Catholic church, there version ends a bit before ours.

Some people translate the Greek word *hamartia* as sin and some as trespasses and some as debtors. It doesn't matter. This prayer unites all Christians. Together we try to pray the way Jesus taught. We remember who God is and we ask for what we need and pray that God's Love (God's Kingdom) will come into the world full force -- so we all are really good at loving and taking care of each other.

Our Father who art in heaven,

God is like a parent who protects us and takes care of us. Our God is powerful and loving and wants good things for us.

The prayer could begin "Our Mother" but in the time when Jesus lived, men tended to be the boss of the family. Women didn't have as much power. Some people have suggested that a good opening would be "Our Householder" -- the idea being that the

Father of the house was the one who made sure everyone had what they needed and that everyone took care of everyone else. He was in charge.

When people of Jesus's time thought about the world, they imagined that God and angels and other heavenly beings lived way up beyond the sky in the land God ruled.

Hallowed be thy name,

This is a way of remembering how special God is, like us and not like us at the same time. Hallowed is another word for "holy." Holy means "set apart for God." So, churches are holy because we build these for God's purposes.

Of course, some people say that every thing is holy, because all of the world and the moon and the stars belong to God. When we have eyes full of love, eyes like God's eyes, we can begin to see God in everyone and in all of creation. Then the whole universe becomes holy.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

This means we want the world to be God's best dream come true. If we were all living the way that God wants us to live, everyone would have enough food and enough friends and enough love. This part of the prayer says we want what God wants.

Give us this day our daily bread

Notice that we pray simply to have enough to eat for today. We don't pray that all our cupboards and refrigerators are full, so we can stuff ourselves.

We also pray for *our* daily bread. We pray that all of us have enough to eat. In God's kingdom, no one is really and truly happy unless everyone has enough.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Jesus taught a lot about forgiveness. It is essential that we know we are forgiven and that we forgive others. These two things go hand in hand. We are to forgive just as God forgives.

What does it mean to forgive? It means not to hold that hot anger in yourself anymore. Not to stay mean and hard and cold when someone has hurt you or taken something from you or not shared. It means letting your body and your heart relax so that you are free to be open and loving and to connect with other people. So you can be happy and free.

Sometimes in this prayer people use sin or trespass instead of debt. Each word helps us understand something about our relationship with God a little differently.

A debt is when someone borrows money from you and then owes you money. We owe God our very breath, everything about us, every good thing we have is a gift. God gives us these things freely.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

We ask God to help us stay loving and full of God's peace and power.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

God's love cannot be defeated by anything. Love wins. Every time. Forever.

Amen.

This means Yes!