

Bible Study Material
For Gamma Delta
and Similar Student Groups



THE THEOLOGY OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

An exploration of the Biblical basis of the doctrines of the Lord's Prayer which the Lutheran Church teaches and confesses in Dr. Martin Luther's Large Catechism, with special reference to problems occasioned by present-day trends in theology, science, social living, and the human situation in general.

By

John W. Constable, Campus Pastor
State University of Iowa
Iowa City

THE TEN TOPICS

Belief and Prayer

The Fatherhood of God

God's Sanctity and Man's Secularism

The Kingdom and Communism

God's Will or Mine?

Creation and All its Blessings

Meaning and Mandate in the Forgiveness of Sins

The Time of Testing

The Problem of Evil

His Majesty Recognized

Historical Introduction to the Large Catechism

April, 1529 is usually the date given for the publication of the Large Catechism by Martin Luther. It must be made clear, however, that the version of 1529 was not a first attempt but marked the culmination of work previously done by Luther in the area of Christian education.

As early as 1516 or 1517 the Reformer delivered a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer in Wittenberg. These presentations were later published, and in 1520 rewritten and enlarged. They were issued in that year as "The Brief Form of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer."

After completing his stay at the Wartburg in 1522, Luther returned to Wittenberg and revised the above-named booklet for re-publication. In 1525 he became familiar with the "Kinderfragen" (Children's Questions) used by the Bohemian Brethren, and resolved to write a work of this type. Again, it should be noted that Luther's handbook of instruction was not a unique thing. Luther's catechism of 1529 was preceded in the Lutheran Church by Bugenhagen's of 1526 and by Johann Brenz' of 1528.

The reasons for Luther's issuance of a standard catechism in 1529 are found in the results of the Saxon Visitation of 1527-29. The visit of schools revealed a "deplorable, miserable condition," with the children having "no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine." Also many of the instructors were found to be "altogether incapable and incompetent to teach." To correct this situation, Luther prepared his catechetical manuals, urging the teachers to adhere to one text.

Luther probably began his work on the catechism in 1528, drawing much of the data from his catechetical sermons. The Large Catechism, especially, was prepared from the sermonic material. In its printed form it serves the school instructors and fathers as a commentary on the Small Catechism. The Large Catechism was published in April, 1529, and the Small Catechism on May 16th of the same year. (J. L. Neve, *Introduction to the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church*, pp. 370-81; *The Book of Concord*, tr. and ed. by Theodore Tappert, pp. 357-8).

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

Well known is the comment of a church father on the varying depths of Holy Scripture which enable a lamb to wade and an elephant to swim through its stream. The Commission on College and University Work is of the opinion that discussion guides based on the Bible enhance their appeal when they likewise indicate various levels of study procedure. Individuals ranging from technology freshmen to seniors and graduate students in the liberal arts fields can thus adapt the material to their understanding.

In *The Theology of the Lord's Prayer* John W. Constable, campus pastor at the State University of Iowa, provides for flexibility by listing Bible passages for all to consult and then adding "Other Readings and References" for those who have competence and interest for a deeper study of the subject.

This plan also makes allowance for the varying time factors. Some Bible study groups have time only for the minimal work. Others have sufficient time to venture into more of a depth treatment of the material at hand. It is, of course, desirable for all college Bible classes to conceive of themselves as groups of lay theologians intent on the deeper penetration of the Word of God and the Lutheran confessions, and to that end *find the time* for adequate Bible study.

Since this is *Bible* study, close attention should first of all be given to the Biblical texts cited under section A. Let God speak! Let the members of the group read the passages in context and then re-state in their own words what message God conveys. This is a minimal expectation. Further, since this study is to acquaint students with Luther's Large Catechism, the appropriate selections from this work should be read by the group. The selections to be read from the Large Catechism are indicated in section B. At the very least, the leader, or a class member who had read that portion, should briefly summarize the content.

Having done this, the group is ready to take up the discussion questions in section C. Much of the material suggested under "Other Readings and References" can be woven into the discussion. Here is where the volunteer researcher and more advanced lay theologian can make his contribution to the group. Under the stimulation of these discussions many students will be induced to turn to the bibliography at the end to pursue further reading on their own.

In section D of each study unit the author suggests various projects related to the subject. By following through on these action projects students are led from *knowing* to *doing* in Christian worship.

Why was Luther's Large Catechism chosen? When individuals present themselves for membership in the Lutheran Church they are asked whether they subscribe to the Lutheran confessions. The Large Catechism is one of the confessional writings. To make an intelligent subscription, one ought to have personal acquaintance with the confessions.

Most Lutherans know the Small Catechism in which the ABC's of Christian teaching are presented. College students are in a position to advance from the milk of the Word to more substantial spiritual fare. They are well aware of the exhortation to continued Christian growth as implied in Hebrews 5:12, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." College students should be ready to go from the milk to the meat of the Word.

Why was the Lord's Prayer (Third Chief Part) in Luther's Large Catechism chosen for this study? Prayer, particularly the model prayer bequeathed by our Lord Jesus Christ, is an excellent focal point of spiritual interest. What student, burdened by the problems of his Christian vocation, has not often said, "Lord, teach me to pray!"? This study not only offers doctrinal instruction but also encourages worship and the deepening of the student's devotional life. Not only the head, but essentially the *heart* is to be involved in these prayer studies. A better grasp of the meaning of prayer will come to fruition in the improved practice of prayer.

Your group will establish the proper setting for these discussions by putting them into a devotional context. Plan to open and close each session with fresh, spiritually creative, and pertinent devotions. If the group meets in the evening, student-led meditations with candlelight are recommended.

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14.

—Commission on College and University Work.

I. BELIEF AND PRAYER

A. Read these Bible Passages:

Psalm 19:14
Psalm 50:15
Psalm 95
Psalm 96
Psalm 103:1
Isaiah 65:24
Matthew 6:7
Matthew 21:22
Mark 11:24
Philippians 4:6
I Thessalonians 5:17
I Timothy 2:8
James 1:6-7
I John 5:14

B. Other Readings and References:

The Book of Concord, tr. and ed. by Theodore Tappert, pp. 358-62.

Hermann Sasse, *This is My Body*, p. 13, 31.

J. L. Neve, *Introduction to the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church*, pp. 370-81.

"Luther's Catechism," by Louis H. Koehler in *The Abiding Word*, Vol. II, p. 608.

C. For Discussion:

1. Is prayer possible without faith or belief?
2. Why are the Lord's Prayer and the Second Commandment closely allied by Luther?
3. Road signs invite: "Why not try God?" What do they mean? Are they an invitation to prayer?
4. Can one pray with another person who is of a different faith?
5. Must a prayer always be expressed in *words*?
6. Do we believe according to the way we pray, or pray according to the way we believe? Give this a lot of thought.
7. Can the strength of personal belief be correlated with the extent of our prayer life? Do we pray much because we believe strongly? Does infrequent prayer reflect on one's faith?
8. What can prayer do for your personal belief? See Mark 9:24.
9. Should a person be satisfied with God's answer to his prayer even though he may not agree with the answer of God?
10. Might not formal prayers be a deterrent to serious prayer life? (i.e. "reciting" the Lord's Prayer instead of praying intently a prayer in one's own words).
11. Does man have a prayer right or privilege before God? Can he demand anything in his own name? In Jesus' name?
12. Do you agree that "the pulse of prayer is beating constantly"?

D. Action and Reaction

1. Compose a prayer on the state of the Church today.
2. Visualize as an ad man would a modern prayer *a la* Burma Shave signs. Use model petitions.

II. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Introduction: "Our Father, Who Art in Heaven . . ."

A. Bible Passages:

Matthew 6:9-13
Luke 11:2-4
Romans 8:15
Galatians 3:26
Ephesians 3:20
Ephesians 4:6
I John 3:1

B. Other References for Study:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 371-5; 420-5.
Lutheran Cyclopedia, "Prayer", pp. 834-5; p. 592.
J. L. Neve, *op. cit.*, pp. 390-4.

C. True-False

1. The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are taught in the Holy Scriptures.
2. God is the Father of all mankind.
3. God is our Father, but we can approach Him only through His Son.
4. "Our Father does not pity us since we have a Law to follow, and we are responsible beings."
5. "Big Brother" (*a la 1984*) and God the Father are similar.
6. Christ gave His disciples the Lord's Prayer as a model prayer.
7. We say "Our Father" because God is exclusively our own Father.
8. Our Father rules both heaven and earth in His own best interests.
9. All prayers must be addressed to the first person of the Holy Trinity.
10. The words "Our Father, who art in heaven" are a summary of the whole Gospel.
11. Prayer, properly speaking, is a fruit of Christian faith and not a means by which faith is engendered.
12. True prayer to the Father is not possible without the mediation of Christ.

D. Consider These Projects:

1. Use slides of famous pictures depicting God the Father for analysis. Cynthia Maus, *Christ and the Fine Arts*.
2. Sponsor a brief showing of religious art at the Center. Many universities have an art department which will loan such works, either originals or prints. Select pictures that correlate with the subject under discussion.

III. GOD'S SANCTITY AND MAN'S SECULARISM

First Petition: "Help, that this name be holy with us on earth",
Neve, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

A. Bible Passages:

Jeremiah 23:28
Ezekiel 22:26
Matthew 5:16
John 17:17
Romans 2:23-24

B. For Ready Reference:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 425-6.
Cornelius Loew, *Modern Rivals to the Christian Faith*, pp. 9-29.
George Forell, *The Ethics of Decision*, pp. 3-46.

C. Discuss:

1. Is sound doctrine more important than Christian action?
2. Whatever happened to the "holy" in our world?
3. "We are the only 'Bible' many people read."
4. Secular society by its nature is unholy.
5. What relationship does God's name have to God's Word?
6. "Religious sects profane the name of God by their multiplicity."
7. A religious veneer defames the name of God.
8. What is our responsibility toward the name of God?
9. "Keep thyself pure" and pure doctrine are primary considerations for the Christian.
10. Are life's decisions wrapped up in the name of God? Explain.
11. How does Luther draw the Second Commandment into the discussion of the First Petition?
12. Is secularism a greater danger to our society than facile Christianity?

D. Some Actions For You:

1. Compose a collect for the Word similar to the one on page 14 of *The Lutheran Hymnal*.
2. Volunteer to write a brief opening devotion for the next session based on the Second Petition.

IV. THE KINGDOM AND COMMUNISM

Second Petition: "Thy Kingdom Come."

A. Bible Passages:

Matthew 9:38
Mark 1:15
Luke 12:32
Colossians 2:6
Revelation 22:20

B. Reference Works:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 426-8.
Lambert Brose, *How To Fight Communism Today*. Neve, *op. cit.*, p. 391.
R. R. Caemmerer, *The Church In The World*, pp. 12-25.
J. B. Phillips, *New Testament Christianity*, pp. 98-107.
Lutheran Cyclopedia, "Socialism and Communism," p. 992.

C. True-False

1. Man wants to be his own "God."
2. It is "dangerous" to pray the Second Petition.
3. Communism, the anti-kingdom, is making better progress in the world today than Christianity.
4. A Communist cannot pray the Second Petition.
5. This petition requests the end of the world.
6. Christianity is doomed to be a minority kingdom in this world.
7. The kingdom of Christ is only eternally constituted and does not pertain to this time and world.
8. It is Christian to pray for the destruction of ungodly Communism.
9. Our government was religiously and morally right to blockade Cuba in 1962.
10. Christians will have little to do about ushering in the kingdom of God.
11. God's kingdom comes often without observation.
12. The conflict between God's kingdom and dialectical materialism can be resolved.

D. A Suggested Action:

Update Hymn 458 of *The Lutheran Hymnal*: "Our Father, Thou In Heaven Above". See whether the group can improve on the translation.

V. GOD'S WILL OR MINE?

Third Petition: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

A. Bible Passages:

Psalm 119:35
Matthew 16:24
Acts 14:22
I Corinthians 10:13
II Corinthians 12:9
I Thessalonians 4:3
I Timothy 2:4
Hebrews 12:6, 11

B. Reference Works:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 428-9.
Augsburg Confession, Article XVIII, Tappert, pp. 39-40.
Neve, *op. cit.*, pp. 391-2.
C. H. Little, *Lutheran Confessional Theology*, pp. 97-100.
Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 31, pp. 327-378.

C. Choose Your Answer:

1. Suffering (is, is not) a blessing from God.
2. God (does, does not) superimpose His will on ours.
3. The devil (can, cannot) break the will of God for us.
4. I am following the will of God when I (allow, do not allow) materialistic influences to determine my choice of vocation.
5. Determinism (is, is not) in agreement with the will of God.
6. My will (must, must not) be congruent with the will of God.
7. God in Christ (wants, does not want) all men to be saved.
8. The counsel and will of the (devil, world, our flesh) (is, are) opposed to the will of God.
9. We are living in an age when (man's, God's) will is most important.
10. I (am, am not) correct in rebelling against the teachings of the Church which I cannot accept.
11. Most people say "Thy will be done" but (can, cannot) recognize the will of God when it is exercised in their lives.
12. When the Church asks me to use my talents in its service, it is (correct, incorrect) for me to refuse graciously.

D. Try This Action:

Interview the local rabbi on campus and get a copy of the Kadish, a Jewish prayer. Compare this in class with the Lord's Prayer.

VI. CREATION AND ALL ITS BLESSINGS

Fourth Petition: "Give us today our daily bread" (New English Bible)

A. Bible Passages:

Psalm 37:25
Psalm 127:2
Psalm 145:15, 16
Proverbs 30:7-9
Matthew 5:45
Ephesians 5:20
II Thessalonians 3:10-12
I Timothy 6:8

B. References:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 430-32.
Wayne H. Cowan, ed., *What The Christian Hopes For In Society*, pp. 19-36.
Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, pp. 195-217.

C. For Discussion:

1. Is nature intrinsically good? Or evil?
2. "Most people pray to God with empty baskets in their hands." Explain.
3. Could God be called unfair because He sends His blessings upon both the just and the unjust?
4. God called everything that He made "very good." Why can it be said to be blighted today?
5. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." What does this reveal to us about God?
6. Does a person do wrong to plan for the future?
7. Is it needful for one to express his thanks to God for his daily blessings?
8. Only this one petition deals specifically with temporal blessings. The previous three dealt with spiritual blessings. Does this point up the need for a spiritual emphasis in our prayer life rather than a material one?
9. Luther says, "It would be very proper for a pious prince to place a loaf of bread instead of a lion on his coat of arms." What does he mean?
10. "Receive your daily bread with thanksgiving." Does this say anything to modern labor unions? To all people in general?
11. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." How can this be true?
12. The reception of daily bread involves responsibilities. Name some.

D. Do This:

Write a new, fresh table prayer based on this petition of the Lord's Prayer.

VII. MEANING AND MANDATE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

Fifth Petition: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

A. Bible Passages:

Genesis 32:10
Genesis 50:15-21
Palsm 19:12
Matthew 18:21, 22
Matthew 18:23-25
Mark 11:25, 26
Luke 15:21
Luke 18:13

B. For Reference:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 432-3.
Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 51, pp. 176-82.
The Abiding Word, Vol. I, pp. 146-68.
C. S. Lewis, *Christian Behavior*, pp. 38-43.

C. Fill In And Discuss:

1. In Christ God declares us just. This is calledjustification.
2. Everyone must forgive his brother trespasses.
3., or "the hill of the skull," is a symbol of forgiveness.
4. Forgiveness is reciprocal. For every finger pointed at another person there are pointed at you.
5. Is it correct to say that we must forgive anyone?
6. Before a man can be forgiven he must of his sins.
7.is a type of person I could never forgive.
8. We are not worthy of the of sins.
9. Jesus says to forgive our brother times seven.
10. In the Fifth Petition we pray for the forgiveness of sins, both of omission and
11. Here we tell God not tous if we are not willing to forgive another person.
12. Christ died on the Cross for the sins of all mankind.

D. Work Out Together:

A brief service of humiliation and prayer based on the Lord's Prayer or just this petition. For a sample, see IV-146 in *The Campus Pastor's Workbook*.

VIII. THE TIME OF TESTING

Sixth Petition: "And lead us not into temptation."

A. Bible Passages:

Genesis 22:1-9
II Samuel 12:9
Proverbs 1:10
Matthew 4:1-11
Mark 7:25-30
John 6:5, 6
II Timothy 4:10
James 1:13, 14
I Peter 5:8, 9

B. References:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 433-5.
This Day, September, October, 1962.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Temptation*, SCM Press.
Lutheran Cyclopedia, "Temptation", p. 1042.

C. True-False

1. The word "temptation" may refer either to an act of testing or to enticement to evil.
2. Everyone must be tempted and must needs be a victim of the same.
3. The devil is the source of all temptation.
4. Temptations always weaken our faith.
5. God tests men's faith.
6. Faith is really of no value unless it is tempted.
7. It can be right to cheat in a test if it serves a very important end.
8. I cannot always resist daily temptation, but this is all right, provided I have the *desire* to resist.
9. I should willingly enter into difficult moral situations in order to test my faith.
10. A Christian after much personal effort will finally overcome all temptations.
11. "God indeed tempts no one" just to test his faith.
12. In morally doubtful situations it is quite all right to be in favor of the majority decision of a group.

D. A Personal Project:

On the basis of this petition draw up a brief check list of moral decisions a student needs to make on campus. Rate yourself personally to get your spiritual profile.

IX. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Seventh Petition: "Deliver or preserve us from the Evil or Malicious One"
(Luther).

A. Bible Passages:

Job 5:19
Psalm 91:10
Acts 14:22
II Corinthians 12:9
Philippians 1:23
II Timothy 4:18
Hebrews 12:6

B. References:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 435-6.
C. H. Little, *Lutheran Confessional Theology*, pp. 101-4.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, pp. 33-83.

C. Choose Your Answer:

1. We (can, cannot) expect that God will keep every evil from us.
2. Evils are crosses that we (do, do not) have to bear.
3. (God, the Devil) is the author of all evil.
4. Good (can, cannot) become an evil.
5. (Evil, good) men receive the most blessings.
6. The final deliverance from all evil is found in (death, a blessed end).
7. God (has, has not) made an ultimate solution to all evil.
8. God in Christ (will, will not) sustain us in this life.
9. We (should, should not) receive evil things in this life because of our sins.
10. A man (must, must not) bear his evil days alone.
11. It is (right, not right) to blame God for all the evil that befalls you.
12. World calamities (are, are not) the result of the sin of this world.

D. A Suggestion In Response:

In view of today's world tension, enumerate what you consider to be the reasons for the world's evil days.

X. HIS MAJESTY RECOGNIZED

Doxology, or Conclusion: "For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen."

A. Bible Passages:

Psalm 31:14, 15
Psalm 37:5
Psalm 103:13
Psalm 118:1
Matthew 28:18
Luke 7:50
Romans 9:5
II Timothy 4:18
Hebrews 13:8

B. References:

The Book of Concord, Tappert, p. 436, Sec. 119-24.
J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small*, pp. 9-63.
Philip S. Watson, *Let God Be God*, pp. 33-48.

C. Discuss Together:

1. The sovereignty of God. Is God sovereign in your life?
2. An artificial "modern" view of God ("God in general," e.g.).
3. What can we do to enhance the majesty of God on earth?
4. Has God really the power to grant petitions? How do you know?
5. Why do you think God should receive the glory for His actions?
6. Are proper prayers always acceptable to God, and do they thus have the assurance of His answer?
7. What could possibly lead you to expect that God will answer your prayer?
8. Must a man have faith to have the assurance of an answer to his prayer?
9. What really makes a prayer acceptable to the Father?
10. If God rules the world as King, must we act as His subjects? What does this entail?
11. Does our faith always trust God, or must we be first shown a sign?
12. What tarnishes man's view of the majesty of God?

D. Something To Consider Doing:

Evaluate the relevance of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer in relationship to men's needs today. Can you sketch seven brief petitions for modern man?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Temptation*, SCM Press, London, 1959.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost Of Discipleship*, SCM Press, London, 1959.
- Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther's World of Thought*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1958.
- Lambert Brose, *How To Fight Communism Today*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1962.
- R. R. Caemmerer, *The Church in the World*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1949.
- Wayne H. Cowan, ed., *What the Christian Hopes for in Society*, Reflection, New York, 1957.
- George Forell, *The Ethics of Decision*, Muhlenberg, Philadelphia, 1955.
- C. S. Lewis, *Christian Behavior*, Macmillan, New York, 1949.
- C. H. Little, *Lutheran Confessional Theology*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1943.
- Cornelius Loew, *Modern Rivals To Christian Faith*, Westminster, Philadelphia, 1956.
- J. L. Neve, *Introduction to the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church*, Columbus, 1926.
- J. B. Phillips, *New Testament Christianity*, Macmillan, New York, 1956.
- J. B. Phillips, *Your God is Too Small*, Macmillan, New York, 1954.
- Hermann Sasse *This is My Body*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1959.
- Philip S. Watson, *Let God be God*, Muhlenberg, Philadelphia, 1949.
- The Book of Concord*, ed. and tr. by Theodore Tappert, et. al., Muhlenberg, Philadelphia, 1959.
- Luther's Works*, American edition, Vols. 31, 51, Concordia and Muhlenberg Press, 1957, 1959.
- The Abiding Word*, Vols. I and II, Concordia, St. Louis, 1946, 1947.
- Lutheran Cyclopedia*, Concordia, St. Louis, 1954.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD
COMMISSION ON COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY WORK
77 W. Washington Street
Chicago 2, Ill.