

The Lord's Prayer: Introduction

Our Father who art in heaven.

What does this mean? God would thereby [with this little introduction] tenderly urge us to believe that He is our true Father, and that we are His true children, so that we may ask Him confidently with all assurance, as dear children ask their dear father.

1. At His disciples' request, "Teach us to pray," Jesus Himself teaches us to pray in a remarkable way: to *His* Father, whom our sins have gravely offended, as *our* Father; to pray to Him "with all boldness and confidence" that we are His dear children, and He will hear us as our dear Father. (Luke 11:1–13; Matthew 6:7–14) When we pray to God as "Our Father," who else must be included in "our," and why are we included with Him? (Matthew 28:10; John 20:17)
2. When, therefore, we pray so boldly to our Father, on what are we relying? What is being exercised when we pray? (Hebrews 10:19–20)
3. On whose account does God the Father care to hear our prayers, or consider us worthy to pray? (John 15:15–16)
4. God gives prayer glorious promises (Psalm 50:15; Matthew 7:7–8). How can you be assured that He will keep these promises? What guarantees them, despite whatever "results" your prayers seem to get?
5. As these likely similar answers have suggested, prayer is meant, in our time of trials, to turn us back to Jesus, in whom is all our trust. God does not always answer prayers as we'd like. He promises to work all things for our *good*, not for our *pleasure*; to His will, which is to save us, not to ours (Romans 8:26–30). What ought we desire above all in prayer? (Luke 11:13) Where is He to be found as the foremost answer to our prayers? (*Small Catechism*, Creed, 3rd Article)

From Luther's *Large Catechism* (III: Lord's Prayer)

²² [W]e should be incited and drawn to prayer because in addition to this commandment and promise God anticipates us, and Himself arranges the words and form of prayer for us, and places them upon our lips as to how and what we should pray, that we may see how heartily He pities us in our distress, and may never doubt that such prayer is pleasing to Him and shall certainly be answered...

²⁷ But the distress which ought to concern us most, both as regards ourselves and every one, you will find abundantly set forth in the Lord's Prayer. Therefore it is to serve also to remind us of the same, that we contemplate it and lay it to heart, lest we become remiss in prayer. For we all have enough that we lack, but the great want is that we do not feel nor see it. Therefore God also requires that you lament and plead such necessities and wants, not because He does not know them, but that you may kindle your heart to stronger and greater desires, and make wide and open your cloak to receive much.