



The Lord and His Prayer

N.T. Wright

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Taking the Lord's Prayer clause by clause, Wright locates this prayer within the historical life and work of Jesus and allows the prayer's devotional application to grow out of its historical context. Grasping the Lord's Prayer in its original setting can be the starting point for a fresh understanding of Christian spirituality and the life of prayer. This is spirituality to stimulate and refresh both the heart and the mind.

The Lord and His Prayer Details

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Ryan says

This little book was simply great. I loved the personal application that he drew for each petition of the prayer, but I was blown away by the cosmic and creational redemption that he drew out of each prayer. Closely associated with the work he has done on Jesus, he describes what this first meant to Jesus and first-century Palestine, then draws much wider implications for us today. Great book.

Adam Shields says

Short Review: this is a helpful short book on the Lord's prayer. I appreciate Wright's pastoral tone and focus, without talking down to lay readers. I have read several books on the Lord's Prayer and I think this is a good one for teaching the Lord's Prayer as theology and discipleship while still being practical about praying it.

Another that I liked was Living Prayer: The Lord's Prayer Alive in You, which was more practical and less theological. Wright also has a very good chapter on the Lord's Prayer in Simply Good News: Why the gospel is good news and what makes it good news. But there is little overlap in material between that chapter (which focuses on how the order of the prayer orients us to understanding what the gospel is really about) and this book which is a line by line exploration of the prayer. But both are well worth reading because both are oriented around right theology and right practice of discipleship.

This isn't as easy to get as I would like. The Kindle version isn't available right now and has been expensive for less than 100 pages. The audiobook is reasonably priced and cheaper than the paperback. But for a book less than 100 pages, I would like it to be cheaper.

It would make a good small group discussion with six chapters of about 12-15 pages each.

My full review is on my blog at <http://bookwi.se/the-lord-and-his-pra...>

Corey says

This is my first N.T. Wright book and definitely will not be my last. This book is an older work that he completed while serving as a minister in the 90's. It is short and simple and very practical. Wright walks through the Lord's prayer and writes on each separate section of it. It was first written as a series of sermons so it is very accessible and easy to read or listen to.

Peter says

I was born in the days when you recited this every morning in school assembly, so I've been citing and reciting this prayer for over 40 years. I was aware that it is a ladder, an aid to prayer, as much as it is a prayer in itself, but still I hadn't fully grasped the implications of the words nor plumbed the depth of their meaning. So, enter the erudite Mr Wright with 6 sermons that show some of that depth of meaning and wisdom and

how these famous lines embody something vital and central to Jesus' own spirituality, heritage and personal journey, as well as ours.

Northpapers says

I grew up in communities where the Gospel was limited to the good news of personal salvation in Christ. There were hints of other themes, but getting out of hell and into heaven was the central narrative. We had to reduce and abstract all kinds of biblical statements and stories to make this happen.

Thankfully, my theology has changed and grown since then. But I do feel like the biblical vision of Heaven as a transformative force on Earth is still fresh terrain for me. It illuminates forces and dynamics in the biblical text and in the world I inhabit that were obscure or depthless to me before.

Few biblical texts paint as clear and compelling a portrait of the embodied Kingdom of Heaven as the Lord's Prayer. And few voices are as helpful in understanding that portrait as Wright. And this one is both illuminating and brief, which makes it highly shareable in community.

While most biblical scholars writing for a popular audience tend to offer a central thesis then build a work around it, Wright is more willing to absorb the text and follow it where it leads. This makes for books that feel broader the closer they stay to the text.

I read this in one sitting yesterday, and almost every one of its 69 pages contains some potent or quotable insight into the Christian faith and the biblical text on which it is built.

I'd highly recommend this to Christians or those interested in Christianity as a digestible overview of the core concerns of Jesus as described in the canon. I'm getting several copies to share with my community of faith.

Ben De Bono says

Compared to most of N.T. Wright's stuff, The Lord and His Prayer is very short and accessible. That's not a criticism however. In fact, it's part of what makes this book work so well. The Lord's Prayer is much the same way. It's short and accessible, yet also contains deep theological truth. Wright has written a book that matches the prayer perfectly. It's short, powerful, applicable and full of deep theological truth. I can't recommend this one highly enough. Great, great book.

Jacob Aitken says

This book *is* NT Wright in every sense of the word. And it also seems to be every NT Wright book. For Wright, the so-called Lord's Prayer is not an updated spirituality to help you be more pious or something. It is Jesus. It is signing on to what Jesus is all about.

Wright gives a lucid summary of every clause in the prayer. In short, when we call God "Father" we are placing ourselves in Israel's salvation-history (Ex. 4:22-23; 2 Sam. 7:14; Isaiah 55:3). It is saying "The Kingdom of God" (Wright 20).

When we ask for his kingdom to come, we are pointing to the New Exodus (Is. 52:7). Yahweh is returning to his people. His section on “thy will be done” has some great pointers on the physical aspect of prayer, as praying for our daily bread anchors the prayer in practical matters. Some advice:

- (1) This clause helps us minimize stream-of-consciousness style praying
- (2) We should pray for specific needs.
- (3) Yet, we should also lift our eyes beyond our needs.
- (4) All aspects of the Lord’s Prayer come together in the Eucharist.

In some ways his most important section is on forgiving trespasses and debts. It’s not that our refusal to forgive places a metaphysical block in front of God, but rather we are removing ourselves from the Kingdom plan. In refusing to forgive we are saying the Kingdom really hasn’t come for us.

The section on debts shouldn’t be surprising: Jesus is the Jubilee (Luke 4). The World Bank is the negation of that.

While many of Wright’s smaller books aren’t as good as his other ones, this one is. He brings it home on every level.

Patrick Willis says

Absolutely loved this book! Quick read! Super encouraging and challenging! Every person interested in learning more about the Lord's prayer should certainly read this book!

Jeff Elliott says

Wright' short book breaks the Lord's prayer down into the significant clauses which is not a new tactic but he never fails to find surprising insight and application in a well-worn text:

Some of the quotes may require context...

From the prologue:

Jesus’ message summons us to focus our thoughts on the coming of the Kingdom of God. Because that is a huge and difficult idea, I here focus that thought, too, on one small point: namely, the prayer that Jesus taught, the so-called ‘Lord’s Prayer’. We live, as Jesus lived, in a world all too full of injustice, hunger, malice and evil. This prayer cries out for justice, bread, forgiveness and deliverance. If anyone thinks those are irrelevant in today’s world, let them read the newspaper and think again.

The more I have studied Jesus in his historical setting, the more it has become clear to me that this prayer sums up fully and accurately, albeit in a very condensed fashion, the way in which he read and responded to the signs of the times, the way in which he understood his own vocation and mission and invited his followers to share it. This prayer, then, serves as a lens through which to see Jesus himself, and to discover something of what he was about.

On ways to read the Lord's prayer:

First, there is the time-honoured method of making the Lord’s Prayer the framework for regular daily praying. Take each clause at a time, and, while holding each in turn in the back of your mind, call into the front of your mind the particular things you want to pray for, as it were, under that heading.

Second, some people use the Lord's Prayer in the same way that some use the Orthodox Jesus-prayer. Repeat it slowly, again and again, in the rhythm of your breathing, so that it becomes, as we say, second nature.

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we are called to be the people through whom the pain of the world is held in the healing light of the love of God.

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This, then, I dare say, is the pattern of Christian spirituality. It is not the selfish pursuit of private spiritual advancement. It is not the flight of the alone to the alone. It is neither simply shouting into a void, nor simply getting in touch with our own deepest feelings, though sometimes it may feel like one or other of these. It is the rhythm of standing in the presence of the pain of the world, and kneeling in the presence of the creator of the world; of bringing those two things together in the name of Jesus and by the victory of the cross; of living in the tension of the double Advent, and of calling God 'Father'.

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The ideal posture, they would tell us, is relaxed but not slumped; poised but not tense; alert but not fidgety; above all, humble but happy in the presence of the Creator whom you are learning to call 'Father'.

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The banquet, the party, is a sign that God is acting at last, to rescue his people and wipe away all tears from all eyes. Jesus' parties, and his feeding of his followers in the wilderness, were intended, for those with eyes to see, to pick up this whole theme and celebrate it. As so often, the most powerful things Jesus said were in actions, not words.

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The Eucharist is, first, the way in which Jesus himself taught us to remember him, to think of him. If the Lord's Prayer is the prayer which summed up his own life and work, enabling his followers to breathe in his life and love and make it their own, the Eucharist is the symbol which did the same thing, pointing particularly to his dying and rising. As we do this in remembrance of him, we are taken back in heart and mind, and in sacramental time and place, to the very life of Jesus himself, as he feasted with his friends, as he celebrated one last kingdom-party. This is the Kingdom-banquet, and we are the honoured guests. That, as we saw, is where this clause in the prayer began.

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we are now called to be the people through whom the unique victory of Calvary and Easter is implemented in and for the whole world. The church is to be the advance guard of the great act of Forgiveness of Sins that God intends to accomplish for the entire cosmos. Justice and peace, truth and mercy, will one day reign in God's world; and the church, who could almost be defined as the people who pray the Lord's Prayer, is to model and pioneer the way of life which is, actually, the only way of life, because it is the way of forgiveness.

p. 68

We therefore have to come to grips with the fact that Jesus gave this prayer to his disciples, but that when he prayed it himself the answer was 'No'. He put it together with an earlier part of the Lord's Prayer ('Thy will be done'). When he held the two side by side, he found that God's will involved him in a unique vocation. He would be the one who was led to the Testing, who was not delivered from Evil.

p. 71

This prayer, in its setting within the whole Lord's Prayer, keeps the proper balance. Jesus intends his

followers to recognize not only the reality of evil but the reality of his victory over it.

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Here, by contrast, is the young king in Bethlehem, born with a price on his head. He represents the dangerous alternative, the possibility of a different empire, a different power, a different glory, a different peace. The two systems stand over against one another. Augustus' empire is like a well-lit room at night. The lamps are arranged beautifully; they shed pretty patterns; but they haven't defeated the darkness outside. Jesus' kingdom is like the morning star rising, signalling that it's time to blow out the candles, to throw open the curtains, and to welcome the new day that is dawning. Glory to God in the highest—and peace among those with whom he is pleased!

pgs. 86-87

We cannot, then, pray this prayer and acquiesce in the power and glory of Caesar's kingdom. Augustus would have known quite well what was going on if he'd heard anyone praying this prayer, and he would have trembled on his throne. If the church isn't prepared to subvert the kingdoms of the world with the kingdom of God, the only honest thing would be to give up praying this prayer altogether, especially its final doxology.

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to pray in Jesus' name is to invoke the name of the Stronger than the Strong; it is to appeal to the one through whom the creator of the world has become king, has taken the power of the world and has defeated it with the power of the cross, has confronted the glory of the world and has outshone it with the glory of the cross. When people in Jesus' world backed up a request with the Emperor's name, people jumped to attention. How much more, when we pray in the name of the true King of kings?

Eric Chappell says

A fantastic little book on the Lord's Prayer. Of all the 'laymen' books for the Lord's Prayer, this is my favorite.

Wright does a phenomenal job of interweaving the plot line of Israel and the OT, the first-century context, and the person and work of Christ in a refreshingly delightful study of a common and well-known prayer. I found Wright's treatment of the prayer to actually be the most gospel-centered of most of the recent treatments of the prayer. You'll find it nourishing for head and heart.

David Lasley says

A small book packed with insight on the Lords prayer. Wright does a great job of bringing the prayer into its context, helping the reader understand a little more what Jesus probably meant, and what his listeners would've heard. For anyone interested in learning more about this prayer, this seems like a great resource. For anyone else like me who sometimes feels almost too familiar with the Lord's Prayer, this is an extremely refreshing and insightful read.

Bev says

This little book on The Lord and His prayer breaks up one of the most oft sung and prayed pieces of the Bible into its clauses and phrases and unpacks them, in the context of Christianity.

In a way that is theologically sound (I checked with an expert ?) and that is easy to understand. So do try not to be put off by the less-than-awe-inspiring cover.

Read my full review here.

Bo Cogbill says

I read this together with Praying the Lord's Prayer by J.I. Packer, Lord, Teach Us by William Willimon and Stanley Hauerwas, and The Prayer of the Lord by R.C. Sproul, and I would rank them as follows:

- 1a. Sproul
- 1b. Packer
2. Wright
3. Willimon and Hauerwas

As per his usual, Wright turns out a great book, this time focusing on the Lord and His Prayer. As always, Wright does a great job pulling you into the story God has written, is writing, and will continue to write until the return of Jesus.

"For nearly two-thousand years people have prayed this prayer. When you take these words on your lips you stand on hallowed ground."

Wright's ability to pack a big punch in such short doses is evident in this little book on the Lord and His Prayer--just 69 pages! He shows how the Lord's Prayer was, and is, pointing us to the story God has been writing since Genesis, how the Lord's Prayer was answered in Christ, and how the Lord's Prayer will be fully answered in the eschaton. You feel pulled into the great drama of the Triune God--particularly in how the Prayer highlights the sacraments of baptism and communion.

Though I love Wright's content, I personally don't always enjoy his style, and this wasn't an exception. There were, at times, forced analogies and illustrations that felt smug (though I guess, he is British), and because the book is based on an Advent sermon series, that theme seemed shoe-horned in, but overall the book is quite solid. I'm sure I will visit it again in the future.

Ay says

Really great! Read in logos software.

Marc Arlt says

This is an absolutely brilliant little book which will forever change the way I pray this prayer. Rich in Kingdom theology and practical application with a vision for the whole world in view, you must read this book!
