

New Zealand Prayer Reflections

The New Zealand Version of the Lord's Prayer helps many contemporary people find a new way to say the familiar words of Jesus. Below, you will find five days of exercises to engage and experiment with this faithful version of the Lord's Prayer. I pray this will be a meaningful time for you. I pray the following pages will awaken new insights and understandings. Dare to dive into this version of the prayer this week. As always, if you would like to talk more about this prayer, let me know.

Day 1

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe; The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world; Your heavenly will be done by all created beings; Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trial too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

Exercise number 1: Say the pray above slowly, savoring each word like a piece of chocolate. Let each word linger, hover, and hang in the air around you. What does it evoke and provoke when you say, "Earth-maker"? For example, I picture a waterfall, hear the splashing water, feel the condensation on my skin, and smell the wet dirt around. Words create worlds but if we never take the time to enter and investigate each word, the whole prayer above can be just a nice thought that doesn't do anything for our soul. Pause with each word today. Which word stirs your soul? Why? Try to express some of what makes a word particularly powerful for you. Are there any words that you struggle to wrap your mind or heart around? Why? Try to express what it is about a word that is difficult for you. The reasons why you find a word resonating or not might be your experience or definition. Give voice to your responses and reactions. I pray this exercise might really awaken new insights in your heart and soul this day.

Day 2

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe; The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world; Your heavenly will be done by all created beings; Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trial too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

Exercise number 2: Today we are going to notice the differences between this prayer and our traditional Lord's Prayer we say or sing on Sundays. For example, from the very beginning, we know that there is a difference between saying, "Our Father" at the beginning of our usual Lord's Prayer and praying, "Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God." Not just a difference between two words and twenty-three words (or twenty-five if you think the hyphenated words really should count as two.). What other differences do you notice? I encourage to dive deeper question with more than whether you like something a particular turn of phrase. What happens in your mind, heart and soul when you pray, "And lead us not into temptation" as compared to "In times of temptation and test, strengthen us." There is a difference and distinction. Honestly, I need both set of words at different times. Homework assignment for today, lay the two versions of the prayer side-by-side to notice and name what stirs within you.

Day 3

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe; The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world; Your heavenly will be done by all created beings; Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trial too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

Exercise number 3: Bring this prayer close to your heart and let the words connect to your experiences right now. For example, how specifically are you following God's justice? What bread did you eat or are going to eat? What hurts were absorbed from someone yesterday – say the person's name and describe the papercut the person left on your soul. What temptations or tests are you facing? What trials are you enduring that feel overwhelming? Where does evil show up in your life? I want you to be as specific as possible today in weaving your experience of life into the spaces of these words and write in the margins.

Day 4

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe; The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world; Your heavenly will be done by all created beings; Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trial too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

Exercise number 4: I invite you to call someone today and discuss this prayer. I know this is vulnerable and all my introverted friends just said, "I'm outta here." Hear me out. We can be so caught up in our own thoughts they become an echo chamber. Sometimes, you need to break out of that by taking a risk. Let's be clear that ground rule number one when you call is, "Be Kind". If someone calls you today to discuss this prayer, be loving and gentle. Listen to that person to learn, even if you disagree. When you find yourself objecting, here is a great question to clarify and be curious, "Tell me more." That's it. It is not that complicated. When you find some resistance to what someone is saying, practice responding by saying, "Tell me more." Then listen to the person dive deeper. Talk to someone today. The person might be a church member, friend, a neighbor. Christianity is about community and the more we practice this with each other, the more we can embody (incarnate) Christ in the world today.

Day 5

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe; The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world; Your heavenly will be done by all created beings; Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trial too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

Exercise number 5: Whew...you made it all the way to the end. So today is a catch up today. Today is a day of sabbath, resting, and reflecting. No more homework unless you want to go back and review or re-do an exercise. Simply say the New Zealand version of the Lord's Prayer again paying attention to what has shifted over the last five days within you. Perhaps, this might inspire you to write YOUR own version of the Lord's Prayer (see how I snuck a possible homework assignment in!) One final prayerful plea that if you did not yesterday call someone, please try this. I think conversation and connecting is so vital to the community of faith. Thank you for engaging and being part of this experiment this week with me.