

# Daily Prayers

by Martin Luther

## How the head of the family should teach his household to pray morning and evening

### Morning Prayer

In the morning, when you get up, bless yourself with the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, say the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

If you choose, you can also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to your work joyfully, singing a hymn, such as the Ten Commandments,\* or whatever your devotion suggests.

### Evening Prayer

In the evening, when you go to bed, bless yourself with the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, say the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

If you choose, you can also say this little prayer:

I thank You, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray You to forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.



## How the head of the family should teach his household to ask a blessing and return thanks

### Asking a Blessing

The family shall go to the table reverently and with folded hands, and say:

The eyes of all look to You, O Lord, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. [Psalm 145:15-16]

Then shall follow the Lord's Prayer and this prayer:

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

### Returning Thanks

Likewise also after the meal they shall say reverently and with folded hands:

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever. He gives food to all flesh. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. [Psalm 136:1, 25; Psalm 147:9-11]

Then shall follow the Lord's Prayer and this prayer:

We thank You, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits, who live and reign forever. Amen.

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# The Prayers

by Edward G. Kettner

Over the past year we looked at the six chief parts of the Catechism and have seen how the Scriptures have set forth the description of the content of the Christian faith and how it is played out in the Christian life. But Luther did not stop there. He provided further material to guide Christians in their lives, to help them keep their eyes on their Saviour. After the chief parts are covered, Luther goes on to provide specific prayers for Christians to pray, and gives instructions for incorporating prayer into their daily lives. As with the six chief parts, he notes that the heads of households and schoolmasters should use these prayers as models.

Luther was not the first to put forth models for prayer as a means for establishing a disciplined life of prayer. In fact, he models his prayers on those in the Roman breviary, purging those prayers of their moralistic content and focusing on the God who has saved us and still preserves us. In these prayers we see elements of the first article of the Creed (God has made me ..., given me all I need to support this body and life ..., defends me and protects me ..., for all which it is my duty to thank, praise, serve and obey Him); the second commandment (call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks); and the Lord's Prayer (give us this day our daily bread).

Luther specifically includes prayers for morning and evening, to help children (and adults)

Luther wrote a pamphlet entitled "A Simple Way to Pray," which is included in Volume 43 of the American Edition of Luther's Works, and is available in a translation by Matthew Harrison in an inexpensive edition from Concordia Publishing House ([www.CPH.org](http://www.CPH.org)).

understand how our lives are to be ordered by prayer. Even the apostles felt the need to ask Jesus to teach them to pray, and Jesus gave them a form to follow in the Lord's Prayer, a form which the church uses to this day. As we look at the morning and evening prayers we see the rhythm of the Christian life played out. In the morning, Luther says, make the sign of the cross and invoke the name of the Triune God. Then say the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

The morning prayer which follows specifically thanks God for His protection the previous night and asks Him to keep us from evil during the coming day. Luther then suggests that Christians then joyfully go about their day's work, entering into it with a hymn to the Ten Commandments or whatever one's devotion may suggest. Here we see Luther acknowledging that the law serves as a guide to the Christian as they go about their daily task. What could be more joyful in our life in this world than, by God's power, living our lives in accordance with His will?

When evening comes, as we retire for the night, Luther provides a prayer in similar form. Again, it begins with thanks to God that He has kept us from harm and danger. While the day begins with a prayer that our doings and life may please Him, the evening prayer includes the petition that He would forgive all our sins where we have done wrong. Confession of sin, therefore,

may and should be made directly to God, as well as confessed to one another so that verbal absolution can be given.

The morning and evening prayers reflect the rhythm of daily life. We begin each day thanking God for His protection and praying that we might live the day in a way which is pleasing to Him. Then at night we pray for forgiveness for those things we have done wrong, for even though we are His children we still sin daily. Only when we remember this and know that we have forgiveness can we, as Luther puts it, lie down and sleep in peace.

Luther also provides prayer to be used "at table," that is, at meals. He saw it important to both ask for a blessing as one is about to eat, and then to give thanks after the meal is over. Prayer before eating begins with verses from Psalm 145, "The eyes of all look to you ...," acknowledging God as the giver of food, not just to us human beings, but to every living thing. Saying He "satisfies the desires of every living thing," means that we recognize we have from Him all we need, therefore there is no need either for greed or anxiety. In view of this, we then pray the Lord's Prayer, which includes the petition asking for daily bread, then asking God to bless us and to bless the gifts He is giving to us. Then, following the meal, a prayer of thanks is to be said, also based on the Psalms, and including the Lord's Prayer. One might see here that good manners toward God prevail, as before the meal we say "please," and after the meal we say "thank you."

As Christians we desire to grow in our life of prayer. The prayers given in the Catechism provide an excellent place to start.

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