

Week 4: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

A challenging week ahead?

If you've ever used the Couch to 5k app there's a moment when the voice says, 'the runs are getting harder now, but you've got this.' This week we come close to some difficult places as we encounter sin, evil, temptation and forgiveness. We really encourage you to stick with the process this week, even if the themes feel very tricky.

Every human has the capacity to make choices that disrupt and effect the well-being of others. Sometimes these are not entirely deliberate, but none-the-less we each are faced with the outworking of our words and actions when they hurt.

We must each find ways to live with all-of-ourselves, even the parts we are ashamed of, dislike or even fear. In the wholeness of God's love, mercy and forgiveness we have a way to find peace when we mess up and when other people's mess ups damage and hurt us.

Our hope this week is that you will find good ways of enabling your family to encounter these difficult issues without fear and condemnation. To find ways of expressing pain and encountering forgiveness and peace.

Remember, God loves you

The Lord's Prayer begins and ends with God. People are in their right place in the middle; surrounded and secured by God's concern for our physical needs, our relational needs and our well-being and spiritual needs.

We were reflecting in Week 2 (Your Kingdom Come, Your will be done) that everyone has a role in bringing God's Kingdom values of goodness, justice and love into their way of being and living. But we all make wrong choices at times that mean we do, say or think a thing that is contrary to the way God prefers us to be and live. This is sometimes called sin.

We noticed that it could be tricky to know what sin is because there is no list in the Bible of what is or isn't a sin and Christians disagree about this. We

could also wonder if there a scale of sin with some being 'worse' than others.

In the Bible, the religious leaders called Pharisees believed that breaking any religious law was sin but Jesus rejected this, instead encouraging goodness, justice and love to be the benchmarks. John 3:17 says 'God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world guilty, but to save the world through him'

That's a vital place to begin with this week. God loves us. God loves you. We are surrounded by God's love even when we mess up.


The section of the Lord's Prayer we are looking at this week is likely to generate a lot of questions and a certain amount of discomfort. Try not to be anxious or worried about the questions and remember that giving factual answers is not the only way to respond. You already know how to do this.

This week you could try responding with 'I have that question too', or 'it's ok to keep asking these questions over time'.

Household activity

Play a game of 'Stay or Go'¹ (This is a non-contact game!)

- One person is on a 'desert island' (they could sit on a rug or cushion as their island).
- Everyone else tries to tempt them to leave their desert island. They can offer anything! (This is an imaginary game).
- What will it take to tempt them? How outrageous do the offerings get? Is it a simple thing that tempts in the end? (for example: "you can have a hug with someone in the room")
- Who wasn't tempted and, why not?
- Did you like trying to tempt each other? How did you know what would tempt them?
- Talk together about these things. What do you notice about temptation?

 "I wonder if being tempted is like choosing to go through a wide gate rather than a narrow gate?"

- "How can Jesus help us choose the best way?"

The Little Gate, by Nick Butterworth and Mick Inkpen is a great book to explore with little children

¹ *The Lord's Prayer Unplugged*, Lucy Moore

Stilling and Noticing



Let's take a few moments to be still together now. If you'd like to extend the Stilling exercise include the words from Matthew 7:14 as shown.

If keeping it short works better, use the words of the Lord Prayer only. Sit, lie down, get comfy. Take some deep breaths and continue to breathe deeply. Smile. Then close your eyes if it helps.

Stilling

One person (child or adult) says slowly:

'Forgive us our sins (PAUSE) as we forgive those who sin against us' (PAUSE)

'Lead us not into temptation (PAUSE) But deliver us from evil' (PAUSE)

'Forgive us our sins (PAUSE) as we forgive those who sin against us' (PAUSE)

'Lead us not into temptation (PAUSE) But deliver us from evil' (PAUSE)


Small is the gate (PAUSE) and narrow the road that leads to life, (PAUSE)

and only a few find it (PAUSE)

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Open your eyes, smile, and gently invite the others in your group to do the same. Gently lead into a time of Noticing, below, with a wondering question.

 "I wonder what do you notice about this? Does a word or phrase catch your attention? Do you have a question?"

- "How do you feel?"
- "Does this part of the prayer remind you of another story, song, poem or prayer?"

'Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it'.

Matthew 7:14

Noticing: the five finger Examen

Use your hands and fingers actively during this practice by holding them up.

We start with Thumbs up. 'Thank You' which is about being grateful and thankful – What are you feeling thankful for today? Bring some things to mind or share thoughts together.

Now hold up your pointing finger. Where have you seen God or good things today? Have you pointed someone towards God by being kind or helpful? Has someone pointed you to God by giving you kindness, love or help?

Next, we come to the tallest finger. What has stood out from today? A person, story, conversation, time of quiet, a game?

Now the ring finger (which is the weakest finger). It's called the ring finger because people who are married or engaged usually wear a ring on this finger to show they are in a relationship. Relationships can be difficult sometimes. What do you notice about how you've been with your friends, teachers, brothers and sisters today?

Lastly, we come to the little finger. The smallest one. Small things can make a big difference. This could be a time to simply say "sorry". Reflect on one small thing you could do that will make a difference tomorrow.

Dwelling 1: The Lost and Found Son

Jesus often told parables, which are stories that have spiritual meaning and wisdom coded within them. Dwelling in parables is one way of taking the time to allow the story to decode for you. As you slowly share this story together, see what word or phrase catches your attention today and wonder together about it.

Luke 15:11-32

Jesus also told them another story:

Once a man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing.

Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'"

The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son."


But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate.

The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?"

The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

 Where was your attention drawn to?

- "I wonder which part you like best?"
- "I wonder which part feels most important?"
- "What connections do you make between this story and the part of the Lord's Prayer for today?"
- "Does this story add to or help your wonderings? Was anything confusing or distracting?"
- "Were you reminded of any other story, song, psalm or prayer?"
- "Does it remind you of a situation in the world today?"

Leader's notes

We wondered if there are 'sins' in this story and what they might be. We wondered who was tempted in this story and how. We wondered if there is evil in this story. We noticed that the father was desperate for his son to be home safely – his first words and actions are displaying love, compassion and joy, rather than anger or condemnation.



Dwelling 2: Jesus is Tempted

Can you imagine that Jesus was ever tempted? Jesus was a human but all God too. It's a bit mind-bending but as a human Jesus experienced all the things that humans experience. He laughed, cried, got tired, went to the toilet, got cross about things and presumably celebrated his birthday!

Take the time to dwell in this story and see what you notice about temptation, evil and forgiveness.

Matthew 4:1-11

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert, so that the devil could test him. After Jesus had gone without eating for forty days and nights, he was very hungry. Then the devil came to him and said, "If you are God's Son, tell these stones to turn into bread."

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say: 'No one can live only on food. People need every word that God has spoken.'"

Next, the devil took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest part of the temple. The devil said, "If you are God's Son, jump off. The Scriptures say:

'God will give his angels orders about you.

They will catch you in their arms, and you won't hurt your feet on the stones.'"


Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, 'Don't try to test the Lord your God!'"

Finally, the devil took Jesus up on a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms on earth and their power. The devil said to him, "I will give all this to you, if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus answered, "Go away Satan! The Scriptures say:

'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left Jesus, and angels came to help him.

 Where was your attention drawn to?

- "What did you notice in these verses?"
- "I wonder what feels most important in the story?"
- "I wonder if you have ever been tempted? Share a story about it and what you chose to do (or not do)"

Mending

The emojis you used in week 2 to pray will be useful this week. Make, draw, colour or print out a variety of emoji faces showing different emotions.

Where is forgiveness needed?

The five finger Examen on page 3 is a great way to notice highs and lows and spot where forgiveness might be needed (given or received). Try this as your first Mending prayer.



Mending: thinking about forgiveness.

For this prayer time it would be helpful for you to have a chalkboard and chalk, or a whiteboard and dry markers or even a tray of sand or flour. You'll also need the emoji faces again.

- Talk together about what do you think it means to 'forgive'
- With younger children read or watch the Charlie and Lola story 'Whoops but it wasn't me' and see what you notice in there about forgiveness. Do you think God's forgiveness is similar to or different from Charlie's response to Lola?
- Can you think of something you have said or done today (or this week) that you know doesn't fit with God's Kingdom values of goodness, kindness, justice or love? If you'd like to, write or draw it on a chalkboard, whiteboard or tray of flour/sand.

Say these words from Psalm 51:1-2

*'You are kind, God! Please have pity on me.
You are always merciful! Please wipe away
my sins.*

Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt.'

- Talk to God in your own words about what has happened, how you feel and how others feel.

- Think about or dwell quietly in God's forgiveness.
- When you feel ready wipe the board or tray clean, and smooth. Don't rush! If it helps, use the Stilling exercise to help you take time to do this.
- Pick an emoji to show how you felt before and how you feel now. You can talk with God about this if you'd like to. Tell God how you are feeling. Ask God to help you live in his way of kindness, justice and love. Maybe you'd like to say 'thank you' or express gratitude to God.

Blessing

Remember and hold on to the thought that with God, we do actually get things right more than we get them wrong! As we consider how we will be a blessing this week, begin with dancing or singing these words from Colossians. How will you be a blessing this week? Remember to put these in your family scrapbook or journal if you are keeping one.

'God has chosen you and made you his holy people. He loves you. So always do these things: Show mercy to others; be kind, humble, gentle, and patient. Do not be angry with each other, but forgive each other. If someone does wrong to you, then forgive him. Forgive each other because the Lord forgave you. Do all these things; but most important, love each other. Love is what holds

you all together in perfect unity. Let the peace that Christ gives control your thinking. You were all called together in one body to have peace. Always be thankful.'

Colossians 3:12-15

Leader's notes

When Jesus died, everything seemed dark and empty but on Easter day Jesus was alive again - human again, all of God still. When we ask for or give forgiveness it is like an Easter Day moment. New life has come.

