



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

Archbishop Stephen writes in today's **Daily Express** about the importance of the Lord's Prayer as a way to pray and a way to live. The article 'The Lord's Prayer can still add peace and joy to modern life' follows in full

If people know a prayer, it's the Lord's Prayer. Even if we don't always get the words right. Someone recently told me they'd heard one child recite it: "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from email."

From out of the mouths of babies, as they say. Yet having been translated into 1,000 languages, the Lord's Prayer is recited by millions of people every day and on every kind of occasion.

For comfort, for spiritual sustenance, for joy, sadness, and for routine. By soldiers going into battle. In Church Sunday by Sunday. At the christening of a new child, and at the coronation of a King. Walking the dog and burying the dead.

But not everyone knows it. And not everyone knows it well. Not everyone remembers it correctly. Even those of us who know it very well and say it every day, don't always stop to think about what it means. It is, for some of us, almost too familiar. We say it. We know it by heart. But it hasn't got into our hearts.

Which is why I've just published a book to help adults know and understand the Lord's Prayer.

And a book for children as well, with resources for schools. And why next year I'm going to be travelling across the north of England telling people about the Lord's Prayer and issuing a warning. This beautiful prayer will change you.

It has certainly changed me. And goes on changing me. It was walking across northern Spain on pilgrimage in 2016, a large part of the Camino del Norte from Santander to Santiago, when for just about the first time in my life I wasn't sure where I was going to sleep each night, or where the next meal was to be found.

This taught me the meaning of the words: "Give us today our daily bread." I've said these words so many times but now I began to understand what they truly meant: 'Give me enough for today; save me and spare me from wanting more than my share.'

It was praying with a large international community of young people that taught me how important it is that the prayer begins with the word "Our", thus binding us to each other across all barriers of separation and difference.

In less than 70 words, Jesus gives us a prayer which tells us how to live as well as how to pray. He teaches us that we belong to each other. It isn't "my" Father, but "our" Father. He teaches us to make earth like heaven by building God's kingdom of peace.

He invites us to stop asking for more all the time. In fact, is there anything more vital for our world to learn at the moment, than that we might be satisfied with daily bread – all of us! – not always craving more than our share? The planet itself cries out for us to learn what this means.

He challenges us to be realistic about ourselves and to say sorry for our sins. Then to forgive others.

In giving us this prayer, Jesus is saying: this is what we should be asking for. And if we did ask for these things, what a difference it would make. If we truly lived out the values of the Lord's Prayer, the world would move towards a place of justice, compassion, and balance – where no one takes more than they need, and everyone receives what they truly require.

Today I believe the Lord's prayer is as important as ever. It is part of our spiritual and cultural heritage. It is a corrective for all the wrong turns and self-seeking desires that mess up our lives and threaten to convulse the world.

And yes, the prayer ends with the words: deliver us from evil - though perhaps the child I quoted above had a point. One of today's evils is the endless chatter of the digital world, preventing us from stopping, robbing us of silence, inhibiting reflection, getting in the way of saying the prayer which could change us for the better.

By stepping away from constant connectivity, we rediscover the space for inner stillness – a place where we can truly encounter God. We open ourselves up to reflect more deeply and to hear what is truly important.

Our capacity to forgive, and our ability to be grateful for our 'daily bread' are strengthened when we detach from distractions and reconnect with what matters most.

So, here's my advice: don't say this prayer if you think your life and the world around you is just fine as it is. But if, like me, you think things could change, then say this prayer, and let that change begin in your own heart.

- *Praying by Heart: The Lord's Prayer for Everyone*, by Stephen Cottrell (Hodder, £14.99) is out now

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