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Lord's Prayer

Pray for your needs

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The year was 1961. Nikita Khrushchev, then the Premier of the Soviet Union, made a remark that while in space, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin had seen no God. Khrushchev's statement was made as part of a broader Soviet propaganda effort to promote atheism, at the height of the Cold War.

In response to this, *Time* magazine reached out to C.S. Lewis for his thoughts. Lewis, a Christian and professor at Oxford, argued that the question itself was absurd—essentially, how could we expect to find God in outer space, a place that is distant, impersonal, and not in any way related to the nature of God? For Lewis, the existence of God wasn't about finding Him in the physical universe through scientific means, but about understanding the nature of God as transcendent, outside the bounds of the material world.

Lewis wrote an essay in February 1963, originally titled, "Onward, Christian Spacemen," which he changed to "The Seeing Eye." Here is a passage from this essay:

Lewis wrote:

*“The Russians, I am told, report that they have not found God in outer space... Looking for God—or Heaven—by exploring space is like reading or seeing all Shakespeare’s plays in the hope that you will find Shakespeare as one of the characters or Stratford as one of the places.*

*Shakespeare is in one sense present at every moment in every play. But he is never present in the same way as Falstaff or Lady Macbeth. Nor is he diffused through the play like a gas...*

*Now of course this is only an analogy. I am not suggesting at all that the existence of God is as easily established as the existence of Shakespeare. My point is that, if God does exist, He is related to the universe more as an author is related to a play than as one object in the universe is related to another.*

*If God created the universe, He created space-time, which is to the universe as the metre is to a poem or the key is to music. To look for Him as one item within the framework which He Himself invented is nonsensical...*

*How, then, it may be asked, can we either reach or avoid Him?...in our own time and place, [avoiding God] is extremely easy. Avoid silence, avoid solitude, avoid any train of thought that leads off the beaten track.*

*Concentrate on money, sex, status, health and (above all) on your own grievances. Keep the radio on. Live in a crowd. Use plenty of sedation.*

*About the reaching, I am a far less reliable guide. This is because I never had the experience of looking for God. It was the other way round; He was the hunter (or so it seemed to me) and I was the deer...*

*Space-travel really has nothing to do with the matter. To some, God is discoverable everywhere; to others, nowhere. Those who do not find Him on earth are unlikely to find Him in space. (Hang it all, we're in space already; every year we go a huge circular tour in space.) But send a saint up in a spaceship and he'll find God in space as he found God on earth. Much depends on the seeing eye."*

As we begin week 3 of our series on The Lord's Prayer, we have reached the words, in heaven. We have looked at Our Father and now, in heaven.

The phrase, "in heaven" balances the intimacy of His relationship with us by calling him Our Father with an affirmation of God's sovereign and majesty. The technical terms are the immanence of God (he is near us) and the transcendence of God (he is beyond us). As Erickson writes, "The question of whereness does not apply to God. He is not a physical being; hence he does not have spatial dimensions of location and extension."

By saying, "Our Father in heaven," Jesus is saying God is with you, above you, beyond you, and everywhere imaginable and unimaginable, far above his creation in his

being and in his activity, there's nothing He doesn't cover.

In 1 Kings Chapter 8, King Solomon has assembled the elders of Israel, heads of the tribes, and the leaders of the ancestral houses of the Israelites in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, for the dedication of the temple. When the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. Solomon says, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever."

Solomon then exclaims, "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart, the covenant that you kept for your servant my father David as you declared to him; you promised with your mouth and have this day fulfilled with your hand."

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you today; that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may heed the

prayer that your servant prays toward this place. Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your dwelling place; heed and forgive.”

If God is unique in heaven above or on earth below” as Solomon states and if even the highest heaven cannot contain the Lord then Solomon correctly exclaims, “How much less this temple I have built!” But Solomon hopes that God will dwell on earth in this temple...on what basis? How will the Lord live among the Israelites and not abandon them?

Solomon’s prayer deals with some of the mystery and the paradox involved in thinking about God’s presence with us.

Solomon’s confidence in God’s willingness to condescend to human level comes from the fact that he knows God has revealed himself in the past, that God desires a relationship with Israel, and what he knows about God’s character. God is lofty, holy, and mysterious, yet approachable and personal at the same time. The temple will serve as the physical symbol of these divine realities. Here the unapproachable Lord becomes approachable and ready to help those who worship, sacrifice, and pray.

But they also provide a reminder that even though Yahweh has a temple, his people must not forget that God cannot be contained in a box, whether a small one like the ark or a

grandiose one like the temple. His willingness to accommodate them by manifesting his presence in a cloud filling the temple should not lead them to think that he can be controlled or limited.

Where have you limited God, or tried to control God? When have you put Him in a box?

We can do so when we define God by human terms, perceptions, or experiences. For example,

When we create an image of God based solely on our own experiences or cultural context, we reduce God to something that can be fully understood or controlled by the human mind. This limits God's infinite nature to finite human concepts.

Sometimes, we can try to confine God to the parameters of a specific doctrine, tradition, or ritual, making Him seem like He can only be understood or experienced in one specific way. This can lead to the idea that other views or experiences of God are invalid. For instance, the Pharisees often tried to limit God by focusing heavily on the letter of the law, prioritizing traditions and rituals over the spirit of the law. When Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees were outraged because they saw the Sabbath as a day of rest with no work allowed, even though the healing was a demonstration of God's love and power (Mark 3:1-6). They viewed God's laws as a rigid set of rules,

missing the heart of what God intended—compassion and restoration.

When we view God as something that only works within the physical laws of nature, we restrict God's potential to act outside of these boundaries. We can then disregard miracles or anything that challenges our understanding of how the world works.

Throughout history, many have used God to justify political power, social control, or ideological agendas, essentially limiting God's image to fit their needs. During the Crusades, people would use the name of God to justify war and conquest, reducing God's purposes to human conquest and power rather than the message of peace and reconciliation taught by Jesus.

Do you expect God to act in ways you think are logical, fair, or understandable? And when He doesn't conform to these expectations, you dismiss or struggle with His actions. This can make God seem smaller or less powerful than He truly is.

I think if we all stop and think there's at least one point in our life where we have all tried to limit or put God in a box. I know I have, in fact, just this past year, as my expectations for God I was fitting into predictable ways. I was thankful to the individual who literally said, don't put God in a box. It stuck with me, as God has shown me throughout my life

the vastness of his glory.

In Mark 9, Jesus heals a boy who is possessed by an impure spirit. The disciples were asked to drive out the impure spirit but they could not. At which point Jesus says, Mark 9:19-29

**Mark 9:19–29 NRSV**

“You faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.” And they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. It has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.” Jesus said to him, “If you are able!—All things can be done for the one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!” When Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You spirit that keeps this boy from speaking and hearing, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!” After crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he was able to stand. When he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” He said to them, “This kind can come out only through prayer.”

As one commentary says:

**Mark Explain the Story**

Jesus is more likely looking at the disciples when he says, “If you can?” He is grieved that their failure has cast a shadow of doubt in the man’s heart, angry that the disciples have failed God’s people. They were appointed to extend Jesus’s mission of bringing relief from the oppression of enslavement to demonic oppression and sickness. They were to be agents of the life-giving kingdom of God. Still eyeing the disciples, Jesus proclaims that “everything is possible for one who believes.”

Jesus emphasizes the lack of faith of both the disciples and the father. All need faith: those who would heal or perform any other ministry and those who would be healed or have someone else healed. And up to the very last point of this story the account has emphasized the necessity of faith, and then the idea of prayer is added. The two closely related, prayer - the avenue to faith. As a disciple of Jesus are you faithful and believing? When faced with crisis ourselves, do we know how to pray with whatever faith we may have? "I believe, help me in my unbelief." Do you believe God can do anything?

Limiting God often happens when people try to understand or control something that is beyond human comprehension. As humans, we like control, we like to try to understand the unknown, but it can reduce God to something manageable, which misses the point of God's boundless nature. Sometimes we all need reminders to not put God in a box, but instead to approach Him with a sense of awe, humility, and openness. We need to embrace His infinite and mysterious nature, embracing the unknown as the Lord says in, Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Embrace a personal relationship over rules, be open to God's unpredictability. In the Bible, God frequently works

through unexpected means: He used a shepherd (Moses) to lead a nation, a small child (David) to defeat a giant, and a poor, humble woman (Mary) to bring the Savior into the world. Be open to God working in ways that challenge your expectations and understanding. Don't limit God's actions to one time or place, but instead recognize the fullness of His nature. Remember, God is both transcendent (above and beyond us) and immanent (present and involved with us). He is both just and merciful, both a powerful Creator and a tender Father. If you focus too much on one aspect of God's character, you miss the richness of His nature. Allow God to challenge you and change you. Respect that there are different views of God. God reveals Himself to different people in different ways. Not everyone will understand God in the same way, and that's okay. Instead of dismissing others' experiences of God, appreciate the diversity of perspectives and recognize that God is far larger than any single person's understanding. Are you able to live with tension? God is often beyond simple dualities. Instead of trying to make Him fit into categories of "this or that," embrace the tension of "both and." You might struggle with questions like: How can God be all-powerful and allow suffering? Or how can God be completely just and yet forgive sin? Instead of avoiding these tough questions, live in the tension and trust that God's ways are higher than ours. Look around you and see the creativity and variety in God's creation. His handiwork is reflected in the diversity of

life, the beauty of nature, and the complexity of the universe.

This, in heaven, phrase of the Lord's Prayer calls us to remember the eternal perspective. We may feel small and insignificant at times, but we serve a God who is vast and unshaken by anything that happens in our lives. His throne in heaven is unmovable.

As Justo Gonzalez states, "Led by the example of the model prayer that the Lord has taught us, we often refer to God as "our heavenly Father." We are claiming that this being whom we call Father not only loves us as a parent but is also Lord and Creator of all there is. God, this one whom we call our Father, is also the inescapable Lord of all. Our heavenly Father is not only right here with us but also beyond the furthest reaches of our mind, our feelings, and even our imagination."

Lewis's response to that there was no God in searching space, in essence is that belief in God cannot be reduced to an experiment in a laboratory or something that can be disproven by scientific discovery, because the search for God is of an entirely different order. It's a philosophical, moral, and spiritual pursuit, not a physical one.

His rebuttal was widely appreciated and became an important moment in the broader discussion about the intersection of science, atheism, and religion. It highlighted

how the search for truth transcends the physical universe and is rooted in deeper human experience. Our Father, in heaven. Don't put God in a box, even heaven can't contain him.