



BIBLE LENS

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Shining a light on the weekly Bible Lessons published in the *Christian Science Quarterly*®

Soul

August 8–14, 2022

from the **Responsive Reading**

[Jeremiah 7:21, 23; 32:40, 41](#)

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; . . . Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: . . . And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; . . . Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

Obedience to God is a primary demand made of His people. Even before they are given the Ten Commandments, God pledges, “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people” ([Exodus 19:5](#)).

Jeremiah repeatedly urges obedience (see additional examples in [11:1–8](#); [26:12, 13](#); [38:19, 20](#)). His many predictions of disaster—seen as the effect of disobedience—seem to eclipse his more hopeful messages. (Today, lengthy laments or prophecies of doom are sometimes called jeremiads.) Yet his vision of God’s goodness to the faithful is clear, recalling [Deuteronomy 30:9](#): “The Lord will again rejoice over thee for good.” And he underscores God’s intention for good with the word *assuredly* (Hebrew, *be^e met*, literally meaning “in truth”; see other instances in [Psalms 111:7, 8](#); [Zechariah 8:8](#)).

from **Section 2**

5 | [Matthew 4:17](#)

Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Christ Jesus’ imperative “Repent” (Greek, *metanoō*) parallels John the Baptist’s charge in the Judean wilderness (see [Matthew 3:2](#)). Both are demanding a deep commitment to regeneration.

One scriptural authority identifies *metanoō* with the Hebrew verb *šûb*, signifying turn or return. He explains: “. . . it was not original with John or Jesus but was the standard prophetic and Jewish means of reconciliation with God. . . . ‘Get yourself a new orientation for the way you live, then act on it’ catches both the Greek and Hebrew connotations.”

6 | [Matthew 6:6](#)

When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Although prayer was a sacred daily practice for the Israelites, some “hypocrites” (v. 5) apparently displayed their piety in conspicuously public places. In this counsel Jesus rejects pride and ostentation. *Tameion*, the Greek noun rendered *closet*, refers to a storage room—likely the only separate space in most homes. The Master wasn’t directing petitioners to use such rooms, but to reach out to God privately.

While Hebrew Scripture occasionally mentions God as father (see examples in [Isaiah 64:8](#); [Malachi 2:10](#)), Jesus places God’s fatherhood at the very center of his teachings, almost exclusively calling on Him as Father. (In the single recorded exception—addressing God as “my God”—Jesus is quoting [Psalms 22:1](#); see [Matthew 27:46](#).) Later New Testament authors describe God as Father dozens of times (see instances in [Romans 1:7](#); [Ephesians 4:6](#); [Colossians 1:12](#)).

A commentator reflects: “. . . only in Christianity was the thought of God’s personal, loving relationship to the individual developed. It is through the revelation of his Son that God is known as the Father, not merely of the Son but also of all believers.”

6 | [Matthew 6:9](#)

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

“The Lord’s Prayer,” notes a scholar, “is really the community’s prayer. What stands out in the prayer is its spirit of submission and dependence. It envisions a community that walks with God and looks to him for everything from food to forgiveness.”

Jesus’ wording would have been familiar to Jewish listeners. Its opening lines echo the Kaddish, an Aramaic hymn of praise regularly recited in synagogue services: “Exalted and hallowed be his great name in the world which he created according to his will. May he let his kingdom rule”

from **Section 3**

7 | [Leviticus 26:2, 6, 9, 11, 12](#)

Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord. . . . And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: . . . For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you. . . . And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.

Tabernacle is translated from the Hebrew word *miškān* (meaning dwelling), and is the name for the portable tent considered God's habitation.

The promise in verse 12 recurs throughout the Bible to celebrate God's covenant with His children (see, for instance, [Jeremiah 30:22](#); [Ezekiel 36:28](#)). Paul cites it in portraying the Christian community as God's temple (see [II Corinthians 6:16](#)). And the Revelator announces, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" ([Revelation 21:3](#)).

9 | [Luke 11:2](#)

Thy kingdom come.

Christ Jesus often speaks about God's kingdom—in Luke alone, the Greek term for *kingdom* (*basileia*) appears dozens of times. Apocalyptic or "end time" writings viewed this realm as a glorious future revival of Jewish power. The Savior characterizes the kingdom as spiritual, already present within each heart (see [17:20](#), [21](#), citation 26).

A Bible expert remarks: " 'Kingdom' in the phrase 'kingdom of heaven' is a noun of action . . . Just as God's love means God's acting in love for others, so also God's kingdom means God's active sovereignty over creation. God's kingdom does not exist as an abstraction in and of itself, but is God's act."

from **Section 4**

12 | [Matthew 6:10](#)

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

God's will has been the subject of thoughtful study over the centuries. Hebrew Scripture defines it in terms of spiritual requirements: "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" ([Deuteronomy 10:12, 13](#)). [Micah 6:8](#) likewise asks, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

In this verse Christ Jesus declares honoring God's will to be integral to prayer. The Master preeminently models humble conformity with the divine will, especially in his appeal to God before his crucifixion: "Not my will, but thine, be done" ([Luke 22:42](#), citation 13). And subsequent New Testament writers record believers' devotion to God's will (see examples in [Acts 21:8–14](#); [Romans 12:2](#); [Hebrews 13:20, 21](#); [I John 2:17](#)).

from **Section 5**

14 | [Matthew 6:11](#)

Give us this day our daily bread.

Daily is translated from the Greek adjective *epiousios*, appearing only here and in Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer (see [Luke 11:3](#)). It is interpreted variously as “for the coming day,” “for the next day,” or “for all time.”

Bread, according to 16th-century theologian John Heylin, implies “all things needful for . . . the maintenance of the whole man, both body and soul; for each of these have their proper sustenance.” Jesus’ simple petition makes clear God’s willingness and ability to supply all needs—and the expectation that we trust that provision.

from **Section 6**

18 | [Luke 11:4](#)

Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

God’s forgiveness of sin is acknowledged in the Hebrew Bible (see, for instance, [Isaiah 55:7](#); [Jeremiah 31:34](#)). Now this mercy is tied to the worshiper’s forgiveness of others. One source observes, “. . . the forgiveness [believers] must extend to others is not the basis of their salvation but a prerequisite for daily fellowship with the Father Conversely, one who does not forgive others may actually be revealing that he or she has not really known God’s forgiveness (cf. Lk 7:47).”

from **Section 7**

21 | [James 1:2–4](#), [12](#), [13](#)

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. . . . Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

Temptations and *trying* are translated from distinct Greek words with similar meanings (*peirasmos*, *dokimion*). Both can imply testing or proving, as coins are tested for authenticity. [Genesis 22:1–13](#) reports God’s testing of Abraham’s faith, and [Psalms 66:10](#) affirms, “Thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.”

Worldly temptations, whether outward afflictions or inner impulses, are to be welcomed joyfully—embraced as opportunities to exercise faith and grow spiritually. First Peter counsels: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, . . . that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” ([4:12](#), [13](#)).

The person who withstands temptation through reliance on God is depicted by a commentary this way: “A mature believer is one whose character has begun to conform to the image that God intends it to have—the very character of Christ. Such a person may be described as wanting nothing, . . . In other words, integration and wholeness are becoming a reality in one’s faith.”

23 | [Matthew 6:13](#)

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[James 1:13](#) (citation 21) asserts that God does not tempt anyone. As Jesus illustrates at the outset of his career (see [Matthew 4:1–11](#)), evil is to be resisted and destroyed through God’s power. Later the Savior charges his close followers, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation” ([Luke 22:40](#)). And I [John 5:18](#) proclaims, “He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

The term *evil*—sometimes rendered “the evil one”—is translated from the generic adjective *ponēros* (encompassing a wide array of wickedness, including harm, malice, sorrow, and pain). Paul confirms divine deliverance: “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (I [Corinthians 10:13](#)).

from **Section 8**

25 | [Matthew 6:13](#)

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

Scholars have long recognized this doxology as an addition to Jesus’ prayer. (It is omitted in Luke’s Gospel; see [11:2–4](#).) Several draw a comparison with I [Chronicles 29:11](#): “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.”

Read a related article, “[A prayer for all seasons](#)” by James Lee Phillips, at jsh.christianscience.com/a-prayer-for-all-seasons.

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