

How Did We Get the Popular Version of The Lord's Prayer?

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When Jesus' disciples asked him how to pray he taught them what we now call *The Lord's Prayer*. (The "Lord" means Jesus.) But The Lord's Prayer that many English-speaking Christians say in church is different than what's in our modern Bibles. Why?

Luke's Gospel records a shorter version of the prayer (Luke 11:2-4). The longer one is in Matthew's Gospel and provides the framework for what we say today. So as we sort through it, we first need to look at two popular English translations from the 1500's. Here they are:

Matthew 6: 9-13

(from the 1st translation of the New Testament into English in 1526 by

William Tyndale)



O oure father
which arte in heven
halowed be thy name.
Let thy kyngdome come.
Thy wyll be fulfilled
as well in erth as it ys in heven.
Geve vs this daye oure dayly breed.
And forgeve ys oure treaspases even as we forgeve oure trespassers.
And leade vs not into temptacion:
but delyver vs from evell.
For thyne is the kyngedome and the power and the glorie for ever.
Amen.

Matthew 6: 9-13

(from the 1560 **Geneva Bible**, initially the most popular English translation brought to North America by settlers)



Our father
which art in heauen,
halowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdome come.
Thy will be done
euen in earth, as it is in heauen.
Geve vs this day our dayly bread.
And forgiue vs our dettes, as we also fogiue our detters.
And leade vs not into tentation,
But deliuer vs from euill:
For thine is the kingdome, and the power, and the glorie for euer.
Amen.

You're right: the spelling is weird. That's because English wasn't as standardized (across-the-board) as it is today. But if you follow along, the translation on the right (from the Geneva Bible), is pretty much what we pray now. However, about half way through, it says "debts" and the other (the Tyndale version) says "trespasses." The trespasses version is probably most popular—but in reality neither is perfect. "Trespasses" can make you think of property and "debts" can make you think of money. The idea is a *transgression* or a *wrong*, and the two words used are simply trying to get at that idea. With all that in mind, make the spelling more modern and these two translations are pretty much what we say today.

But when you look at the version in Matthew's Gospel in your modern Bibles, three main things are still different:

Matthew 6: 9-13

(modern translation: New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)



Our Father
in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

First, it says "as we also *have* forgiven our debtors." Modern translators are more accurate in reflecting the original wording that we ask God to forgive us in the same way we have *already forgiven* those whose have wronged us. That's significant.

Second, it says "rescue us" (i.e. "deliver us") from "the evil one." The difference is that the popular version just says "evil." The reason for this is translational discrepancy about whether the Greek word *poneros* means "evil" or "evil one." But modern translators conclude that it means "evil one" (the Devil).

The third big difference is that the closing lines are missing: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen." This is called a doxology: a saying that praises God. The reason it's not there is because modern research

concludes that it was most likely not in the oldest and most original manuscripts of Matthew's Gospel. It may have been added later as a sung response to the main part of the prayer.

To summarize, the popular version of The Lord's Prayer that many English-speaking Christians say in church (and in general) is basically handed down to us from the versions found in Matthew's Gospel in the 1500's. Modern Bible translations are a bit different because they represent more recent scholarship on how to translate certain phrases, and use more original manuscripts as the basis of their translations. And although the "doxology" is left off, it is no way theologically inaccurate: "*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen!*"