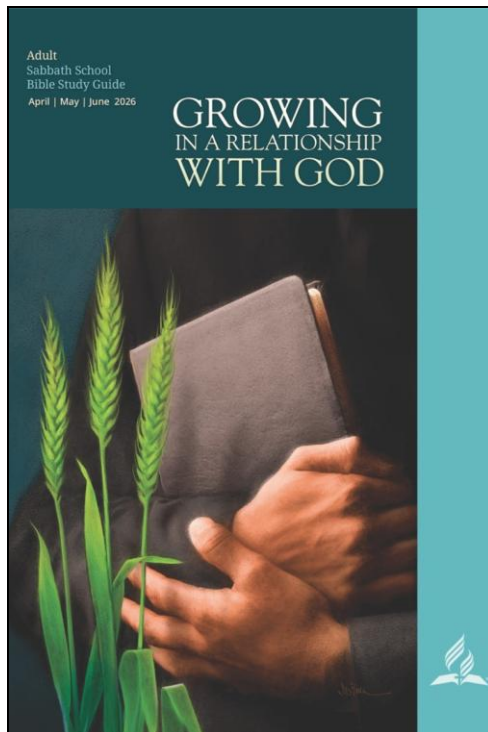




## 2026 Q2 Growing in A Relationship with God Lesson 7: Practical Prayer

by Stanley Baldwin



### The Author:

“Nina Atcheson is the curriculum manager and senior editor of the *Alive in Jesus* Sabbath School Curriculum at the General Conference. She lives to inspire and equip others to **know God deeply and personally** through His inspired Word. Atcheson is married to Matt, and together they have three teenage children.” Quarterly p. 3

### The Topic

“ Because this topic—**that of God’s desire to be in a relationship with humankind**—encompasses the entire Bible, there are many different angles, stories, and Bible passages that could have been chosen to teach this important topic...”

“**Ultimately, the desire is that these 13 short, focused lessons will reawaken your love and commitment to Jesus Christ as you seek Him anew this quarter.**” Quarterly p. 2, 3

It is easy to study the lesson each week as if it were a stand-alone lesson, and authors do break down their subject into 13 sections which are basically complete in themselves. However, to get the author’s big picture we need to understand their overall design. But then if you carefully go through each lesson using what Tim calls the “Design Law” perspective, your understanding of the lesson and the general topic may change significantly.

In this SS Class we are using these lessons as guides to direct our discussions and understand how our concept of God affects us, our thinking and our behavior. So, I think it is important to become familiar with the author and their idea about the general topic they are presenting. Let’s first look at the author of our lessons this quarter: Nina Atcheson is the curriculum manager and senior editor of the *Alive in Jesus* Sabbath School Curriculum at the General Conference. She lives to inspire and equip others to **know God deeply and personally** through His inspired Word. Nina is married to Matt Atcheson, and together they have three teenage children.

Now about the topic for this quarter: On the screen are two quotes from the Introduction to this quarter's lessons:

First, the author says: "Because this topic—**that of God's desire to be in a relationship with humankind**—encompasses the entire Bible, there are many different angles, stories, and Bible passages that could have been chosen to teach this important topic...". This goal intrigues me because the title for the quarter is "Growing in a relationship with God."

A relationship is a two-way street, God's desire for a relationship and our response to His overture. The title and the stated goal for this Quarter seem to focus on different beings in the relationship. The emphasis of the content seems to be on our response, which is important since we are the ones who need to change—not God!

Then she says: "Ultimately, the desire is that these 13 short, focused lessons will reawaken your love and commitment to Jesus Christ as you seek Him anew this quarter." To which I add my hearty "Amen!"

"From the opening of the great controversy it has been Satan's purpose to misrepresent God's character and to excite rebellion against His law." PP 338.

"The last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love." COL 415.



#### Job 37:13

"He causeth it to come, whether **for correction, or** for his land, **or** for mercy." KJV

"He brings clouds to **punish men, or** to water his earth **and** show his love." NIV

"He makes these things happen either **to punish people or** to show his unfailing love." NLT

"He uses storms **to punish people or** to water the earth **and** show men His love." TCW

Personally, I applaud Nina Atcheson's goal to present God as a Deity who wants to be in a relationship with humankind. But, what kind of relationship does God want and how does He go about it? For example: in lesson 2 Mrs. Atcheson quotes EGW "From the opening of the great controversy it has been Satan's purpose to misrepresent God's character and to excite rebellion against His law."—

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 338. And she includes this quote: “The last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love.” Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 415.

Two fantastic quotes! But in the same lesson she refers readers to Job 37 in which Elihu says to Job in verse 13 “He (God) makes these things happen either to punish people or to show his unfailing love.” And God’s answer in chapters 38 and 39 doesn’t specifically address this issue of God punishing people or as the King James Version says “for correction.” Instead of “punishing people” meaning a “policing, punitive action” God highlights His omnipotence and omniscience (All powerful and all knowing) while giving humans the freedom to experience the natural results of their choices instead of His protection.

Now just a word about various translations: I grew up on the King James Version, as many of you probably did. During college in the 60’s the Revised Standard Version was widely used in conjunction with the KJV. However, in the 70’s the New International Version was published and soon was generally accepted as the replacement for the KJV. Among Protestants.

In 1999 Tyndale published the NLT the New Living Translation which is now becoming a widely accepted translation along with the ESV, the English Standard Version. The ESV is an update of the RSV and in 2001 was published by Crossway a Church of Christ publisher.

Of interest to SDA’s; in 2003 Jack Blanco published The Clear Word, TCW, which is his paraphrase of the Bible. I thought you might like to see how these 4 interpret Elihu’s concept of God.

Which law lens do you use to explain this seeming disparity between God using storms for punishment or love to reveal His character.? Is the author promoting Imperial Law or Design Law? (A question to keep in mind throughout this quarter.). This passage makes me think of Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5:43-48 God sends sun and rain on righteous and unrighteous! The righteous and the unrighteous see and interpret the same climate events differently.

Here are the Contents for this Quarterly:

1, 2	Introduction
3	Our Attitude
4, 5	The Bible's Role
6, 7	Prayer
8-10	Biblical Teachings
11	Persistence
12	Sharing Him
13	Reward



Today we are looking at Lesson 7, the second study on PRAYER.  
The key to developing a relationship with God.

Referring to the Table of Contents is especially important to understanding the author's intentions. Atcheson's stated goal is to accept "**God's desire to be in a relationship with humankind.**" However, the lessons are all devoted to what we can do to "Grow in a relationship with God" as you can see from the Table of Contents.

**Today's Lesson: "Practical Prayer"**

Lesson number 7, the second lesson on the topic of prayer

**Today's Study:**

"This week let's study other praying individuals in the Bible and consider practical ways to strengthen prayer in our daily lives." Quarterly p. 56



Practical Prayer: What can we do! What should we do! We castigate some religions because of their reliance on rituals rites, and tradition for salvation. Then there are those that claim that they depend solely on Righteousness by Faith not on behavior. Both seem to miss the necessary change in our character which only God can do with our willing cooperation and practice. Character change will, of course, affect our behavior but this behavioral change is because of the change in our motivation, desire, and intent. And this change will be evident in our spiritual life as it becomes an integral part in our physical life.

Next, let's look at the Memory Text.



## Memory Text

“Trust in Him at all times, you people;  
pour out your heart before Him;  
God is a refuge for us”  
Psalm 62:8, New King James Version

“O people, trust God always  
and pour out your hearts to him,  
for God is our safe haven.”  
Psalms 62:8 Remedy

“He is my refuge, a rock where  
no enemy can reach me.”  
Psalms 62:7 The Clear Word

Last week the Lesson’s title was, “Prayer Warriors”. I really liked the Memory Text: Psalms 116:1 “I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.” To me this speaks of God’s desire, His readiness, His willingness to be in a relationship with His creation.

Today our Memory Text is also a verse taken from a prayer written by King David to be sung by the choir. It is an admonition to Israel and to us, to trust God. Psalms 62:8 “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us”. What is your take on this Memory Text?

To me this speaks of my part in an already established relationship. Do you “pour out your heart” to a stranger? No. Trust is earned. (Job, Abraham, Moses, three worthies, Jesus, John Paul etc.). Daily God demonstrates His love pouring by out His love for humanity and causing it to rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43-48) It is my response, my choice, to trust and pour out my heart with praise, concerns and desires like Job, Daniel, King David, and Jesus did and then what is God’s response—He becomes our refuge, and the result is peace with almighty God, if not with man.

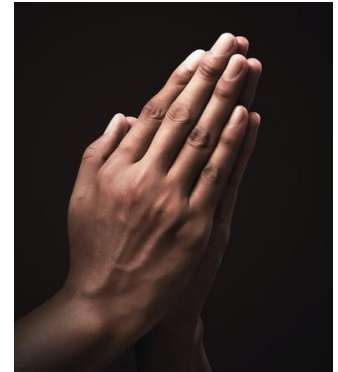
I especially like Jack Blanco’s paraphrase in which he graphically describes what a “refuge” is in verse 7 the verse just before our Memory Verse: “He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.”

I had to add this picture since I got a chuckle out of the saying on this welcome mat, “Ask God, not Google.”

“This week let’s study other praying individuals in the Bible and consider practical ways to strengthen prayer in our daily lives.” Quarterly p. 56

**“Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.** Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. **Prayer does not bring God down to us but brings us up to Him.”** SC 93

“Prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse. SC 94



In to our Quarterly on page 56 Nina Atcheson writes, “This week let’s study other praying individuals in the Bible and consider practical ways to strengthen prayer in our daily lives.” And the three individuals our author chose to refer to are Elijah, Hanna and Jesus

# Elijah



“So Ahab went to eat and drink. But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed low to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees.

Seven times Elijah told him (his servant) to go and look...

Finally, the seventh time, his servant told him, ‘I saw a little cloud about the size of a man’s hand rising from the sea.’

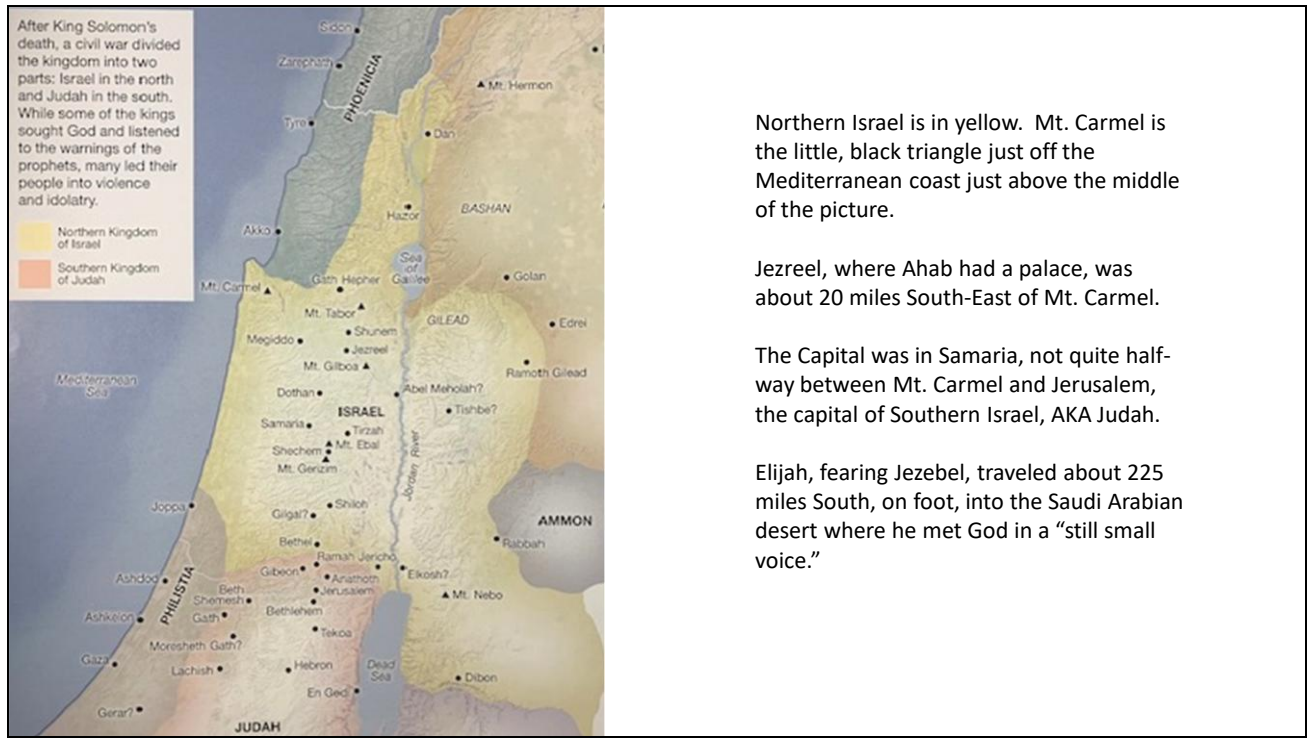
Then Elijah shouted, ‘Hurry to Ahab and tell him, ‘Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don’t hurry the rain will stop you.’” 1 Kings 18:42-44 NLT

For years Elijah had been learning to trust God. Israel had just been suffering for 3 years under a drought that Elijah had foretold under the inspiration of God. During that drought he had been fed by ravens by the brook Cherith, he had been fed by the widow of Zarephath from miraculously replenished oil and grain. And then, at the instruction of the Lord, Elijah met King Ahab who was out searching for him to kill him. When they met God turned the tables on the King! Elijah instructed King Ahab to bring Israel and all the prophets of Baal to Mt. Carmel. Now this was Elijah, yes, he was a prophet, but he was telling, actually he was commanding Ahab, the king, what to do. And Ahab did it!

After the 450 prophets of Baal were killed down in the valley, the Bible describes what happened next: “So Ahab went to eat and drink. But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed low to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees.

Seven times Elijah told his servant to go and look...

Finally, the seventh time, his servant returned and told him, ‘I saw a little cloud about the size of a man’s hand rising from the sea.’ Then Elijah shouted, ‘Hurry to Ahab and tell him, ‘Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don’t hurry the rain will stop you.’” 1 Kings 18:42-44 NLT



Northern Israel is in yellow. Mt. Carmel is the little, black triangle just off the Mediterranean coast just above the middle of the picture.

Jezreel, where Ahab had a palace, was about 20 miles South-East of Mt. Carmel.

The Capital was in Samaria, not quite half-way between Mt. Carmel and Jerusalem, the capital of Southern Israel, AKA Judah.

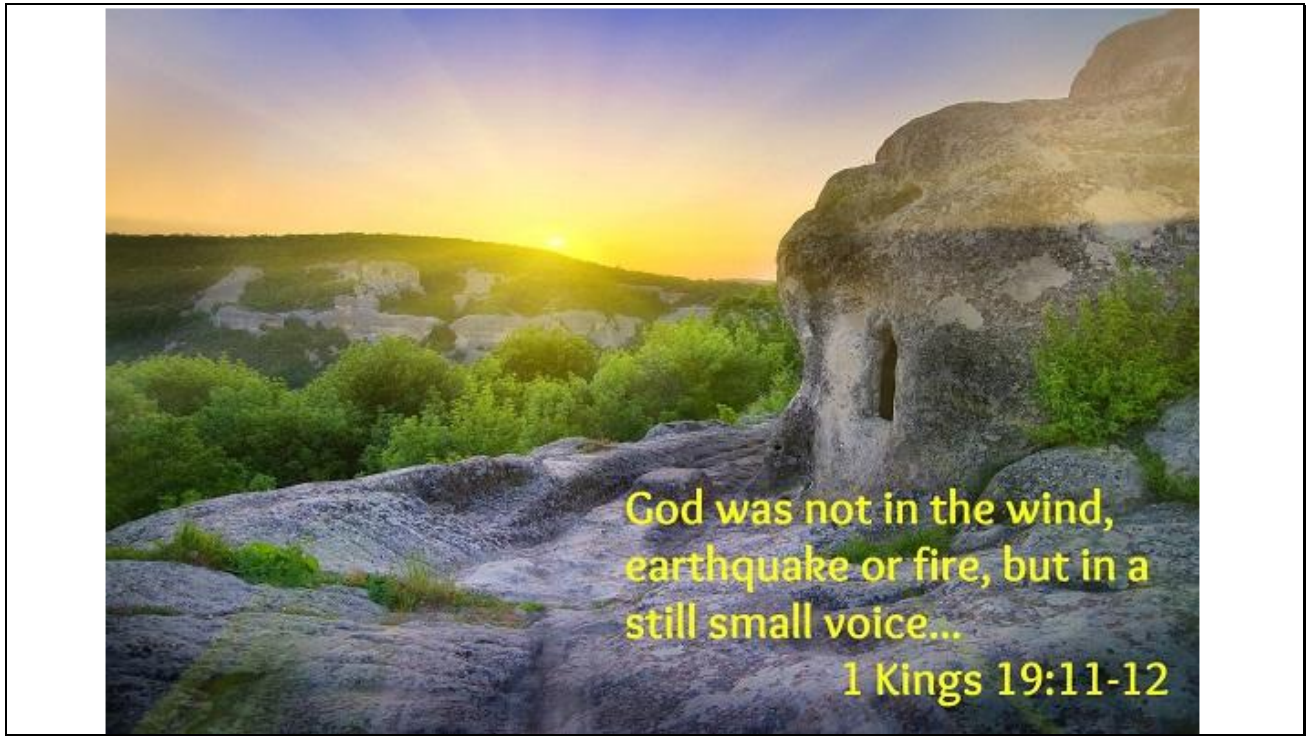
Elijah, fearing Jezebel, traveled about 225 miles South, on foot, into the Saudi Arabian desert where he met God in a "still small voice."

It helps me visualizing events to understand where they happened. So here is a map. The Northern 10 Tribes, known as Israel, is in yellow. Mt. Carmel is the little, black triangle just off the Mediterranean coast just above the middle of the picture.

Jezreel, where Ahab had a palace, was about 20 miles South-East of Mt. Carmel.

The Capital of Israel was in Samaria about half-way between Mt. Carmel and Jerusalem the Capital of Judah..

Elijah, fearing Jezebel, traveled about 225 miles South, on foot, into the Saudi Arabian desert where he met God in a "still small voice."



Elijah had been on Mt. Carmel with the Priests of Baal providing the thundering racket of all 450 priests in calling on their gods, stomping and dancing until the ground shook, all 450 screaming for fire to come down, but there in the Saudi Arabian desert Elijah learned that God is not in a big, noisy, ground shaking, strobe lit, display but in a still small voice. What else do you think Elijah learned on that lonely, desert mountain? (Trust?)

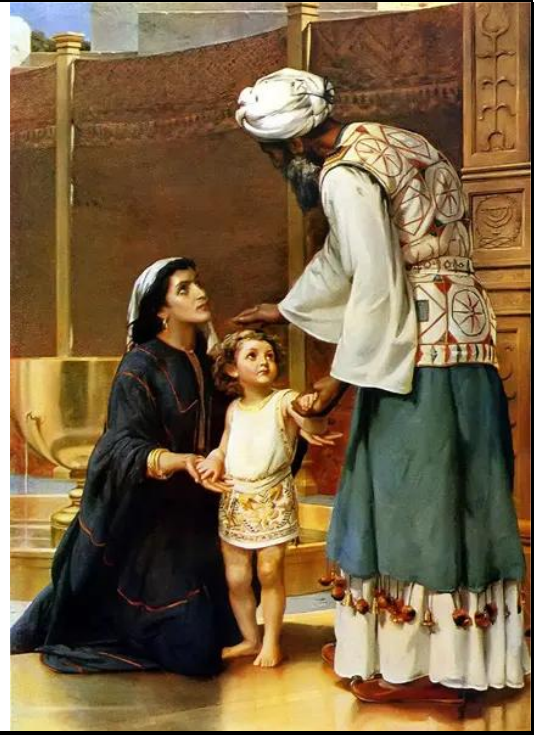


# Hanna

Wife of  
**Elkanah**

Other Wife:  
**Peninnah**

Mother of  
**Samuel**



The story of Hanna, found in 1 Samuel 1 and 2, is the story of the problems of polygamy. One husband and two wives, one childless and the other child-bearing. In that society child-bearing was considered a vital function of a wife, after all God had told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, and God's promise to Abraham included descendants as numerous as the sand of the sea. Also, it was especially desirable to have a son to carry on the family name. Evidently Hanna and Elkanah had been married for several years and they didn't have any children. Pure speculation on my part but that may have been why Elkanah married a second wife. Her childless state and the taunting from Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, was behind Hanna's deep, substantive, overpowering, desire to have a child. What do we learn from this story about prayer especially about vows in prayer?

The lesson Quarterly has a list of 10 things to consider if your prayer is unanswered.

## Unanswered Prayer

The lesson Quarterly has a list of 10 things to consider if your prayer is unanswered.

1. Seek God's will, not your own (Matt. 6:10; 1 John 5:14, 15).
2. Consider your motives (Prov. 16:2, James 4:3).
3. Think about whether you have a cherished sin (Ps. 66:18, 1 Pet. 3:12, Prov. 15:29).
4. Abide in God and in His Word (John 15:7).
5. Have faith when you pray (Heb. 11:6, James 1:6, Mark 11:24, Matt. 21:22).
6. Consider the state of your heart (humble or proud) (James 4:6, 1 Pet. 5:6).
7. Persevere (1 Thess. 5:17, 18).
8. Forgive others (Mark 11:25, 26).
9. Ultimately, God sees the big picture and knows what is best for us (Rom. 8:28, Eph. 3:20, Jer. 29:11–13).
10. Sometimes His answer merely is as it was for Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor. 12:9, NKJV).

Here is the list of 10 things to consider if your prayer is seemingly unanswered:

- Seek God's will, not your own (Matt. 6:10; 1 John 5:14, 15).
- Consider your motives (Prov. 16:2, James 4:3).
- Think about whether you have a cherished sin (Ps. 66:18, 1 Pet. 3:12, Prov. 15:29).
- Abide in God and in His Word (John 15:7).
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## The Prayer of Jesus

The Quarterly focuses on the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:5-15 and the various aspects of His sample prayer.

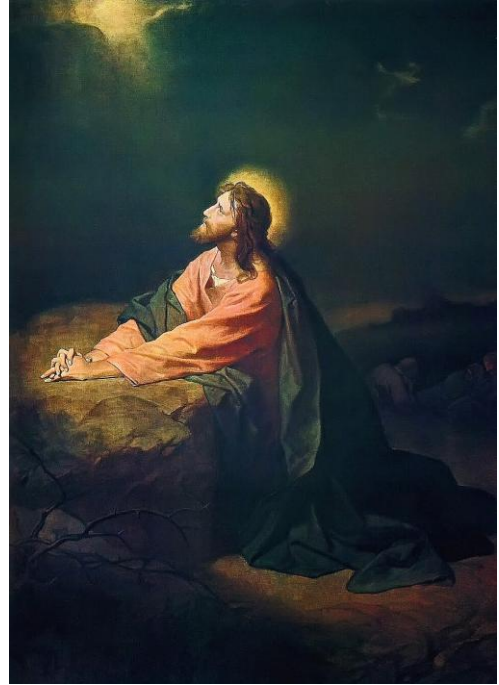
From the Design Law perspective how do you explain:

Hallowing God's name?

"Thy will be done?"

Forgive us as we forgive others?

"Lead us not into temptation?"



Chronologically an early mention of Jesus praying is found in Luke 6:12 "One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and He prayed to God all night." In the very next verse, when Jesus came from praying all night, Jesus chooses 12 men from his disciples to be apostles. All this is in the second year of His three-year ministry and then probably Jesus went on to present the Sermon on the Mount that day!

The Sermon on the Mount is the best record that we have of what Jesus would say to a crowd of listeners and it includes His teaching about prayer which includes His sample prayer that we know as the Lord's Prayer. Unfortunately, it has become a mantra, thoughtlessly repeated as if reciting it will require God's special attention and positive response. To many repeating the Lord's Prayer is a rite, a ritual that indicates a relationship with God by bringing to them a sense of reverence. In reality it has become a superficial tradition masking the reality of a real God who wants the best for us eternally which starts with a change of our inner self, our character.

So, let's look at; a few things from the Lord's Prayer through the lens of Design Law:

Hallowing God's name. There is no way I can change God, or do anything to make Him more holy, so "hallowing" God's name means what? (Acknowledging and respecting God, showing reverence toward God,. As I understand Design Law that would only come by allowing God to change my character.)

"Thy will be done." Again, Design Law would point to the need for me to recognize that I am totally out of harmony with reality and allow God to change me.

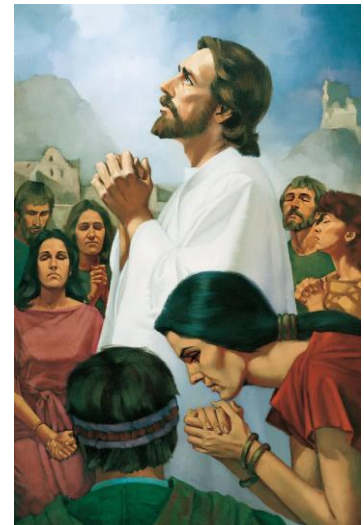
Forgive us as we forgive others. Does God's forgiveness depend on us? Is God unforgiving unless we are? OR do we need to have the same attitude of forgiveness, at all times, for all people and in every circumstance as God does? Our choice of an unforgiving attitude acts like a shield, deflecting God's forgiveness, which He will not force us to receive.

"Lead us not into temptation." Does God tempt people? Does God assist Satan? NO!! James 1:13, 14 "...neither tempteth he (God) any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." The Remedy "Lead us away from temptation". The Clear Word. "Help us overcome every temptation..."New Living Translation "And don't let us yield to temptation."

### **My Conclusion:**

Each of us is different, with different needs, different challenges, different mental, social, spiritual, and physical situations. The stories of Biblical characters' prayer life and results can give us useful suggestions for our prayer life including persistence, daily practice, private as well as public prayer seeking God's will, and praising Him, but **It is up to us to choose to trust God and pour out our lives to Him.**

"It is a part of God's plan to grant us in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask." GC p. 525



Those were the three stories our author used to illustrate "practical prayer." Here is my conclusion: Each of us is different, with different needs, different challenges, different mental, social, spiritual, and physical situations. The stories of Biblical characters' prayer life and results can give us useful suggestions for our prayer life including persistence, daily practice, private as well as public prayer, seeking God's will, and praising Him but, **It is up to us to choose to trust God and pour out our lives to Him.**

Let me put it in simpler form: There is no right or wrong way to pray—**God reads the heart NOT the mouth.**