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Prayer, Meditation, Application to *The Lord's Prayer* Second Life in the Spirit
Seminar Reunion Saturday, August 26, 2000 8:30 a.m. Church Hall Mass
readings: Ez 43:1-7; Mt 23:1-12

In asking for feedback from participants, the issue of prayer came up and how to make it practical. I have several things to say about prayer, and this was in particular in regard to meditation.

The Four Ends of Prayer

First of all, we'll distinguish between different kinds of prayer and the different ends of prayer. All prayer, no matter what kind it is—and we won't go into all the different kinds of prayer there are; there are too many different kinds—but whatever kind of prayer, whatever method of praying we use, there are four basic goals or ends of prayer always contained in everything.

Adoration

The first is adoration. Now what is adoration? We need to distinguish what adoration really is from the expressions of adoration. So people express adoration in many different ways, but what really is it? It's something within our spirit that is adoring God, that is worshiping God, that is **recognizing who God is**. So all prayer is meant to recognize who God is; I'll get into that a little bit more in a few minutes. This is really not so simple; it may sound simple. But it is not simple because we do not experience God directly in our lives often. We may experience God indirectly all the time, but rarely do we experience God directly. Sometimes—St. Paul, for example, on the road to Damascus experienced a direct personal revelation. But this is not too terribly common, and we don't see it a great deal in the lives of saints. The greatest saints don't have that many direct gifts of revelation, nor are they even something to be looked for. So we have to recognize then reflectively who God is; and one of the great source books for this is, of course, the gospels.

Jesus is always trying to tell us who God is, and he tells us both by teaching and by example. The signs and the miracles Jesus works are all messages about who God is and about what God wants for us. And it's important we look at those signs and try to think about what they mean, otherwise we actually can become poisoned by wrong ideas about who God is. So, for example, there's an elderly lady that I happen to be acquainted with who is having a lot of problems of a physical nature and she says, "I must have been a terrible person for God to do this to me!" Well, she has a very poor idea of who God is. And if those bad ideas of who God is are not corrected, they will poison our relationship with God. But many people, all of us at some point, have this problem of misinterpreting what God is all about or what God is doing. And the reason is—I already expressed the reason—we rarely experience directly the will of God or the experience of God.

So among all the various experiences of life we have to find which are really God's gift to us; that selection itself is important, and that's why Christ is constantly teaching. His teachings are exactly to help us find where God is working in our lives. And if we

don't read the Bible, we don't **read the gospels**, we'll never know the difference between truly God's work and the accidents that just happen in life because of the way things work, or the work of the devil, or the work of other people. And, of course, we are deeply affected by other people. So adoring God is a matter of discerning who God really is for us. Okay, so that's always an end to prayer, no matter what kind of prayer.

Contrition

Number two, contrition. Contrition is very important because as we start to reflect on who God is and who we are and how we respond to God, we have to recognize that very often **we have not responded very well**, very passionately to God—and I use that in the modern sense, enthusiastically, willingly to God—and so we have to recognize our own short-fall, our own failings, to really be believers, trusting in God. We recognize that we **haven't always put our trust in God**. We have often trusted ourselves or we have put our trust in others, but not in God. So this is a call for contrition. So contrition is always an end of prayer. No matter what kind of prayer we're praying it will call for contrition. And in the broader sense contrition involves a change of mind. And that is really what is meant by the Greek word, "**metanoia,**" **whereby we start thinking anew about everything**. This morning's reading was an example, but there are many examples in Scripture about how Jesus says, "But I say. You think, but I say." "My thoughts are not your thoughts,' saith the Lord"—that's in the Old Testament. **So to bring our thoughts into a godly, godlike form, that's part of contrition;** that's part of metanoia. So it's not simply that I recognize something I did wrong. That's the third most important thing. The second most important thing is I recognize what I haven't yet done, how I haven't yet responded to God. The first is that **I am willing to allow Jesus, especially, and the Church to teach me how to think about life**, and to recognize that what I think is really often something just the result of happenstance and confusion and ignorance. So I need to find out what God really is and who God is and what God wants for me. So contrition is the second end of prayer.

Thanksgiving

The third end of prayer is thanksgiving; and of course, one could say that could be the first end also, but they are all really equal. Thanksgiving is important not really because God needs to be thanked. God doesn't need to be thanked! But **we need to be thankful!** Why? Because gratitude really purifies our spirits. **Our burden is lightened when we are grateful;** so there's always ways of looking at everything, and there are grateful ways and ungrateful ways. And, of course, when we recognize ingratitude that's another cause for metanoia or conversion or contrition as well.

You remember the story of Pollyanna—I don't know if you remember the story—but there is a story of this girl, Pollyanna. And she lived in England during the Victorian period, and there was something very dowdy and rigid about that culture, and overtly Christian, but not very Christian. And one of the things about that particular time was Sunday was a day of rest, but it was not a day of fun in any way. So no work and no fun and no nothing! It's kind of a combination of a Puritanism and Victorianism. So the worst day of the week was Sunday, and people hated Sunday. And so in this particular house where Pollyanna lived—her guardians were wealthy and they had servants, and the

servants hated Sunday even though they didn't have to work. But they hated it because it was so boring because they couldn't go out to a show—there weren't any shows—and there weren't any pubs open, and there was nothing to do, and they couldn't play games—that was a very strong mark of many forms of English Protestantism, you know, you didn't play games—my mother was brought up that way, you know Methodism, and so on. No games. No dolls. Nothing, nothing like this, see? It's all bad, and especially on Sunday—that was for everybody. So they just really thought it was miserable. So they said one day to Pollyanna, who always liked to look on the bright side of everything, “Well, Pollyanna, tell us something really good about Sunday. If you can tell us something really good about Sunday, well, then you're really great!” She thought for a minute. She said, “I know. Sunday is wonderful because it's seven days until the next one!” Well, of course, that's kind of a joke; but the point was she really went out of her way to look at things in a good way.

Now I'm not recommending exaggerating things, but I think very often we tend to be in the other direction. We exaggerate the negative. We are very prone to that. I think it is part of the burden we carry with us, that we exaggerate the negative. So we might have some plans, and the plans don't work out—do we really wonder whether the plans were good in the first place? I mean were they really in the will of God? We might want something very much. We might want to be somewhere very much. We might have all kinds of wishes and desires. You know, but the question is, are they for our good? That's a big question mark. **We assume too often that what we want is right.** That's not being discriminating. In gratitude we really start to recognize how God is gracing us. And that is really a belief that goes way beyond the New Testament—back in the Old Testament—that God is constantly gracing his people. They don't see it. They're very ungrateful. And that's too bad, because while they're ungrateful they're really not enjoying the blessings because meanwhile, while they are being blessed, they want something else. **So finding the blessings in life;** that's one of the ends of prayer. And that builds up a sense of gratitude; and that's for our good, not God's good.

Petition

And the fourth, and I left it until the end, is petition. You know, even as spiritual believers, we can be very greedy. And in fact, if you go through the capital sins—some nun once told me she went through the capital sins and realized there was a spiritual form to each one of them. There's a spiritual kind of greed, a spiritual kind of gluttony, a spiritual kind of lust. You say, “What is all that about?” It's about excessiveness, you know. **We can enjoy and want and consume too much—even in the spiritual order**—thinking, of course, according to the normal human way that more is always better! We have to be careful about that.

And in a minute I'm going to go over *The Lord's Prayer*, as an example of mediation. Petition is very important. And Christ said, “Ask for everything you need and pray always,” and so on. Ask for everything you need. And the attitude that we can go to God and ask for everything we need is very good. But we have to be very careful we really **ask for what we need**, and not always ask for what we want when what we want is not what we need. And, you know, that's one of the most difficult things for adults to

distinguish. Third graders are pretty good. I've tried them out, and they can pretty well always distinguish the difference between want and need, but adults rarely do. The things get confused as people get older. So we need to keep in mind petition is always an end of prayer, but the petition should be for what we really need. So those are the four ends of prayer.

Meditation

Now how do we go about praying? Well, what about meditation? That was the question. Well, **meditation is all about finding meaning**. I will distinguish meditation from contemplation, which I won't talk about today. But contemplation is not about meaning. Contemplation is about enjoying. The end of Eucharist is actually contemplation. So through the Eucharist we should actually be able to sit in a contemplative place of enjoyment of the Lord. But Catholic writers have always said that **we should not go into contemplation before we go through meditation, otherwise our contemplation could be empty**, as is often Eastern contemplation; it's kind of empty. Now you can say, "Well, the Lord could fill that emptiness." And that's true, but so could something else. So Catholic authors have always stressed the need to start with meditation. So what is meditation all about? It's about **finding meaning in words and ideas**. And I will use as an example *The Lord's Prayer*. You can use any prayer. You could use any Scripture. You could use books written by anyone, if they're written in this line of trying to make us think and realize something. Take, for example, *The Lord's Prayer*.

Meditation on *The Lord's Prayer*

Our Father

Now the first phrase, "Our Father." When you meditate you have to **start small**. Now here's a phrase, "Our Father." It helps, of course, **the more you read Scripture, the more you can meditate because things will start to connect**. For example, if you read "Our Father" you can think of this morning's reading of the gospel "Call no man father." And how Jesus said, "You have only one Father, who is in heaven." And then you could meditate on this issue of, well, is this real for me? **Is this really true that I regard God as Father?** And if you read a book, perhaps on meditation, you might read that Jesus really called God "Abba," Daddy. And of course, if you read St. Paul in Romans and Galatians, he talks about "Abba." He says, "The Spirit speaks in our hearts crying out, *Abba*, 'Father!'" So you think of that word, "Abba," meaning "Daddy," remember it means "Daddy." So we think: Do I really relate to God this way?

And then, of course, **there are the four ends of prayer**—first of all, **adoration**. And then you could **praise God** for the fact that he is really our Daddy and that really **all that we have comes from him**, and that could consume quite some time. I don't know, five minutes, ten minutes; I don't know how long; it depends on you and your dispositions. Or you could look at **contrition**. Well, you know, you could recognize that I have not really regarded God as my Father. I've really regarded myself as my real source. **I really depend upon myself, not God!** Now I'm not saying there is never any action we're supposed to take. I'm not saying we should be totally passive; the last thing we

should be is lazy and slothful. I'm not saying we shouldn't take right action, but the whole issue is: Have I really regarded God as my protector, my guardian? And then I might say, "No, I really haven't." Then I might express contrition for this for really not making God my Father, for preferring to think of myself as the source of my own abilities, my own welfare, my own strength. So then I would be contrite about that. So that would be the second end of prayer. The third end of prayer is **thanksgiving**. So then I might, maybe without any words, but simply **be thankful for the kind of God who is revealing himself in Christ**. And then, fourthly, I might even **ask God for his Fatherly blessing on my day**. So that's just an example of taking one phrase and meditating on it in regard to the four ends of prayer. And that's not the only way you could do it, but that's one way you could do it.

Our

Even the word "Our," you could think about do I really think of God as "Our" God—"Our" Father, or do I think of him as "my" Father? And I think sometimes we are urged by our culture to be very individualistic, you know. And I have heard people talk about "my God," and I say, "Well, who is that?" So really, you know, we need to say, "Our Father." That's the whole idea that **God is the God of everyone!** And if God is the God of everyone, **then I am really sister and brother to everyone!** Now again, you can't take this absolutely literally and say, "Okay, I'm moving in tomorrow. I'm your sister; I'm your brother." But nonetheless, it should color the way in which we live. And again, go through the four ends of prayer in regard to that.

Who art in heaven

So "Our Father, who art in heaven." Again, you know, that might seem like an unnecessary addition, "who art in heaven," but then if you think about it, even this morning Jesus said, "You have only one Father, the One who is in heaven." There's something to that because we know that the history of the world is full of idolatry. Idolatry means worshipping images, worshipping graven images, really. Well, now that's a lot to think about. The God who is in heaven actually doesn't have an image until he sends one. **And the image he sends is Jesus; he is the image!** And before Jesus there is no image of God that human beings have or have a right to. That's why idolatry was forbidden; it's against the first commandment: "You shall have no strange gods." **What were strange gods?** Well, in the ancient world serpents and snakes and goofy looking things that they made up, or animals, or half animals and half man, and all that sort of stuff—in other words, **human imagination**.

Well, human imagination is still at work. And we have the New Age, you know, New Age ideas, New Age everything. Well, what is all that about? It's just about human beings making stuff up. Isn't that what idolatry is? Yes. Now perhaps it's shocking; maybe it should be shocking that it's the first commandment: "**Don't make stuff up!**" That's another way of putting it. "Don't make stuff up! Let me tell you; **let me reveal to you what I'm all about**. Don't you just make it up!" And we look at the world and culture and what people think about God, well, a lot of it's made up! Now of course, we know a phenomenon today is atheism. **Maybe atheism has come from all the made-up**

stuff. Maybe it's that even the followers of Christ haven't really been conveying the true revelation of Christ, and maybe that's why people have turned away. I don't know.

So anyway, "who art in heaven," we could really meditate on that and then go through again the four ends or one or two or whatever. I mean, you need to be kind of loose. You know, you don't want to be too highly structured. It's not like taking apart a clock and putting it back together again. It's not like that. It's a conscious thing. **Meditation is a living, conscious movement of the Spirit within; and it's very important that we recognize that from before we start, that we pray to God and ask for his Spirit to guide us, to be with us, and to exclude all spirits and all influences that are not compatible, that are not of Christ.** Okay? That could be many. That could be literally **temptations or simply distractions.** Sometimes we're distracted, and most often by our **own anxieties or by our own issues,** whatever they would be. Maybe we have real family problems and we can't wipe them away, but we can forget about them while we pray insofar as we can actually bring God then into our problems and not the problems destroying our prayer. This is easier said than done. So we have anxieties; we have our fears that we have to deal with and recognize. So God is in heaven, and the real God is a God who doesn't think the way we do and doesn't act the way we do and doesn't respond the way we do; and so **we're always making God into someone like us, and that is not the real God. So the God we pray to is the God who is in heaven.** So that's the second phrase then.

Hallowed be thy name

"Hallowed be thy name" is the third phrase. "Hallowed," of course, means "be holy." May the name of God—the **name** of God—be holy. Okay. So we can think about that too. **What does that mean for the name of God to be holy?** The name of God, of course, we don't use it. In the Christian Church we never use the name of God. It's "**Yahweh.**" That's the name God revealed to Moses, but in the Jewish tradition it was never spoken except by the priest. There are no priests in the New Testament except Christ. And he is a heavenly priest, not an earthly one. There are no more earthly priests. So there is no one to speak the name of God. We don't use the name of God except in the name "**Jesus**" **itself, which actually means "Yah saves."** That's actually what Jesus means—*Yeshua*—actually the name "Yahweh saves," or "Yah" is short for "Yahweh," "Yah saves." So the name of Jesus is really the name of God that we know and use.

"Hallowed be thy name." So again, we could **go through the four ends** and we could adore God through the name of Jesus, but we could also be contrite about the fact that we use the name of Jesus lightly—too lightly—throwing the name of Jesus around at the wrong time and the wrong place, not respecting it. And to me it really is painful when I hear people use the name "Jesus" in a fit of anger or something bad happens and they are upset. **The name of Jesus is to be hallowed, hallowed in our spirit, hallowed in our minds, and not used lightly.** So then we need to be contrite about the misuse of the name of Jesus, and then go on to also be thankful for the gift of Christ, and so on.

No set way to pray

And then the next phrase. You can just proceed or stop. The thing about meditation is don't ever think you have a goal. The goal is to pray, so whatever is meaningful for you at that moment that's where you stay. You don't get on to oh, well, I've been spending all this time on praise so now I have to get on to contrition. Well, no, maybe not. Maybe today you're just supposed to praise. There's always tomorrow, right?

Thy kingdom come

So "Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come." Now this **was for Christ the most important thing**. So now we're talking about priorities. "Thy kingdom come"; we're talking about—we're now praying for the kingdom to come—this is petition now. "Thy kingdom come" is a petition. We're praying that the reign of God, the kingdom of God, will come to earth. Now you say, "Well, didn't it already?" Well, yes, it did, partly, in Christ. **In Christ it came. It was inaugurated.** He said, "The kingdom is at hand," you can reach out and touch it; it's present. But on the other hand, **it's not fully established because it requires human cooperation.** And so to pray that the kingdom of God be established, that it come in its fullness to earth has got to be the believer's **first and primary priority**. Notice, not your personal needs, and not the needs of the community, but this is God's priority that God's kingdom come. As we grow in faith we recognize that the coming of the kingdom **includes all other blessings**, and that it is really a form of selfishness and a form of ignorance and a form of egoism to prefer anything to the kingdom coming. The kingdom contains all blessings.

Now maybe my blessings are not that important to the kingdom. Well, then **I should be willing to surrender my wishes or needs even to the coming of the kingdom**. That would be a true disciple then: someone who would really want that first and foremost. Now St. Paul even says, "I don't even care if my body is burned," so much he wanted the kingdom to come. So "Thy kingdom come." Number one priority. And then what that means, and you think about the gospels, my goodness, they're full of teachings on that: what is the kingdom? The signs of healing are all about the kingdom: what God wants to do, what God is doing, the kind of life God wants for people, the blessings he desires. And you see, we're included in all of that; so all of our needs would be all subsumed. But not just me; **it's all of us together, see, in the kingdom**. So then the need would be for us to be contrite about our lack of concern about other people who maybe have greater needs than mine, and so on. So you go through again the four ends of prayer.

Thy will be done

"Thy will be done." Again, we have to recognize that God's will is not done on earth as it is in heaven because **human will is free** and we don't have to do what God wants, and we don't! So the world has its own agenda and goes its merry way, and sometimes Christians simply identify with the world and think that's what God is doing. And that's very wrong. So we all have our own wills, and **our wills have to come into God's will**. God isn't going to change his will to suit us; that's not the way it works. And we surely don't have the wisdom or the intelligence to know better than God. So God's will needs to be done on earth. It has to be done by our wanting it to be done. And that's, of course, a moment of surrender and submission for each believer.

So we start to realize what we're saying when we pray *The Our Father*. You know, we're really encapsulating all of what faith is about. **You could actually meditate on *The Our Father* every day for years and never not have something to think about that would be new**—and pray about, because we keep changing and as we change we would see things differently. Again, the four ends of prayer: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and petition.

Give us this day our daily bread

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Now we're coming into our own personal needs and the needs of our families. Notice where they come in the list of priorities. After the kingdom itself is desired and the will of God is desired, then we can pray for our daily bread; and **our daily bread means everything we need for life**. “Man does not live on bread alone,” but everything we need to live on, that's included in the bread. And God does want us to have bread, but he wants everyone to have bread. And so actually feeding the poor, **feeding the hungry**, is one of the primary responsibilities of the disciple. Our consciousness of **social justice** should be beyond anything else and before anything else involved in feeding those who are hungry. If we are going to pray for our daily bread and our needs, we have to be willing to share our bread with others as well. So “give us this day our daily bread.” Again, the four ends of prayer—we could take one at a time. You could now do this on your own.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

“Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Now this teaching on forgiveness constitutes the largest section of teachings in the gospels. There's nothing more important than this teaching on forgiveness. Why? Because **our whole relationship with God is defined by God's attitude toward us, which is an attitude of forgiveness**, which is a way of saying that no matter what has gone on in the past that can be forgotten and a new life can begin now. So **forgiveness is linked to rebirth**. There would be no rebirth possible without forgiveness. Forgiveness is the past can go, can be let go, and something new can begin—that's rebirth. Without the doctrine of rebirth there is really no point to the gospel. The whole idea is that what we have evolved into is simply a sort of background; what God really wants to do is **he wants to begin something new**. But that **newness cannot begin without forgiveness, which is a cancellation of all debt from the past**. And there are many teachings and many examples and many parables about our debts—and debt means anything we owe, it means anything left undone, anything done wrongly in the widest sense of the words.

Now people, of course, naturally seem to always remember what people haven't done right for them or have done wrong against them. This is, you might say, keeping accounts. We keep accounts. And this, of course, is very damaging to our spiritual growth. **If we keep accounts, those accounts will poison our lives in a similar way as if we blamed God for what God didn't do**. Keeping accounts brings a heaviness to our lives. It keeps us pulled down and does not allow us to grow and to live. So we have to let go of all these accounts. So forgive us our debts—and the Latin word is better, “debita, debita nostra”—forgive us our debts, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive

those—see—who trespass against us, or those that we hold owing us. So we have to cancel debts in order to let ourselves grow. **There is no possible way that we can be forgiven without being forgiving**, anymore than that light fixture can have light in it if only one wire goes in there. You have to have two; electricity has to go in and come out. It has to be a circuit, a complete circuit. So with forgiveness, it's a complete circuit from God through us back to God. And if there is no circuit, then there's no relationship. So I mean it's a very, very, crucial issue with Christ.

Now again, we have to distinguish between forgiveness and feelings. Our feelings are just our feelings, and they really belong actually to our bodies. Our feelings are rooted in our brains, so are our thoughts. And Jesus says, "Spirit gives life, the flesh is useless." Well, flesh includes our thoughts, our feelings and our imagination. That in itself is part of our bodies—not bad—this is what God came to redeem, but it isn't really essential to this process of forgiveness. **Forgiveness is will; it means I want to forgive.** I choose to let go of all my grievances against other people, against my feeling of being cheated, my feeling of being let down, my feeling of being rejected, my feeling of never getting what I want or what I need, or my parents never really were good parents to me, or I was abused or neglected. Now letting go of all that, that's all involved here.

Now it doesn't mean that the minute you make that decision in your spirit you respond to God's Spirit and grace you say, "Yes, I want that," that doesn't mean that now your memory is going to be suddenly purified of every memory that you've had, every bad memory. No, memories are brain things. I'm not sure you really want to forget it. I mean a good way to forget it is to have a stroke. Do you really want to have a stroke? That's how you forget things—strokes. Diseases make you forget things. I don't think you want that. But the thing is now there is such a thing called "**healing of memories.**" St. Teresa of Avila talks about this. You know, when we go through life and we think we know, and we think we know everything, but we don't. We don't know God is with us at every moment. So our memories can be healed by recognizing that actually when we were being rejected, **God was nonetheless ministering to us at that moment**, although perhaps—not only perhaps, but probably—we were not aware of it. We were not aware of this. Now because we were not aware of it, we couldn't respond to it. But God wasn't missing; **we were the ones missing in terms of awareness**, which, of course, God doesn't hold against us either. God doesn't hold anything against us; as long as we can move on and let go. So that's a very essential aspect of prayer. So this is where thanksgiving and contrition are very important, that we let go and thank God for the very way in which life has been structured so that **we can be reborn and grow**. And of course, the rebirth the Bible talks about is not just an experience; it is, in fact, not an experience. It's a new life that has God as the origin, Spirit as its origin.

Lead us not into temptation

So, "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation." Now that's I think one of the hardest petitions in *The Lord's Prayer* to understand actually, because in all truth God does not lead us into temptation anyway. But we are led into temptation. See? What does that mean? Again, I think **we have to be very knowledgeable of ourselves before we ever really know what temptation**

means. People think of stupid things like a box of candy; they think, oh, that's a temptation. Well, perhaps. You know, if you shouldn't be having candy, then it would be. But temptation I would have to say is different for each person. Some people are really tempted by—well, for example, I just was talking about keeping accounts. They're tempted to keep accounts and keep reminding themselves of how bad life has been to them. Other people are tempted to despair. Other people are tempted to anxiety. What is anxiety all about? Self-reliance, control. That's many people's real temptation. Other people are tempted to envy.

If you look at the capital sins, those are really general categories of temptation. **Envy** means comparing yourself all the time to somebody else. Certain personalities seem to be born with this tendency—a negative, ultimately destructive tendency. A person who is truly envious will never rejoice in another person's benefit or welfare, blessing—never. Rather someone else's blessing will make them sad. That's a terrible way to be—go back to “Our Father”—you know, there's no faith there in the person. So envy—every sin really is a sin against faith. See? Envy is a sin against faith because it denies the our-ness of our Father and our common sharing.

Pride, of course, is probably the primary temptation of every person to be the center of oneself. In this morning's gospel reading, “He who exalts himself shall be humbled; he who humbles himself shall be exalted.” It's the human tendency to exalt oneself or one's own society or culture. We live in an individualistic culture. Previous, more primitive cultures were tribal—the same problem—exalting self. This is contrary to the plan of God, and it's a temptation. So pride is one; envy is one.

Gluttony could be in certain people surely a temptation, but too often people think of that alone—or lust. Gluttony is about filling up our emptiness with things: food, drink, pleasure, whatever.

Lust is a temptation more for some than others. It means using sex in particular, but really all excitement in an excessive way. It's about pleasing oneself. Sex is a gift from God and it's not about pleasing oneself; it's about service to a higher good, and it's about ministering to a partner one has in Christ. See, the real ends of marriage have to do with that, and it's not for my personal enjoyment—that's lust. So that's a temptation for many people as well. But because sex in particular is such a blessing, there is a temptation toward excess. “Nothing exceeds like excess.” We can also lust after power.

Another one is **greed**, very common in our society. The more you have, the more you want. It says in Timothy: “The love of money is the root of **all** evil.” Now that's a parabolic saying; it's not really the root of all evil. It's the root of a lot of evil. And it's so amazing that people have so much money and they want more. And I'm appalled sometimes. But that's greed. See, greed is irrational—want more and more and more and more and never can let go of anything even though there is so much good they could do with it, but they can't let go of it because they want more. And they actually feel bad about it. They feel bad if they actually did give something away, then they would

probably repent of that! You know, they would feel remorse for the lost money—for no reason because they can't use it anyway. So greed is a very common temptation.

Sloth is a temptation. That means basically inactivity and passivity toward life. See, a lot of people just take a passive attitude toward life. “Well, you know, I couldn't care less! I just don't care,” you know. So that's really a very negative attitude, and it's a temptation for people. Not everyone is tempted to sloth. Probably the people who are tempted to sloth are not tempted to anxiety. You know what I mean? It's not that everyone has the same temptations.

Anger and resentment. I mentioned before how resentment keeps accounts in our lives and can disrupt and misguide our entire life. And this simply causes ill-will in us, and it's a temptation. We have to recognize it and do something about it.

Now we could go on probably for a long time about different things, but those are some ideas of “deliver us from evil.” And of course, ultimately that's what we need—deliverance—because, although it is important that we do what we can do in life, somehow evil is bigger than we are, in a strange way. It's not bigger than God! But it's bigger than we are in our own humanity. And **we have to have that attitude that we need deliverance from evil**, otherwise we might actually wear ourselves out being good and trying to do everything. You know? But actually we cannot purify the world. And we cannot make the world good and sinless. The world and we ourselves need deliverance. And this is what God is doing now in Christ. It was inaugurated two thousand years ago; it continues in Christ. So we pray for deliverance from evil. Again, we could go through that and think about what it means and where we perhaps need deliverance, and for our families, and then we could petition the Lord.

Conclusion

So the four ends of prayer could be used differently depending upon what the thought we're having is, what we're thinking about. Anyway, that's an example of how you could meditate, if you care to do that.