



Did Jesus Struggle Like You Do?

A reflection on the Our Father prayer

Did Jesus struggle? YES!

Besides being fully divine, Jesus was also fully human. That means that he had to learn to live the Sermon on the Mount long before he preached it. He had to discover how to love his enemies. Doing good to people who hurt or opposed him probably wasn't always easy. He didn't enjoy giving to everyone who asked or stole from him. Although he never sinned, he had to grow in spiritual maturity. Hebrews 2:10 says that he was not fully perfect until he suffered on Good Friday.

Jesus practiced holy living one day at a time. Some days were harder than others, but he grew from his experiences, and he learned to overcome his struggles. The only real difference between Jesus and us is that Jesus never gave in to the temptation to give up the struggles and succumb to sin. When he preached the Sermon on the Mount, he did not ask us to do anything that was foreign to him. He truly understands what we go through as we struggle not to sin.

Even the words he chose for the "Our Father" prayer came out of his own needs and experiences. Take a look at the Lord's prayer from his perspective. Let's imagine what he might have prayed as a young adult:



Our Father in heaven, the One who gave me this human life, the One who gave life to every person who was ever conceived and who ever will be conceived. You made me a brother of that man who came into my carpenter shop to order a storage chest for his tailor shop. He was so demanding and picky and unreasonable that I wanted to throw him out, but instead, I worked extra hard to do my best work for him. And how did he reward me? With more complaints and a refusal to pay the full amount. Is that fair? No! But You, O God, love him anyway. He is my brother, and so I choose to love him, too. Help me to love him the way you love him.

Hallowed be Your Name. I want to revere You in everything I do. I want to be a witness of how wonderful You are by the way I live my life. Use me to make a difference in others. Show me how to help others revere You. Give me an opportunity to reveal to that tailor how much You love him. Maybe I can find a good deed to do for him. But what I long for most, my Father, is to reach multitudes of people with Your love. In the meantime, I'll work at evangelizing the few people You've put in my life right now.

Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Sometimes, Father, I think You're not using me to my fullest potential. I could be doing so much more if I weren't stuck in this carpenter shop. I know Mother needs me. I understand that she and other relatives depend on the

income I earn, now that Dad's gone. But I feel frustrated sometimes. How long must I limit my usefulness to carpentry work and a few good discussions in the synagogue? How long must I practice patience with unreasonable tailors and grumpy fishermen and the others who come into my shop? They're only interested in themselves; most of them don't listen to me when I try to tell them the advantages of holy living. Send me to people who are ready to listen! Why are you keeping me here? Yes, Father, I trust that You know the perfect timing for everything. Therefore, I pray that Your will, not mine, be done in my life in this town in this job with these people — just as completely as Your will is always done in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread. Please give me and my family and my neighbors and my customers — everyone who's part of this community of brothers and sisters in which You've placed me — whatever it is that we need today to do Your will. Give my tailor-brother an awareness of the love You're showering upon him, so that he can be healed of the insecurities that make him so fearful of being cheated. And give me more of Your patience so that doing good to him becomes easier. I also need patience to be truly satisfied with the life and the job and the small town I am in today.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who've sinned against us. Thank you, Father, for giving me the strength to resist sin. I pray on behalf of my brothers and sisters who do succumb to sin. Since we are all part of the same community as Your children, I accept their guilt as my own. Forgive us, Father, for we don't understand what we're doing when we sin. We don't realize how we're actually hurting everyone, including ourselves, when we choose to disobey Your will. And Father, because I personally have been hurt by the sins of the others, I ask You not to hold this against them, for I choose to forgive them.

Do not subject us to the test, but protect us from being led into temptation, and deliver us from the evil one. Your faith is our shield that protects us from sin, but to rely on You we must turn to You. So for myself and on behalf of the others, I ask for Your divine help. You have given each of us the strength we need to resist the evil one; help us learn to use that strength. It is only through Your power that we can obey Your will; help us to continue to grow in the free use of that power, so that the struggle between the flesh and the spirit is more quickly ended.

You've taught me that the most effective way to resist temptation is to do the opposite of what the evil one wants me to do; help me to do that more readily. If I'm ever tempted again to throw that tailor out of my shop, help me to more speedily make him feel welcome. And strengthen everyone in my human community. Help us to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us, to bless those who curse us, and to pray for those who treat us badly. Help us to overcome temptation by becoming instruments of Your infinitely powerful and totally unconditional love.

And use me, Father, to deliver all of my human family from the evil one. For You have so loved the world that You've sent me to manifest Your love, that whosoever believes in me shall have everlasting life.

Thank You for hearing my prayer.
Amen!