

## The Lord's Prayer, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and the Kingdom of God in Jesus' Ministry

Reflection By: Andrea Perch

It is interesting to note the similarities of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. For example, in *Educational Psychology Interactive: Maslow's hierarchy of needs* (2007), Huitt describes Maslow's physiological needs of "hunger, thirst, bodily comforts, etc.", which equates to our asking God to provide us with bread each day in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:11). Another one of Maslow's needs is that of love and belonging (Huitt) while in the Lord's prayer we ask for love and acceptance of our wrongdoings: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). Maslow's needs of safety and security (Huitt) can be linked to the last lines of the Lord's Prayer "And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). The needs described thus far are what Maslow describes as *deficiency needs* but he also names *growth needs* (Huitt). I believe we can assimilate *the growth needs* of "Aesthetic: symmetry, order, and beauty [and] Self-actualization: to find self-fulfillment and realize one's potential [as well as] Self-transcendence: to connect to something beyond the ego" (Huitt) with that of the lines "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:) from the Lord's Prayer.

While the needs addressed by both Maslow and the Lord's Prayer are similar, their order differs. According to Maslow the needs order is as follows: physiological, safety/security, belongingness and love, and esteem (Huitt). "Within the deficiency needs, each lower need must be met before moving to the next higher level" (Huitt). While Maslow places these needs as primary, in the Lord's Prayer we see that these needs are placed at the end. The Reign of God, God's love and beauty, and the fulfillment of mankind to reach wholeness are central in the Lord's Prayer and this is shown in Jesus' ministry. "His ministry encourages his followers to take simple but radical steps toward others in trust, forgiveness, and loving solidarity. The impact of his presence on others was one of total acceptance, love, healing and forgiveness in all aspects of their lives" (Lavin 73). These qualities that Jesus portrayed in his ministry are characteristics that Maslow found to be common in self-actualized people (Dr. C. George Boeree). *Growth needs* found in Maslow's hierarchy are the last to be found, however these needs are central in Jesus' ministry and the most important.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains the Lord's Prayer: "By the three first petitions, we are strengthened in faith, filled with hope, and set aflame by charity. Being creatures and still sinners, we have to petition for us, for that "us" bound by the world and history, which we offer to the boundless love of God. For through the name of his Christ and the reign of his Holy Spirit, our Father accomplishes his plan of salvation, for us and for the whole world." As Christians, we look towards Jesus for salvation. Through Jesus' life we see an example of the living Kingdom of God and the love and acceptance freely given to all is what we strive towards in our need to grow as human beings.

## References

Boeree, Dr. C. G. (2006) Personalities Theories: Abraham Maslow.

<http://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/maslow.html>

Cooper, N. (2003). *Language of the Heart: How to Read the Bible*. Toronto: Novalis Press.

Huitt, W. (2007). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *Educational Psychology Interactive*. Valdosta, GA:

Valdosta State University. Retrieved [date] from,

<http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/regsys/maslow.html>

Lavin, M. (2009). *What We Believe: Practical Theology for Teachers*. Toronto: Novalis Press.

New Revised Standard Version, The Catholic Edition of the Bible available at

<http://bible.oremus.org/>

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Catechism of the Catholic Church. Part Four: Christian Prayer: Part Two: The Lord's Prayer "Our Father!"

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p4s2a3.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p4s2a3.htm)