

TEACH US TO PRAY

"Our Father"

Pastor Scott did such a great job last week introducing our new series. Prayer isn't about being in the presence of people; to be seen and heard by them. Prayer is about being in God's presence to experience His presence. **Wonderful!** According to Jesus, prayer is matter of singular focus; a condition of our hearts as we enter into God's presence to speak to Him. And that is what Jesus teaches us in this model prayer, we refer to as "the Lord's Prayer."

You know, two guys were talking and one of them made a comment about prayer. The other scoffed: "If you're so religious, let's hear you quote the Lord's Prayer. I bet you ten dollars you don't know it." His friend responded, "Yes I do: 'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep'." The other friend said, "Wow-I didn't think you knew it!" and handed him a 10-dollar bill."

I learned that prayer as a kid. I remember mom and dad coming up every night to lead me in that prayer before I went to sleep. It definitely helped establish a God consciousness in my life. **'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep'. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. And bless Mommy and Daddy and Cindy and Peter and Nan and Nan and Gramp Fowler and all my cousins and pebbles, the best dog in the world.'**

"If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." It was a scare you to death little kid prayer - man. *What was it with adults in that era?*

"Rock a bye baby on the tree top, when the wind blows the cradle will rock, when the bow breaks the cradle will fall and down will come baby cradle and all." *"Ring around the Rosie, a pocket full of posies, ashes, ashes we all fall down."* **No wonder we ran toward salvation as kids.**

Anyway, all of that to get to the actual Lord's Prayer that we have come to know and love. Let's recite it together this morning...

*Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.*

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13

The gospel of Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer is a fuller version than Luke's, so we often quote it. That said, the book of Luke gives us more details about Jesus' prayer life than any other biography of Jesus we have in the Bible. And in chapter 11 where Luke gives us his version of the Lord's prayer, we find that as Jesus is praying to His Father his observant followers ask Him to teach them to pray.

Luke 11:1 NKJV, *"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."*

They watched and listened to Jesus as he was praying to His Father. Oh, how I would have liked to be there and hear Him talk to the Father.

What they saw and heard prompted their interest and desires to enter into the same kind of intimate prayer that He had. So, Jesus' friends ask him to teach them to pray.

Apparently, John the Baptist's followers had learned their own way of praying. It was probably distinctly different than what most Jewish people in that time period practiced. Most practiced a set prayer called The Eighteen Benedictions that was prayed in unison.

By asking Jesus to give them a distinctive way of praying together, Jesus' followers are realizing that they're a unique community, that they're bound together in a special way. *And if anyone was going to teach them, who better than Jesus, the Messiah, the son of God?*

It's in response to this request that Jesus gives his followers this model. Oddly enough, we have entitled it, "The Lord's Prayer – but in reality, we should have entitled it, "The disciple's prayer"; since Jesus gave it to us to follow. You see, Jesus didn't pray this prayer. Jesus had no debts or trespasses that needed forgiving because according to the Bible he never sinned.

However, I do think Jesus did follow the same basic pattern of prayer we see outlined in “the Lord’s Prayer.” In fact, you can find several parallels between this prayer and the actual “Lord’s Prayer” that’s recorded in the John 17.

So even though Jesus never had to ask for forgiveness, it’s important to remember that this prayer Jesus gives His disciples is a guide to experiencing the kind of prayer they saw and heard when Jesus prayed.

It was characterized by intimacy and a richness that was different than what they had known. Consequently, Jesus begins from the get go, directing their attention to this detail.

Luke 11:2 NKJV, *“He said to them, “When you pray, say: Our **Father** in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”*

Jesus, the Son of God, obviously addressed God as his father, but what He He is quick to instruct His followers to do the same.

Because of Jesus, the Son of God...

1. We’re able to know God as our Father.

Think about it like this: *If Jesus were the son of a famous president who we would never have access to on our own. Without knowing the son personally, we’d have to write letters to the president but it is highly unlikely that we would ever get to meet him personally. We’d probably get a form letter back written by some lower staffer, if we got any response at all.*

But because we know the president’s son, he shares his own relationship with his father with us, he shares his own access, his own intimacy, his own ability to go straight to his father with a request.

So when Jesus gave us the Lord’s Prayer, he was inviting us into his own access to the Father when He told them, **“When you pray, say *OUR Father in Heaven.*”**

It’s likely that Jesus taught this prayer in **Aramaic**, and when Matthew and Luke wrote their gospels, they translated the Lord’s Prayer into **Greek**. That of course has been translated for us into **English** in our English Bibles.

Aramaic was the primary spoken language of the Jewish people of Jesus’ day, and Greek was the written language. If Jesus originally gave this prayer

in Aramaic, then the word for “Father” Jesus would’ve used would’ve been the Aramaic term **abba**.

In fact, Jesus addresses God using this term abba in **Mark 14:36 NIV**,

*“**Abba, Father**,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”*

We also find evidence that this became a common term for how Christians addressed God in prayer according to Paul in Romans and Galatians.

Romans 8:15 NIV, *“The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “**Abba, Father**.”*

Galatians 4:6 NLT, *“Because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “**Abba, Father**.”*

“Abba” was a familiar term of endearment that a child would use to address his father in the context of a family. It’s not quite the equivalent of the word “**daddy**,” but closer perhaps to “**dad**” or “**dearest father**.”

A first century Jewish person would’ve never dreamed of approaching God in this way. To call God abba would’ve **seemed too common and irreverent**. Yet this is the way Jesus invites us to approach His Father.

For some, approaching God as your dad **can create some difficulty for you** if your relationship with your earthly father wasn’t so hot.

*For instance, if you had a **biological father** who abandoned you and your mom when you were young and then when he did reappear years later, it was a major fiasco until he disappeared all over again, then it isn’t going to be easy to approach God as your dad with that kind of relational baggage.*

*Some of you had **adoptive fathers** who adopted you after your mom remarried. If he had a short fuse, or didn’t talk to you for weeks on end, and it seemed to suit him just fine, then it isn’t going to be easy to approach God as your dad with that kind of baggage as well.*

We have a real tendency to project our experiences with our own fathers onto God, to shape God in the image of our fathers.

That isn’t the sort of father Jesus is inviting you into a relationship with.

He is nothing like imperfect earthly fathers. He is a father who is always faithful, He loves us completely, He always listens, He is always there.

Jesus invites us to approach God as a father unlike any we've ever known.

You know, the reason why we know if our own fathers were inadequate is because somewhere, deep inside of us, we know that there's a standard for being a good father.

We know dads aren't supposed to abuse or neglect their kids, refuse to pay child support, or abandon us. *We know that **because*** we know that a real dad wouldn't do that. *We know that **because*** we have a hunger to know a father whose character is far beyond the imperfections of our earthly fathers, ***because*** we want to know God as our Father.

And we don't come to know God as Father simply through religious practice. God becomes our Father through His Son Jesus Christ, who shares His Father with us. Jesus is instructing His followers! You have to be a follower of Jesus in order to pray this prayer as Jesus intended it to be prayed.

When we embrace Jesus and what He accomplished for us, we come into and relationship with God as our Father. This is how we experience what the Bible calls a "***new birth.***" It is a spiritual birth into a spiritual family.

We were outside the family of God and adopted into it through Jesus.

When we come to know God as Father...

2. We come to know Him in a sense of community.

Luke 11:2 NKJV, "*He said to them, "When you pray, say: **Our Father** in heaven, Hallowed be Your name."*

Notice the prayer doesn't go, "**My** father in heaven" but "**OUR** father." You'll look in vain for the pronouns "**me**" and "**my**" in this prayer; instead, you'll find "**we,**" "**us,**" and "**our.**"

We are part of a family, brothers and sisters who have together come to know God as our Father through Jesus Christ, God's Son, who made a way for us.

Look at Galatians 4:4-6 NLT again, "*But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own*

children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.”

This family of brothers and sisters in Christ are more deeply connected to us than any other relationships, even our earthly families!

We share a spiritual unity through our common Father, God! As God’s family, we are His arms and legs on this earth.

Our talents and abilities are no accident, and when we work diligently with the gifts He has given us, we are able to become a channel of love to reach out to others.

From hugs and words of comfort to feeding hungry bellies, we operate by the love of God to spread the love of God, to all people.

The family of God is the church. The church (*a massive network of local assemblies*) meet to worship God and pray to Him together. We gather to support and encourage each other, because the work of the Lord, though joyful, is difficult. It takes everyone’s talents and collective contributions to accomplish the purposes of God.

1 Corinthians 3:9 NIV says, *“For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.”*

Being a part of the family of God is the greatest blessing given to believers and one that should drive us to our knees in humble adoration.

We are called the sons and daughters of the Living God and we did nothing to deserve it for it is His gift of love, mercy, and grace to us, through Jesus.

But then notice the third quality Jesus adds.

Luke 11:2 NKJV, *“He said to them, “When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”*

He uses the intimate and collective terms **“Our Father”** but contrasts those terms with the phrase **“in heaven.”**

3. He is “Heavenly, not Earthly!”

God is uniquely different from any father we’ve ever experienced because he’s beyond this earthly realm. In fact, He is beyond this physical universe, the creator of it, and the sustainer of its multitudes of galaxies.

The theological term for this is **Transcendent!**

He is “transcendent;” Heavenly, not Earthly!

He is above and beyond our physical human experience.

He surpasses the ordinary. He is unsurpassable, exceptional, incomparable, unrivaled, unequaled, unparalleled, matchless, truly second to none.

God is more intimate than we realize while also being far more awesome and amazing than we could ever begin to imagine.

So, these are an odd combination of terms Jesus has put together.

Far too often we get out of balance with this, either approaching God reverently but without familiarity or with familiarity but without reverence.

When we only approach God reverently, without familiarity, we approach God with a high level of formality, perhaps using King James Version language like “thy” and “thou.”

We approach Him with fear and with our faces downcast because of our failures, recognizing Him as the judge of the universe. So we carefully use just the right words, for fear we’ll say something dishonorable to a holy God.

We only go to God with the big stuff figuring that God can’t be bothered by our petty issues. We approach God reverently, but not with familiarity.

That’s not how Jesus invites us to approach God.

Sometimes we approach God with familiarity but do so without reverence. We rush into God’s presence with our list of things we want, like a prodigal child who only calls their mom and dad when they’re in jail and need bail money.

We tend to bring God down to our own level, calling him “*the big guy*” or “*the man upstairs*,” blinding ourselves to his awesome greatness and incredible power. We go through our list of wants—like a child with a Christmas list to Santa—and then we’re on our way, without another thought about God.

Jesus doesn’t want us to approach God that way either.

Jesus invites us to approach God as our **Father in heaven**, with **reverent familiarity**, familiarity **that dares** to approach the majestic and awesome creator of the galaxies **as our father** *because of what Jesus has done for us*.

That brings us to the last part of **Luke 11:2**, which is the fourth mindset Jesus points them to as they learn to enhance their prayer-life.

*“He said to them, “When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, **hallowed be Your name.**”*

4. He is “Hallowed” - Holy!

Did you hear the one about the little boy who recited the Lord’s Prayer, saying, “Our Father who art in heaven, how’d you know my name?”

We don’t use that word **“hallowed”** often unless it’s with the word “Halloween.” The word **“hallow”** means **“to make or treat something as holy.”** The word “Halloween” simply means **“holy evening.”**

Now this prayer doesn’t mean that God is somehow lacking in holiness and needs us to pray that it would be so. Jesus wants His disciples to recognize that Our Father in Heaven is Holy.

It’s a prayer for God’s holiness to be manifested and vindicated, for people to treat God with the holiness that already belongs to him.

It’s the same idea when we see the doxology or ending of this prayer later, *“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.”*

These things already belong to God, but our world doesn’t treat God in this way. And it’s God’s name we’re asking to be treated as holy. *“Hallowed be thy name.”*

In the Bible, a person’s name is a reflection of that person’s character.

So, names aren’t just arbitrary words, but they identify who a person is.

God’s name is a reflection of his character, his nature, who He is. So, in asking God’s name to be treated as holy, we’re declaring the truth of who God is, recognizing and honoring the holiness of who He is.

The holy, awesome creator of the universe is not treated, as he deserves in our world today. Some people deny he even exists, while others hold on to ideas about God that entirely false and dishonor His character.

Some people think God is cruel, others that he’s petty. God’s has been slandered by his own creation, and rather than simply snuffing out creation,

because He is loving and kind and merciful and longsuffering, Jesus invites us to participate in vindicating and honoring God's reputation.

Hallowed is Your Name. You are Holy, We declare Your holiness. It is who you are.

Jesus is inviting His followers to know God as their Father, a perfect Heavenly Father as opposed to a flawed Earthly one, to worship God, to honor God's holiness. When we come together as a congregation to sing praises to God, to lift up our adoration and love to Our Heavenly Father as we sing, we're seeking to honor Him and His holy Character.

As we lovingly offer up sacrifices to Him, be it our time, our ministry, or our financial giving, we're honoring God's name.

Our corporate worship is a part of participating in honoring God's reputation. **But we're called to live this way throughout the week as well**, as we express our love and adoration to God in worship while we drive on the freeway, wait for a client or drop our kids off at school.

Do you want a model for how to share in Jesus' prayer life, how to approach God with intimate familiarity, and how to participate in honoring God's name?

If so, then you want to learn the Lord's Prayer, not just to recite the words, but to use it as a model for your own life of prayer. It begins first by becoming a disciple of Jesus who invites you into this deep relationship, where there is intimate authentic communication with God.

If you would like to begin that relationship this morning by embracing Jesus, who He is and what He did for you on the cross, pray along in your heart with me.....

Prayer