

Lifeline

"Our Father Who Art in Heaven, Hallowed Be Thy Name"

March 29-30

Introduction

How many of you grew up memorizing "The Lord's Prayer"? Or, if you were Catholic, the "Our Father"? It was so long ago for me that I don't even remember when it happened. It's like learning the alphabet or being potty trained — I'm sure it happened but I don't recall when. Of course I learned it in the King James Version, as one does, with all of the "Thines and the Thous" sprinkled in for maximum holiness. I asked my daughter if she knew it and she recited it flawlessly, but instead of "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," she said, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors". I thought, "These young kids with their hip new slang." But how many of us know, it's one thing to know the Lord's Prayer and it's another to truly live it. Jesus didn't just recite these words, He modeled them.

Lord, Teach us To Pray

Luke gives us a glimpse into Jesus' prayer life,

- Luke 5:16, *"But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."*
- Luke 6:12, *"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God."*
- Luke 9:18, *"Once when Jesus was praying in private and His disciples were with Him..."*
- Luke 9:28-29, *"He took Peter, John and James with Him and went up onto a mountain to pray..."*
- Luke 11:1, *"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

Pastor Wayne would often say, "You can teach what you know, but you will reproduce what you are." Jesus was a person of prayer. What do people see when they observe your life? What does my wife see in me? What do my children see in me? Because I can teach my kids about prayer or reading the bible, but if they don't see me doing it, I'm not fooling anyone. Jesus didn't just talk about prayer, He lived it. But I'll be the first to admit that I have room for growth!

That's why I love this scene in scripture where Jesus is returning from prayer and "One of His disciples" (it doesn't say who but I imagine it was Peter) asks the question. Jesus was coming back from prayer and the disciples probably start nudging one another like, "There He is, go ask Him!" "No, you ask!" "Peter, you do it!" "Alright, fine, I'm going!" And Jesus says, "Hello Peter, you have something you wanted to ask Me?" "Master, the guys and I were wondering if You'd teach us to pray."

Why are they asking? A couple thoughts. First, it was common in those days for Jewish Rabbis to teach their disciples a special prayer that reflected the teacher's theology and way of life. So John the Baptist probably had one he taught his disciples. I don't know what it was. Maybe, "Give us this day our daily grasshoppers and may Ross have a sale on those camel-hair vests." So Jesus' disciples probably expected Him to do the same.

But I believe there was a deeper reason the disciples wanted Jesus to teach them to pray. You see, these guys already knew how to pray. They were devout Jews, they went to synagogue, they knew the scriptures, and they prayed daily. Yet in the short time they had spent with Jesus, they witnessed something radically different from anything they'd ever seen before! When Jesus prayed heaven answered! He prayed with an intimacy and authority they had never experienced. The sick were healed, the blind could see, the dead were raised, the wind and waves obeyed. Jesus seemed to have a direct lifeline to heaven!

The disciples weren't asking for 3 tips for a better prayer life, they wanted whatever Jesus had!

Lord, Teach Me To Pray

And this is good news for anyone who has ever tried to pray! Because maybe like the disciples, you've prayed before. For some of us it might've been a religious thing where we would recite the words over and over like a good-luck charm. For others of us it might've come from a place of real desperation — a cry for healing or direction.

The truth is, there are a wide range of feelings when it comes to prayer. Some find it lifeless, repetitive, or confusing. Others feel discouraged, doubtful, or even disappointed. Maybe you prayed for God to move but things got seemingly worse. I imagine the disciples must have felt this way too. They had prayed before but God had been seemingly silent. And then they met Jesus and watching Him pray was different! So they did the only thing they *could do* — they asked Him to teach them.

“Lord, teach us to pray.”

And if we're honest, how many of us would say, “That's me”? Anybody here feel like they've already mastered prayer? Anybody? No? Then let's come with the same hunger and humility as the disciples! We're not looking for better words or techniques but for something real. If that's you say, “Lord, teach me to pray!”

The Lord's Prayer

In answer to His disciple's request, Jesus taught them a prayer that was short and powerful. Unlike the long performative prayers of the religious elite, Jesus' prayer was portable and memorable. In fact, it is believed some 2.5 billion people have committed the Lord's Prayer to memory and it has been translated into over 1,500 languages. One of my favorite translations goes like this,

“God, You oua Faddah. You stay inside da sky.

*We like all da peopo know fo shua how good an spesho You stay, an show You plenny respect.
10 We like You come da King fo erybody. We like erybody make how You like, ova hea inside da world, jalike erybody up dea inside da sky make how You like.*

11 Try give us da food we need fo ery day. 12 Let us go, an hemo oua shame fo all da bad kine stuff we do to You, jalike we let da odda guy go, an we no stay huhu wit dem fo da bad kine stuff dey do to us. 13 Show us guys how fo no do bad kine stuff wen somebody give us chance fo do um, but get us outa trouble from da Bad Guy.

[Cuz You oua King, You get da real powa, an You stay awesome foeva. Dass it!]" (Matt. 6:9-13).

And although this is the one prayer Jesus explicitly taught in scripture, it contains everything from worship, to provision, forgiveness, and even spiritual warfare. It is a manifesto for the Christian life and an invitation into a radical new reality. And here's the challenge — If you dare to pray these words, not just recite them but truly pray them, your life will never be the same again. This prayer has shaped history, fueled revivals, sustained martyrs, and carried believers through every trial imaginable. And if you let it, it will transform you and the world around you. If that's your prayer then again we say,

“Lord, teach us to pray!”

Our Father

⁹ *“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name,
(Matthew 6:9 NIV).*

“Our Father in heaven”. Think of this opening line like an address. To whom and where are we addressing this prayer? Jesus could have taught His disciples to address God in any number of ways. He could’ve said, “This, then, is how you should pray: Oh Supreme Overlord of the universe or Your Royal Majesty!” Instead, Jesus says, “When you pray, say, “Our Father”. Just let that sink in. It was evident that God was Jesus’ Father but notice we don’t pray, “Dear, Jesus’ Father.” Jesus says God is *our* Father. He’s My Father but He’s also your Father. He’s *our* Father. Jesus is not inviting us into a cold distant religion or rituals to follow but a relationship with God. And not just any relationship, the same intimate relationship that Jesus and God have. This was His prayer in John 17:21, *“That all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You.”* The relationship that Jesus has with God, His Father, is not a privilege He keeps to Himself but one He opens up to us. And if this feels radical and unthinkable to you, it was to His disciples as well.

When the gospel writers wrote the New Testament they used the *lingua franca* (the common language), which was Greek. “Our Father” in Greek is *hēmōn* (hay-mone’) *patēr* (pat-ayr’). *Patēr* - Father. We know, however, that Jesus and His disciples spoke Aramaic. So the word Jesus used when He prayed was “Abba” as seen in Mark 14:36. When praying in the Garden of Gethsemane He addresses God as Abba. But for Jesus to address God as Abba was a novel and radical notion.

The German theologian Joachim Jeremias writes about Jesus’ use of ‘Abba’ in *The Prayers of Jesus*,

“With the help of my assistants, I have examined the prayer literature of ancient Judaism and have found that in no place in this immense literature is this invocation of God as ‘Abba, Father’ to be found. Abba was an everyday word, a homely family-word. No Jew would have dared to address God in this manner. Jesus did it always in all His prayers and in doing so, He made use of the same term that small children used in speaking to their father. He spoke to His Heavenly Father in a childlike, trustful, and intimate way, as a small child to its father. Jesus’ use of Abba in addressing God reveals the heart of His relationship with God.”

It’s one thing if a co-worker or employee comes up to you and says, “Hey, could you give me a hand?” vs. my own child coming to me with need in their eyes and says, “Daddy, can you help me?” The second plea hits different. It reaches somewhere deeper. This is how Jesus invites us to approach God! Not as mere servants or lowly subjects, but as beloved children coming to their Father. I don’t make my children clean themselves up or fix their mistakes before they come to me. When they’re hurting, when they’re scared, when they’ve failed, my arms are open. How much more does our Heavenly Father welcome us as we are? We can bring Him our fears, our failures, our hopes, and our hurts, knowing He listens—not out of obligation, but out of love.

I’ll never forget the first time I saw someone pray like they actually believed this. I grew up in a traditional church—wooden pews, hymnals, and prayers that felt formal and restrained. That’s just how it was. But we had a babysitter named Libby. We loved her—she was fun, full of energy, always bringing activities for us to do. Back then she seemed like a full-grown adult but, looking back, she was probably just a young student.

One day, Libby prayed with us, and I'll never forget what happened. Her voice was filled with so much joy and love but also something else — familiarity, like someone talking to their best friend or a child talking to their Daddy. I'd never heard anyone pray with that kind of familiarity and joy before so I peaked and saw that she had a huge smile across her face! She was a generally happy person but in this moment of prayer her whole demeanor changed like she was truly in the presence of the one she loved most. I never forgot that moment because it was the first time I saw someone pray as if God was in the room. This is how I imagine Jesus prayed to His Abba and this is how we are invited to approach God in prayer.

In Heaven

Yet Jesus doesn't just tell us to pray, "Our Father." He teaches us to pray, "Our Father in heaven." At first, this phrase might seem to pull us in the opposite direction—away from the nearness of God and toward His transcendence. But if we look deeper, "in heaven" serves as a bridge between the intimacy of God as Father and the next line of the prayer, which speaks of His holiness.

The Greek word for "heaven" here is *ouranos*. It carries two key meanings. The first is the heavens—the skies, the atmosphere, even the very air we breathe. If we take it this way, it reinforces the nearness of God. He is not far off in some distant galaxy, unconcerned with our daily lives. No, He is nearer than we think, as present as the air that fills our lungs. When we pray, we're not shouting into the void; we are speaking to a Father who is right here.

But *ouranos* also refers to the dwelling place of God—the transcendent, celestial realm where He reigns in power and majesty. This reminds us that while God is near, He is also set apart. He is not bound by earthly limitations, not subject to time or space. He is above all, holy and sovereign. He is not only the God who welcomes our prayers but is able to answer them.

Hallowed be Thy Name

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your Name, (Matthew 6:9 NIV).

"Our Father in heaven, may Your Name be kept holy," (Matthew 6:9 NLT).

When we pray, Jesus invites us to address God as our 'Abba' our Father who is as near and available to us as the air that we breathe. In the same breath He is the God who is transcendent — not bound by time or space and His Name is to be kept holy.

So which is it? Are we praying to the loving welcoming Father or the transcendent Holy God? In the words of Pastor Mike — Yes. When we come to God in prayer it is paramount that we understand Who we are praying to! A.W. Tozer famously said,

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

The same can be said of prayer! If we fail to come to God as both our loving intimate Father *and* our holy transcendent King, our prayers will be ineffectual. If we don't approach God as a close loving Father our prayers will become cold, fearful, and lacking in trust and intimacy. The reality is that we will probably give up on praying altogether — like the Israelites who did not want to approach God. But if we don't see God as sovereign and holy our prayers become shallow, self-centered, and devoid of worship. A distorted view of God leads to a distorted prayer life—either one of entitlement without reverence or one of fear without love. But when we rightly understand that God is both Abba, our loving Father *and* the Holy One enthroned in heaven, our prayers become both bold and humble, intimate and reverent, confident yet surrendered. This balance transforms not just how we pray, but how we live—walking in both the embrace of His love and the power of His glory.

It reminds me of one of my favorite scenes in C.S. Lewis', *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In the story, "*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*", the children are preparing to meet Aslan, the King of Narnia but they have no idea what he is like. Finally they meet someone who knows Aslan — Mr. Beaver. And Mr. Beaver tells the children what Aslan is like.

"Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver, "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

I love this image because when you finally meet Aslan you realize that he is tender, and loving and kind, but he's also a huge lion! He's powerful and terrifying! Imagine meeting a lion that didn't mean you any harm. You might pet it but at no point would you think you were in control. You would be totally at the mercy of that lion.

That is exactly what Jesus is communicating here. When we come to God in prayer we acknowledge that He is both loving Father *and* all-powerful God. We don't come to God thinking we can control Him or bend Him to our will but rather, like all children who spend time with their Fathers, we become more like Him and are formed into His image. Many people come to God seeking His hand but Jesus said we must first seek His face. And when we behold God both as loving Father and Holy God we are transformed into His likeness.

There's a famous photograph of President John F. Kennedy playing with his children in the Oval Office. It's an image that captures the innocence of a child, completely comfortable in a place of immense power. Here's the President of the United States, a man with incredible authority and responsibility, yet his children have full access to him, even in the most secure and important rooms in the world. They aren't intimidated by the power their father holds—they're simply at ease, knowing they loved and welcomed.

Now, think of our relationship with God, our heavenly Father. God is the Creator of the universe, holding all power and authority, far beyond anything we can imagine. He governs all things, from the largest galaxies to the smallest atoms, and yet, as His children, we have full access to Him. Just like JFK's children were free to be with their father in the Oval Office, we are free to come before God in prayer, no matter how great His power and majesty.

In that photograph, the children aren't worried about the weight of the world their father carries; they're simply enjoying being near him. Similarly, we don't have to be intimidated by God's holiness or the vastness of His power. Instead, we can approach Him with confidence, knowing that He loves us deeply and invites us to draw near. We can sit at His feet, share our hearts, and find comfort in His presence, knowing that we are always welcome.

This is the incredible reality of our relationship with God. He is both our powerful King and our loving Father, inviting us into His presence with the same warmth and intimacy that a child shares with their parent.

As you come to God in prayer, He isn't concerned with you having the perfect words to say.

Gandhi once said something to the effect that it is better in prayer to have the right heart without the right words than to have the right words without the right heart. This opening line of the Lord's prayer helps us to come to God with the right heart.

Group Discussion Questions

1. How do you picture God? Is it difficult for you to envision Him as a loving welcoming Father? Sometimes our relationship with our earthly father can impact the way we view God.

"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," (Romans 8:15 NIV).

Pray that the Holy Spirit would assure you of your adoption to sonship. It is only by Him that we are able to cry, "Abba, Father".

2. When you pray, do you take time to acknowledge God as Your loving heavenly Father and Your sovereign Lord who is worthy of praise? Practice opening your prayers by acknowledging God's nearness and worshipping Him as Holy.
3. Do you sometimes find it difficult to find the words to pray? Practice praying "The Lord's Prayer" focusing on every word you say and asking God what it is you are praying. Other guided prayers in scripture include the Psalms. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to certain worship songs that can become your prayers to Him until you are able to find your own words.