

THE LORDS' PRAYER
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PRAY "OUR FATHER"?
MATTHEW 6:9-13

Matthew 6:9-13 (KJV)

^{6:9} After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13 (TLB)

^{6:9} "Pray along these lines: 'Our Father in heaven, we honor your holy name.

¹⁰ We ask that your kingdom will come now. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us our food again today, as usual,

¹² and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.

¹³ Don't bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One. Amen.'

There is nothing any more exciting than a prayer life that is real and alive. Jesus knew that before we came into this world that we were going to be combated by Satan in the area of prayer. There is no area that Satan launches any greater attack than against the life of a believer when it comes to prayer. Therefore when Jesus gathered his disciples together with him, there was one many things that Jesus wanted to teach them, but one of the primary things was how to pray. Why? Because Jesus knew that this earthly life would be a struggle, a warfare. Therefore in Matthew 6, Jesus begins by teaching the disciples how to pray. However, Jesus didn't tell the disciples to pray, "Our God which art in heaven." Neither did Jesus tell them to pray, "Our Lord which art in heaven. But rather Jesus told them to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven." Why did Jesus use such an intimate term when it came to teaching them how to pray?

1. WHEN WE PRAY "OUR FATHER", WE ARE PRAYING TO ONE WHO HAS PERSONALLY OBLIGATED HIMSELF TO US. Before we were ever born into this world physically, our human fathers had an obligation to us. Upon our arrivals into this world, our human fathers took upon themselves the obligation of providing for our needs. The needs may have been personal, financial, educational, yet once we arrived into this world, they took upon themselves the obligation of providing for us. The same is true in the spiritual area of our lives. Before we ever arrived into this world, Almighty God knew that there were numerous areas in our lives where we would be in need. There are those areas where we need direction, counsel, wisdom as well as those areas where we need personal employment in order that we can provide for our families. There are those areas in our lives where we even need His hand of correction in order that we can be protected from hurting our character. In God's infinite love for us, He has totally and completely provided for us everything we will need in this life. He stands obligated to meet every single need of our lives.

Yet, in His love for us, He waits for us to come to Him as our Father and ask Him before He meets certain needs. While He is voluntarily obligated to us, He will not read our minds and give us what we are simply thinking about. When we pray, God doesn't want us to think that He is our Father, and as our Father He is always looking out for our best. As our Father, He delights to give to us, yet the reason that we have so little is found in our small asking. God makes it clear in His Word, that "Ye have not because you ask not." One area where God is different from many human fathers is the fact that He will not force His advice on us. If we are bent on making the wrong decisions in life, then God will permit us, but we will bear in our lives the consequences of those bad decisions.

2. WHEN WE PRAY "OUR FATHER", WE ARE PRAYING TO ONE WHOM WE HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH. Often times in our prayers; we approach God as though there is little relationship. That is to say, we act as though there is no interest on God's part to hear us when we pray. But that is not the case. The Bible says that we are sons and daughters of God. However, the boldness of our prayers is determined by our viewpoint of our relationship with God. If we view ourselves as insignificant members in the family of God, then our prayers will be minimal at best. Yet, if we view ourselves as individuals who have a right to be heard by our Father based on the shed blood of Jesus Christ, then our prayer lives will soar. One of the greatest victories that Satan wins over many believers is in the area of our relationship with God. Often times Satan bombards us with feelings of inadequacy and unworthiness when it comes to prayer.

Satan often launches suggestions that go something like this: "God won't hear you after all the sins you have

committed”, or “Surely God has far more important prayer concerns than yours.” Yet, the truth of Scripture declares that we are never heard based on our worthiness, but on the basis of what the shed blood of Jesus has done for our sins. From God’s vantagepoint, He loves to hear us, and because of the blood of Christ, God wants to answer our prayers as well. Because of the blood of Jesus Christ shed in our behalf, we have a right to be heard from God. We have the privilege of knowing that we can have real answers to real prayers, not based on performance but based on the work accomplished for us at Calvary.

3. WHEN WE PRAY “OUR FATHER”, WE ARE PRAYING TO ONE WHO ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS ACCORDING TO HIS HOLY STANDARD. Often times we wonder why so many prayers that we offer to God tend to go unanswered. But the truth of Scripture declares that God hears and answers our prayers in accordance with His holy standard. God is a God who is totally unselfish, generous, giving, kind and compassionate. Therefore, He will never answer “yes” to any prayer that stems from a selfish spirit, stingy spirit or unkind spirit. Regardless of how many times we pray a prayer, God will never answer “yes” to a prayer that violates His holy standard and nature. God is not out to give us everything we pray for. He is out to make us individuals that reflect His character and His holiness. While God loves to hear our prayers, He knows the motivation behind each and every prayer that we pray. He knows whether our motivations are selfish or unselfish. When a saint of God refuses to reflect the nature and character of God, then there will be few if any answers to prayers. One of the reasons that we become so discouraged in prayer is that we forget that God only answers those prayers that are in keeping with His holy standard.

4. WHEN WE PRAY “OUR FATHER”, WE ARE PRAYING TO SOMEONE WHO IS HEARING EVERYTHING WE SAY. At the other end of our prayers is the listening ear of Almighty God. Therefore God desires us to be specific and to the point in our prayers. He is not impressed by how loud, how long or prayers are if they lack specific requests. God delights in hearing us praise Him, exalt His name, and He also delights in us being specific and to the point. Just as we like the person to whom we are talking with to be specific and to the point, so does God desire the same thing of us.

It grieves the heart of God when we have nothing new to say to Him. One of the greatest joys that is shared between friends is to say what is on your heart without having to pre-think through what is to be said. God loves us to share with Him what is on our heart without pre-thinking what we are going to say. **The true benchmark of friendship is genuine openness.** When our conversation with God is exactly the same each and every day, then a true genuine friendship has not been developed. While God is listening to everything we say, He is never listening to us in order to jump on to us. He yearns for a deep love relationship with us. He has given us life in order that we can come to know Him, love Him and serve Him. When we come to understand that God is listening in love at the other end of our prayers, then we will speak plainly, precisely, personally, and openly. God is not interested in the format of our prayers. He is interested in a deep abiding relationship.

5. WHEN WE PRAY “OUR FATHER”, WE ARE PRAYING TO ONE WHO WANTS TO SPEAK TO US. When Jesus gave this model prayer to His disciples, He didn’t tell them to pray, “Our God which art in heaven”, but, “Our Father which art in heaven”, because Jesus wanted them to know that the God of the Bible wanted to speak to them personally and specifically. It is the nature of any good dad to develop a communication relationship with his children. God wants nothing less in our lives. We ought not to think it odd that the God of the Bible wants to speak to us, regularly. We do not have to live up to a certain standard for our heavenly Father to speak to us. God delights in speaking to us.

Can you imagine God creating us, giving us life, saving us by His wonderful grace and then refusing to speak to us? The sad reality is that many believers believe just that. Many saints of God think it quite unusual to say that God wants to speak to them. Yet, all throughout the Bible God’s desire is to have a communication relationship with mankind. When God came to Moses, God told Moses to, “Take off his shoes, because he was standing on holy ground. In that one statement is found the proof that the God of the universe wants to speak if we will but listen. When Paul was on the Damascus road, Jesus stopped him and spoke to him saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me.” God spoke to Saul even before his salvation experience. The reason that so many saints of God never come to enjoy the Christian life, and make so many bad decisions is found in the fact that they have never learned to listen to the voice of God as He speaks.

God loves us and respects our will to the point that He will not make us hear. When we miss out on hearing the God of the Bible, we miss out on the adventures that He has in store for our lives and we miss out on enjoying life at its complete best. When we learn to listen to the voice of God, we will live a life that is continually blessed by good decisions. Why? Because God will never lead any of his children in the process of making one bad decision in life!