

## **The Lord's Prayer: The Father-son Relationship**

A man went into his young daughter's bedroom and found her praying. Intrigued as to what she might pray, he stopped and listened. He was immediately fascinated as he heard her pray, "A, B, C, D, E, F..." She kept saying the same thing over and over.

Finally, he asked her, "Sweetheart, what are you doing?" She said, "I'm praying, of course!" He said, "Then why are you saying the alphabet?" She said, "Because I don't know what to pray, and I figured that if I just said all the letters of the alphabet, God would be able to put them together."

Fortunately for us, God knows exactly what He wants us to pray.

In fact, Jesus Himself taught us how to pray.

### **Matthew 6:9-13**

In this manner, therefore, pray: 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.

This is a six-part series on the Lord's Prayer.

### **1. This is a pattern prayer**

When I was a kid, my mother taught me this prayer.

And before I went to sleep at night, I dutifully said this prayer before I even got into bed.

And I prayed that prayer as fast as I could.

As you might guess, the Lord's Prayer was very meaningful to me.

But this prayer was never meant to be just recited.

I know this will be a surprise to many people.

Because many who claim to be followers of Jesus recite this prayer as if it's some kind of magic formula.

Or as if it has the ability to ward off evil like hanging a cross around your neck to keep vampires away.

But let me say it again: this prayer was never meant to be just recited.

In Luke 11, when Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, He said, "When you pray, say, "Our Father..."

But Jesus' true intention is brought out in Matthew, when He says, "In this manner, therefore, pray, "Our Father..."

Pray in this manner.

In other words, pray like this.

Don't just pray this, but pray along these lines.

Because this isn't meant to be a recital, but a pattern for praying.

So over these six messages, we're going to look at the Lord's Prayer as a pattern and see what it teaches us.

In this message, we're going to look at the very first part of the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

I've entitled this message: the Father/son Relationship.

## **2. The church is a community**

And I want you to notice the word Jesus uses here in front of Father: Our.

This has huge ramifications for the believer.

Because there is no concept in the Bible of a believer just going it alone.

There's no concept in the New Testament that it can be just me and God.

Everything in the New Testament teaches that to be a Christian, means to be a part of a community of believers.

The idea of a Christian that isn't vitally involved, and making a real contribution, in the life of their church doesn't exist in the New Testament.

There's no such thing in the New Testament as a solitary believer just making their way through life independently of a community of believers.

If you consider yourself to be a Christian and you are not a vital contributing part of a church community, you are outside of the will of God.

Unless you're too sick or in prison.

That's why this prayer begins with 'Our' Father.

We, the church, are a community of believers.

We interact, we look out for one another, we pray for one another.

Listen to all these 'one another' statements in the New Testament that are based on the understanding that the church is a community.

**Romans 12:10** Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another;

**Romans 14:13** Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

**Romans 14:19** Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

**Romans 15:7** Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

**1 Corinthians 12:25** that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

And, of course, the most significant one of all, made by Jesus Himself:

**John 13:34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

There's a lot more; there are over twenty 'one another' statements in the New Testament.

Because being the church is not just a matter of turning up to a Sunday service and going home.

It's an interactive, interdependent, inter-reliant community of believers.

I love this statement by author J.R. Miller who lived in the 19th and early 20th centuries: Until we cease to live for self, we have not begun to live at all."

## **3. We are sons of God**

I'm just using a little bit of logic here.

If God is our Father, then we are His children.

That makes sense, doesn't it?

There are several Greek words used in the New Testament that are translated child or son, but two I'd like to look at.

**John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

The word used there is 'teknon' and it means a child, male or female.

**Galatians 3:26** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

The word used there is 'huios' and it refers to a son.

Don't get offended, ladies.

This has nothing to do with gender, and everything to do with status.

Because it was the son who was adopted and received all the rights and privileges of sonship and inheritance.

**Romans 8:15** For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Under Roman law, adoption meant that the son came out from under the power of his natural father and under the power of his adoptive father.

Think of what that means for a person who becomes a Christian.

Because it's no accident that the concept of adoption is used in the New Testament.

It has a clear spiritual application.

When Jesus did some straight talking to the Jews, He said, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.

He did not consider God to be their Father.

But when a person is born again, God becomes their Father, and they are adopted into God's family.

They come out from under the power of the devil, and under God's power.

And there are tremendous privileges that go along with that.

Our children have grown up and left home.

But when our son was still at home, he'd come in, go to the refrigerator and help himself.

It wasn't his frig, it was ours.

It wasn't his food, it was ours.

He walked around the place like he owned the joint.

Which one day he will - he his sister.

And I never expected him to do anything different.

Because he's a son.

And sonship comes with certain rights and privileges.

I'd be thinking very differently if some random guy walked into our house off the street and started helping himself to the stuff in our frig.

But it's different with a son, because of relationship.

This is very important to understand.

Because if you don't understand the relationship you have with God, you'll never be confident in your prayers. And if you don't have a relationship with God, He is under no obligation to answer your prayers.

Listen to this.

**Hebrews 4:16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

How should we come to the throne of grace? Boldly.

That's how I want my children to come to me.

Boldly, confident in our relationship.

#### **4. God is the Father**

The world is crying out for fathers.

A nun was involved in prison ministry.

One day, a prisoner asked if she could get a Mothers' Day card for him so she got him one.

Pretty soon a lot of the other prisoners asked her to get them Mothers' Day cards too.

She had an idea and telephoned Hallmark who sent her 500 cards which she distributed among the prisoners.

Later in the year, she realised that Fathers' Day was coming up.

Once again, she telephoned Hallmark and they sent her 500 Fathers' Day cards.

Fathers' Day came and went but there wasn't a single prisoner who asked for a card.

Sometime later, she still had the five hundred Fathers' Day cards.

One of the reasons people have trouble relating to God as Father, is that there are so many bad fathers in the world.

My father was an absent father.

I remember, as a little kid, wondering why my father was never around.

He was living at home.

But I hardly saw him.

He was off to work before I got up in the morning, and then didn't come home till after I was in bed.

And I didn't know till I was an adult that it was because he had a girl on the side.

And that was the reason why, when I was a small boy, we left Wales and came to Australia.

You might have had an even worse experience of fatherhood.

There are not only absent fathers, but violent fathers and abusive fathers.

But even fathers who try their best to be good fathers are flawed.

But God the Father is not like us.

Listen to what Jesus teaches us in this prayer.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

The word 'hallowed' means to make holy.

Why make the Father's name holy? Because He is holy.

So what does holy mean?

Holy means separated, and it's not just talking about the fact that God is physically separated from us because He's in heaven.

God is separated by His differentness.

Unlike us, He is perfect in every way.

His love is perfect; His goodness is perfect; His justice is perfect.

Every attribute of God is perfect.

And yet, Jesus invites us to call Him Father.

To understand more fully what that actually means, I'm going to go back to a verse I quoted earlier.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Abba is an interesting word.

In English, many children start calling their father 'Daddy' and as they grow up they start calling him 'Dad'.

Depending on their age, most people call their father 'daddy' or 'dad'.

For most of us, father is very formal.

My children would never say to me, 'Hello, father.'

Unless they were being cheeky, just for a bit of fun.

They'd say, "Hi dad."

Because father is formal, but dad is personal, and intimate.

That's where Abba comes in.

It means dad.

And that's what we're invited to call God.

When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane: (Mark 14:36) He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. .."

Jesus had a personal, warm, intimate relationship with His Father God.

But we have that same Spirit, the same relationship.

Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

This close, intimate, warm, powerful relationship as Father to son is the basis of this prayer.

If you don't have that kind of relationship with God, no amount of prayer is going to help you.

Because prayer begins there.

If you don't have an intimate relationship with God as your Father, I want to make this invitation to you.

Come and be a part of God's family.

Let Him be a Father to you.

A Father like you've never experienced before.

How do you do that?

It is so simple...