

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4

Individuals or groups may enjoy working through this content while having fellowship at home, while away on summer vacation, or in a Connect Group. We'll provide updated content from week to week this summer.

“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 also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever

Amen”

SUMMARY

We're entering into deeper prayer as a church. Over the next eight weeks, we will study and practice The Lord's Prayer in depth. This is Jesus' prayer. We don't have to wonder what Jesus prayed for when he retreated from his followers for worship. This is his prayer. This is what he prayed to perpetuate the movement of the kingdom in the world. There is no better summary of Jesus' heart than this prayer. Jesus usually refers to God as Father and only occasionally refers to God as “God.” Jesus called himself “The Son,” who came to reveal who God truly is. Jesus redefines “God” for his disciples by naming him “Father.” There are many counterfeit and counterintuitive ideas of God, and praying to our “Father” helps clarify who God is.

We exist to help connect **Jesus to people, people to community, and community to God's mission.** Here are a few insights about how The Lord's Prayer connects to our mission as a church. Let's discuss this text and the process of prayer.

JESUS TO PEOPLE...

Jesus usually referred to God as Father. This word helps distinguish God from all the other gods around us. There are plenty of gods around us today. Jesus directs our attention to the one true living God. This word “Father” helps us remember that God is a person, not an

abstract person. When we pray this way, we realize the personal and intimate relationship we are invited into. We can only say “Father” because Jesus has adopted us into his family through the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ. Jesus was punished for our sins on the cross and offered us his life in our place. Our mission of connecting Jesus to people means that Jesus is the only way someone can come to have God as their Father.

...PEOPLE TO COMMUNITY...

The exclusivity of salvation through Jesus Christ alone isn't the most radical part of this prayer. This prayer's most radical point is how it begins with the word: *Our*. This counters so much of our thoughts about God in modern Western culture. If we learn to pray as Jesus leads us, we will pray with all the saints from all cultures and at all times in human history. The first thing we pray for is a reminder that we are not alone. We pray this prayer in the community of others. We are learning to pray this prayer for ourselves, one another, and our church family. We pray to *Our* Father...

...COMMUNITY TO MISSION

We remember our Father is **in heaven**. We are on earth. This prayer teaches us that God can see the whole picture while we only have individual parts. This prayer also teaches us that we are separated from God. Our sin has separated us from God. We want to be a community living on a mission with God – participating in his program and purposes for the world. This prayer teaches us to invite the kingdom of God to come “on earth as it is in heaven.” As we pray this prayer, we are becoming a people united in the mission of God for the sake of the world.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How does addressing God as “Father” change your perception of prayer and your relationship with him?
2. What emotions or thoughts arise when you think of God as a loving Father?
3. In what way has Jesus redefined the concept of God for us by calling him “Father”?
4. How does this understanding of God as Father help counteract counterfeit ideas of God you may encounter?
5. How does knowing that you are adopted into God's family through Jesus influence your identity and sense of belonging?
6. What do you think Jesus taught us to pray “Our Father” instead of “My Father”? What does this say about the nature of our faith?
7. How does praying together as a community strengthen our love for one another?
8. How does acknowledging God's sovereignty and his heavenly viewpoint help you trust him more?
9. In what practical ways can we, as a church community, participate in bringing God's kingdom to our local context?
10. Discuss how we can better align our church activities with God's mission for the world's sake.