



HOW DO WE PRAY?

AN 8 PART STUDY ON INTIMACY WITH GOD

Session 2: Our Father in Heaven

*Discovering the relationship that
shapes every prayer*

Introduction – The First Words of Prayer

In the previous session we explored a foundational question: **Why do we pray?**

We discovered that prayer is not primarily about technique, performance, or simply asking God for things. Prayer is fundamentally about **relationship with God**.

Now we turn to the model Jesus gave His followers when they asked Him to teach them to pray.

Scripture: Luke 11:1

Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

In response, Jesus gives what has become known as **the Lord’s Prayer**.

Scripture: Matthew 6:9–13

*⁹Pray like this **Our Father in heaven**, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today the food we need, ¹²and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. ¹³And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.*

The first words Jesus teaches are striking.

Before any requests are made, before forgiveness is mentioned, before daily needs are brought before God, Jesus begins with these words:

“Our Father in heaven.”

These opening words establish the foundation of the entire prayer. They reveal something essential about prayer: **how we understand God determines how we approach Him**.

Within these few words Jesus reveals three profound truths:

God is **Father**.

Believers approach Him together as **our Father**.

God reigns in **heaven**, sovereign and holy.

These truths hold together both **closeness and reverence**, forming the foundation of a healthy prayer life.

Scripture Reading

Read the Lord’s Prayer slowly.

Scripture: Matthew 6:9–13

*⁹Pray like this **Our Father in heaven**, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today the food we need, ¹²and forgive us our*



sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. ¹³And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

As you read, notice:

- The first words Jesus chooses
- The tone of relationship Jesus assumes with God
- The balance between closeness and reverence

Allow the words to settle slowly rather than rushing through them.

Key Idea

The opening words of the Lord's Prayer establish the relationship that shapes all prayer.

God is our Father.

We approach Him together as His people.

He reigns in heaven with authority and holiness.

Prayer therefore holds together two essential realities:

intimacy with God

and

reverence for God.

Movement 1 – God Invites Us to Call Him Father

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Lord's Prayer is how Jesus teaches His followers to address God.

Jesus does not begin with titles such as King, Creator, or Sovereign Lord—although all of these are true.

Instead, He teaches believers to begin with **Father**.

This language communicates relationship.

Throughout Scripture, God's people sometimes describe Him as Father, but Jesus makes this language central to the life of faith.

Scripture: Matthew 6:9

⁹*Pray like this **Our Father in heaven**, may your name be kept holy.*

Scripture: Romans 8:14–17

¹⁴*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children^[a] of God. ¹⁵So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own*



children.^[b] Now we call him, “Abba, Father.”¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Scripture: Galatians 4:4–7

⁴ But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. ⁵ 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.^[a] ⁶ And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” ⁷ Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child.^[d] And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

Through Jesus Christ, believers are adopted into the family of God. Prayer flows from this relationship.

We do not approach God as distant observers or reluctant servants. We come as children welcomed by a loving Father.

Because of Christ, believers are invited into a relationship marked by trust, openness, and belonging.

Prayer begins with the recognition that we are already loved.

Movement 2 – Adoption Changes How We Pray

The New Testament repeatedly describes the believer’s relationship with God using the language of **adoption**.

Scripture: Ephesians 1:4–5

⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵ God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

Adoption is a powerful image. It reminds believers that their relationship with God does not depend on performance, spiritual success, or religious achievement.

It depends entirely on grace. It is what God **wanted to do** and it **gave him great pleasure**. Let that sink in for a moment. The God of the Universe sought you out, and it makes him smile to have you in His family.

Because of Christ, believers are welcomed into God’s family and given the freedom to approach Him confidently.

This transforms the posture of prayer.

Instead of approaching God with fear or uncertainty, believers approach Him with trust.

Children speak honestly with their parents. They share their fears, their hopes, and their questions. Prayer invites believers into that same honesty before God.



Prayer is not about impressing God.
Prayer is about **living openly before Him**.

Movement 3 – The Meaning of “Our”

Jesus does not teach His followers to pray **“My Father.”**

He teaches them to pray **“Our Father.”**

This small word carries an important truth: prayer is not only personal—it is **communal**.

From the beginning, the Christian life was never meant to be lived in isolation.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:19

¹⁹ So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family.

Scripture: Hebrews 10:24–25

²⁴ Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. ²⁵ And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

Believers are part of the **family of God**.

This means prayer is not merely a private spiritual activity. It is something the people of God share together.

Throughout the book of Acts, the early church regularly gathered to pray.

Scripture: Acts 1:14

¹⁴ They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

Scripture: Acts 2:42

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper^[a]), and to prayer.

When Jesus teaches believers to say “our Father,” He reminds them that faith is never meant to be lived as a solitary journey.

Prayer includes:



- praying for one another
- carrying the burdens of others
- seeking God together as His people

Even when believers pray privately, they remain part of the larger family of God.

The word “**our**” reminds us that prayer is both **deeply personal and deeply communal**.

Movement 4 – “In Heaven” Reminds Us Who God Is

While the word “Father” emphasizes closeness, the phrase “**in heaven**” reminds believers of God’s greatness.

God is near to His people, yet He is also holy, sovereign, and eternal.

Scripture: Isaiah 55:8–9

⁸ “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. ⁹ For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Scripture: Psalm 115:3

³ Our God is in the heavens, and he does as he wishes.

These passages remind us that God’s ways and perspective are far greater than our own.

The phrase “in heaven” protects prayer from becoming overly casual or self-centered.

It reminds believers that the God they approach is not merely a comforting presence. He is the sovereign Lord of creation.

Healthy prayer holds these two truths together:

God is **lovingly near**.

God is **gloriously greater than us**.

Movement 5 – Jesus Models This Relationship

Jesus not only teaches these words—He lives them.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus repeatedly withdraws to pray and speaks to God as His Father.

Scripture: Mark 1:35

³⁵ Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray.



Scripture: Luke 5:16

¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

Scripture: John 17:1–5

After saying all these things, Jesus looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ²For you have given him authority over everyone. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³And this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. ⁴I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

Jesus demonstrates complete trust in the Father.

One of the most powerful moments appears in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Scripture: Mark 14:36

³⁶ “Abba, Father,” he cried out, “everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”

In that moment of anguish, Jesus addresses God with the deeply personal expression **“Abba, Father.”**

By teaching His followers to pray in this way, Jesus invites believers into the same relationship He shares with the Father.

Prayer becomes participation in the life of God.

Movement 6 – Beginning Prayer With Identity

The opening words of the Lord’s Prayer remind believers that prayer begins not with requests but with identity.

Before we ask for anything, we remember:

- who God is
- who we are
- what relationship we share

This transforms the posture of prayer.

Instead of approaching God with anxiety, we begin with trust.

Instead of trying to control outcomes, we remember the character of the One who hears us.

Prayer begins by recognizing that we are children of a faithful Father who reigns over heaven and earth.

Summary – Our Father in Heaven



The opening line of the Lord's Prayer teaches several foundational truths:

God is our Father.

Believers are adopted into His family.

Prayer is communal as well as personal.

God remains sovereign and holy in heaven.

Jesus models a life of dependence on the Father.

When believers begin prayer with these truths in mind, the rest of the prayer begins to fall into place.

Reflection Questions

1. What thoughts or emotions arise when you address God as Father?
 2. How does understanding adoption into God's family change the way you think about prayer?
 3. Why do you think Jesus teaches believers to pray **"our" Father rather than "my" Father**?
 4. How does the phrase **"in heaven"** balance the closeness implied in calling God Father?
 5. What might change in your prayer life if you began each prayer by remembering your identity as a child of God?
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Personal Notes

(Use this space to record insights, questions, or reflections.)

Practice for the Week

This week, begin your prayer time with the opening words of the Lord's Prayer.

Pause with the phrase:

"Our Father in heaven..."

Spend a few moments reflecting on:

- God's love as Father
- your identity as His child
- the community of believers you belong to
- God's greatness and authority

Allow these truths to shape the rest of your prayer.

The goal this week is not to pray longer, but to pray with **greater awareness of relationship**.



Closing Thought

Prayer begins not with what we need to say.

Prayer begins with remembering **who God is** and **who we are in Him**.

The words “**Our Father in heaven**” invite believers into a life of prayer marked by both trust and reverence.

From this foundation, the rest of the Lord’s Prayer unfolds.

