

# Our Father Who Art in Heaven

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## Romans 8:14-17

The Lord's Prayer, 57 words in the original Greek manuscripts (Matthew version), 38 words (Luke version), a well-known prayer all around the world, heard in every church in different languages and different tunes. We Armenians sing the *Hyer Mer* every Sunday. This prayer has become part of our identity. If we don't sing it, as if something will be missing from our worship service. Some of you are comfortable with this and some of you are not. Let me remind both sides that Jesus taught this as a model prayer which should be genuine, sincere and from the heart. Does the Lord's Prayer sometimes become repetitive? Just before the Lord's Prayer Jesus said: **“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do”** (Matthew 6:7 ESV). Do we mean what we pray?

If Jesus taught us how to pray, why not learn from it?

In the coming nine weeks we will study the Lord's Prayer and see how we can apply it in our prayer life.

The disciples themselves asked this question: **“Lord, teach us to pray”** (Luke 11:1 ESV). I wonder why they asked Jesus this question. The disciples came from a Jewish origin and they knew how to pray. I wonder if they saw how Jesus was praying to his Father. I don't know the answer, but I know Jesus answered their request saying: “When you pray, say: ‘Our Father, who art in heaven....’”

Let us start:

### 1. **“Our Father in heaven”** (Matthew 6:9ESV)

a. What does it mean when Jesus starts his prayer saying: “Our **Father** in heaven ”

**Father**, to call God Father is very important.

You cannot find this kind of description in other religions. God is either transcendent (as in Islam *Allahou Akbar- God is the greatest*) or God is a philosophical idea (as in Eastern religions).

In the Old Testament, we find that Yahweh was considered Father (*Ab*). Also we find verses where Israel was considered as son (*Ebn*) (E.g. Isaiah 64:8; Hosea 11:1; Jeremiah 3:19; Psalm 89:26-27); The Hebrew word that is used is *Ab*, Father not daddy, *Abba*. The way Jesus addressed God the Father as *Abba* is extremely important. It represents an intimate relationship. Christ can teach us that God is a daddy, *hayrig*. God loves you personally.

Everything is set within our calling God 'father' (as Jesus does throughout this Sermon – in fact, we could suggest that a title for the whole Sermon might be, 'What it means to call God "father"'). For Jews in Jesus' day, this title for God went back to God's action in Exodus, rescuing Israel from Egypt and so demonstrating that 'Israel is my son, my firstborn' (Exodus 4:22)<sup>1</sup>

So the Israelites knew that God could be called father; but praying to Him using the word *Abba*, daddy, is much more intimate and personal.

b. "In heaven". Is he saying, "Our Father who is too far, in heaven, far away from us?"

1. God is in heaven means, He is all over us, around us, next to us, above and below, right and left, up and down. My God, my Father, my Daddy, is with me, all over me, all around me.

2. In the biblical understanding Heaven also means **throne, authority**, or the position of **someone who is in charge**. The Lord's Prayer comes in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount. To be in the kingdom of God is the central theme of this sermon. We are praying to the **King of this kingdom**. In this sermon, Jesus spoke about not making oaths; he said: "**But I say to you, 'Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,'"** (Matthew 5:34 ESV) Heaven is the throne of God.

c. "Our Father...."

The Lord's Prayer is not just a private prayer. We pray together saying, "**OUR Father. Give us Our** daily bread"....and so on. We, God's people around the world, pray this prayer together. The Spirit of the Lord is present when two or three are gathered in His name. We, as a community, pray together to OUR

Father. Lately we have a community of prayer warriors praying for Badveli Ara's healing. We are praying to OUR FATHER.

So we are praying to a God, who is **a daddy**, a **Father who is all over us**, everywhere, and **He is in control**, on the throne. He is imminent (personal, intimate Abba, Daddy) and transcendent (sovereign God on the throne).

## **2. Our Father, Our God, Our Daddy is Revealed in Jesus**

When I say think about God as father, what comes to your mind? Some do not like Father's day. When I was working at the boarding school in Anjar, kids who did not have a father, or kids who hated their abusive fathers did not enjoy that day. I do understand this. Our good or bad experiences with our parents, fathers and mothers can shape our understanding of who God is in our lives. We might have a distorted understanding of who God is if our earthly fathers and mothers lived a life away from Him.

- a. How can a father learn to portray the character of a heavenly Father?
- b. How can a child experience the heavenly Father's love?

Darrell Johnson writes:

A number of years ago I was wrestling with this. I said to Jesus, "I like your prayer, but it would be so much more inviting for more people if you had taught us to pray the prayer to you. Where are you in this prayer?" And in my mind I heard John 14:9, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." I sensed Jesus saying to me, "The Father is just like me." The Father, God the Father, is just as good, just as gentle, just as kind, just as approachable, just as vulnerable, just as welcoming, just as generous as Jesus. Jesus' open arms are the open arms of his Father. Jesus' open heart is the open heart of his Father. It is the passion of Jesus to help us know his Father as he knows him, to love his Father as he loves him, to trust his Father as he trusts him.<sup>2</sup>

A few times we read in the Gospel of John Jesus saying, "**if you see me, you see the God the Father.**" We are learning that his fatherhood is expressed in Jesus

and in his love towards us. **So when we pray to God as a Father, we are learning to be a father like God.**

“I came from a fatherless family. My wife came from a church a family with a father who was not exactly the leader of the family. So we didn’t have a perfect family but we had a perfect Father. I had no father, but I had a perfect Father. She has a father but she has a greater Father. Our children had a father but they looked beyond this father and saw the Father and fell in love with Him. So the greatest thing a father can do for his kids is to point them to the Father.”

James Robison - Focus on the Family

### **3. Our Father, Our God, Our Daddy Loves us personally.**

In his letter to the Romans, Paul expresses his view about this love relationship.

**For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.** (Romans 8:14-17ESV)

God is my Abba Father, Daddy, Hayrig. How assuring and comforting is this image that God personally loves me. God is not remote, far away, removed from us. He is all over us, in heaven, all over us and in control, on the throne.

**Illustration:** “When Gen. **Norman Schwartzkopf** was interviewed by Barbara Walters, she asked him for his definition of leadership. He reflected for a moment and said, ‘It’s competence. More important, it’s character. It’s taking action. It’s doing the right thing.’”

Later Barbara asked him what he wanted on his tombstone. For a moment he grew very quiet. Then, with just a hint of a tear in his eye, he said, “**I want it to say, ‘He loved his family and loved his troops – and they loved him.’**”<sup>3</sup>

A general, a commander of the strongest army in the world, who believes in character, competence, doing the morally right thing; he wanted to be remembered as a **“father” figure who loves and was loved.**

God our heavenly Father loves us and wants our hearts: to love Him and worship Him.

If God loves us personally, it does not mean that God is a “teddy bear” that we can squeeze just whenever we want. God is not a game we play. He is our Father, who wants us to be in an intimate relationship with Him. It is like my relationship with my kids. I don’t want them to call me only when they need me, (although I am ready to be there anytime they need me) I would love be in a relationship with them every day.

John says it best:

**Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:8-10 ESV)**

#### **4. Our Father, Our God, Our Daddy Seeks us.**

To my mind come two images or two parables from the Bible. The first of is the prodigal son who wasted everything, even wanted his inheritance (which meant that he wanted his dad to die). Yet the father waited for his son’s return. And when he saw his son coming back, he risked everything, his honor, his life, to run towards his prodigal son.

The other image is the Good Shepherd, the genuine one, who seeks the lost sheep. He leaves behind the 99 and looks for the lost one. The shepherd who risks his life to find his sheep.

Those two images are the image of our heavenly father. He sent His Son Jesus Christ, the genuine shepherd, who risked his life, emptied himself, and became one of us to rescue humanity. We find such a love in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion:

1. When you pray “Our Father in heaven” do you declare that He is the authority in your life?
2. “The greatest thing a father can do for his kids is to point them to the Father.” Are you pointing your children to the Father? Do they see the Father in your own life?

Let us approach the Table of the Lord.

“**Our** Father” - that speaks of Community.

“Our **Father**” - that speaks of Family.

“**In heaven**” - that speaks of Authority.

Or to say it in another way:

**Our** = I do not pray alone.

**Father** = I am not left alone.

**In heaven** = I do not struggle alone.

Or from a third perspective:

**Our** = I pray with others.

**Our Father** = I pray to One who cares for me.

Our Father **in heaven** = I pray to one who has the power to help me.<sup>4</sup>

1 N. T. Wright, Matthew for Everyone, P59

2 Fifty-seven Words that Changed the World, Darrell W. Johnson p 11

3 Sermon Illustrations.com

4. God Our Father by Ray Pritchard (Keep Believing Ministries)