

LIFE GROUP STUDY

Have you ever observed that the only thing the first disciples of Jesus are recorded to have asked Jesus to teach them is, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). There is no record of anyone asking Jesus to teach them to lead, or to counsel, or to heal, or to cast out demons, or to preach. They may have asked him, but there is no record of them doing so.

Why?

Perhaps it is because they could see that Jesus' leading, counselling, healing, casting out, preaching ministry emerged out of his relationship with his "Father." And they could see that the key to that relationship was prayer. Jesus, after all, was always slipping away to pray (Luke 5:16).

I understand the disciples' request to mean more than, "Jesus, teach us some new spiritual techniques that will help us stay awake when we pray and make us feel that our prayers matter." I take their request to mean, "Jesus, will you teach us how to relate to the one you call 'Father' the way you do?"

Darrell Johnson "Fifty-Seven words that changed the world"

Question : Are you happy with the way you pray? Do you feel that you are genuinely connecting with God? How similar do you feel the way you pray is with the way Jesus prayed?

Question : Do you find yourself often "slipping away" to pray? How do find time and ways to "slip away"?

We should also note **the centre of Jesus' Prayer:** the little clause "**on earth as it is in heaven.**" The prepositional phrase goes with each of the first three petitions: your name be hallowed, *on earth as it is in heaven*; your kingdom come, *on earth as it is in heaven*; your will be done, *on earth as it is in heaven*. It is possible that the clause also goes with each of the second three petitions: give us this day our daily bread, *on earth as it is in heaven*; forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, *on earth as it is in heaven*; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil-one, *on earth as it is in heaven*.

The Lord's Prayer stands at the centre of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, in the collection of sayings where he describes what happens when the kingdom breaks in and takes hold of us. At the centre of the Sermon on the Mount, in the Lord's Prayer, is the central clause: "on earth as it is in heaven." It captures the passion of the living God to bring the reality of heaven on earth.

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Question : How does our approach to prayer change if we grasp that prayer is about bringing our lives and situations into God's plans and purposes?

The Lord's Prayer works because of "Our Father who art in heaven." We often say, or hear said, "prayer works." That is only so because of the One to whom we pray works.

On the throne of the universe is a Father. Yes, on the throne is a Creator, a mighty Creator. And yes, on the throne is a Sovereign Master, the Rock of Ages. But what Jesus emphasizes again and again is that on the throne is a Father — his Father. The Father he knows and loves and trusts.

"Father" is a problematic image for many people in our day, and not only for women. Many men also struggle with calling God "Father." The word "Father" is fraught with feelings of disappointment, pain, anger, in cases, an awful sense of abandonment.

Jesus comes to us, and calls us to follow him into his understanding of "Father." His goal is to correct our understanding of "Father"; to replace our misguided concepts associated with the word with his.

In John 14:9, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." Jesus is saying, "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.

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Question : For what different reasons is it often a challenge for many people to approach God as "Father" ?

Question : How do you think your prayer differs if you approach God either as "the **sovereign God** on the throne" OR "the **father, as revealed in the heart of Jesus**, on the throne"?

"Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, on earth as it is in heaven."

Name means who God is and what God is like, his character, attributes, reputations.

Hallowed means reveal, manifest, make known, make real, glorify.

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Thus we might pray, "Father in heaven—Father of our Lord Jesus, our own Father—the big thing I ask is that you make your character real to us and reveal your wonder in the midst of our circumstances and situations.

Pastor Paul Mahon

Question : What is it that you primarily ask for in your prayers? Is it for God to solve the problem, or for peace and rest, or is it for God to be glorified and His person revealed through the situation?

What is the effect of the different approaches on our spiritual growth and health?