

III. The Lord's Prayer in Biblical Perspective
"An Invocation of Adoration"
Matthew 6:5–15
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This is the word of God. Matthew 6:5–15.

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **6** But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **7** "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. **9** Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread,

12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

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

*(For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever,
Amen. – this is omitted in some manuscripts)*

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, **15** but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of God abides forever. May God bless this His Word to the heart of His people.

When it comes to learning to pray there is no shortage of model prayers in the Bible. There is the Jabez prayer found in 1 Chronicles 4. There are 150 model prayers found in the book of Psalms. I recommend a book to go along with praying from the Psalms by Richard Pratt titled Pray With Your Eyes Open. In his book he instructs the reader on how to pray the Psalms of God back to Him. If one studies the Epistles of Paul one will find 17 recorded prayers in those books. There are many individual prayers from people like Solomon (1 Kings 3, 1 Kings 8, 2 Chronicles 6), Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20), and Hannah (1 Samuel 2). There are more but these are prayers we can learn from in the Bible but the Lord's Prayer has been called and rightly is The Prayer of Prayers. The finger of God gave us the Law of God and the lips of God, Jesus Christ, gave us the Prayer of Prayers. The disciples said, "Teach us to pray" and Jesus said, "When you pray, pray this way." That is why this is an essential pattern of prayer.

There have been two studies before this that deal with the words of Jesus that lead into the Prayer of Prayers. Here will be a review but from then on these words will be included in the back and there will be key thoughts brought out from what is being

studied. In the preliminary to the Prayer of Prayers Jesus has taught a number of things. Here is a summary of what has been studied in Matthew 6:5–8.

The first thing that was learned from Jesus here is that prayer is a human instinct by virtue of creation and it is a compelling desire by virtue of one's conversion, but because of sin Christians can be prayerless or misguided. That is why James 4:2 says "*You do not have, because you do not ask.*" Basically one is powerless because they are prayerless. Then James 4:3 says, "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly.*" One is misguided in their prayers because they have been disciplined by the world in learning how to pray prior to one's conversion.

The second thing that was learned was because we have an instinct to pray as unbelievers, now that we are followers of Christ we have to first put off the prayers of vanity in order to put on the Prayer of Prayers as a model. Jesus gave two prayers of vanity that we are to get rid of. One is the prayer of vanity of the religious hypocrite who does not pray to appear before God as His audience but prays his private prayers publicly to be seen by men. The other prayer of vanity to be put off is the prayer of the superstitious pagan who thinks that their empty words mounted up will some how get God's attention and merit His concerns. Now Jesus has provided two assets for His followers in learning how to pray. One asset is the Spirit of God. Romans 8:26 says, "*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*" So the Spirit prompts us, enables us and even carries our prayers with groanings too deep to be uttered. The second asset is the Word of God in general and the Lord's Prayer in particular to guide us in prayer.

The third and last thing that was learned is that while the Lord's Prayer can be used occasionally in worship by repetition, it was designed to be used continually in discipleship. Its purpose was to disciple and train us in our personal prayer life as a model of prayer that will feed our public prayer life.

This study will now start with the first phrase of the Prayer of Prayers. The Prayer is divided up into three sections. The first section is the invocation of adoration, then six intercessions for supplication and then an invitation to exaltation in closing. The invocation of adoration is the first phrase which is "*Our Father in heaven*" (Matthew 6:9). Here God sets us in the right direction. In prayer as Christ centered disciples we have many concerns and passions but here He says our number one concern and passion that guides us into prayer should be to speak to Your Father who is in heaven. This should be an all consuming passion for the supremacy of God's majesty with confidence in God's intimacy.

When Jesus said to His disciples, "When you pray, pray this way" He dropped a religious nuclear bomb on them with the two words, "Our Father." When Jesus said that those two words, it was astoundingly startling yet familiar. It was astounding because in the teaching of the people of God the emphasis on making sure that one never took God's name in vain had been translated into such appropriate carefulness and the idea of "God as Father" is only mentioned 14 times in all of the 39 books of the Old Testament. Every time it is mentioned it is about the concept of God as Father or as God is Creator therefore fathering all of humanity into its existence or the idea of an impersonal concept but the phrase "Our God" calling Him Father was totally transformational yet at the same time it was somewhat familiar. The disciples had been

around Jesus long enough that this was familiar because Jesus even in this Sermon on the Mount will call God His Father 17 times. In the High Priestly prayer in John 17 before Christ goes to the cross to die He will call God His Father seven times. In Jesus' three year public ministry recorded in the Gospels He will refer to God as Father over 70 times but Jesus never actually said, "Our Father" until he taught the Prayer of Prayers. He would say, "Holy Father, Almighty Father, Exalted Father." Yet here He turns to sinners, saved by grace, referring to the Thrice Holy God and says, "Here is how you prayer as My saved followers, Our Father..."

Then He says, "Our Father who art in heaven." This is totally renovating, transforming and astoundingly laying hold of Him. These two little words, "Our Father" pack so much Gospel truth in them. It is hard to put one's arms around this. The reason that Jesus now invites and commands His disciples to call Him "Our Father" is because of five wonderful Gospel truths that are built into that.

The first reason the disciples can call God their Father is because they have been born again. God has given them new life. They have been born of the Spirit and born of the Word. They have been brought forth so that now they call God their Father because God has begotten them anew. They are new creations in Jesus Christ. The Bible says in John 1:12, "*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*" Not in some general conceptual sense God is the Creator therefore Father of humanity but in this special, familial, loving relationship of intimacy God has brought forth one's life and am born again by His grace, a child of His through the power of His Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, one can call Him their Father.

The second reason they can call Him Father is because they have been adopted into the family of God. All kinds of things are attached to adoption. Here are two Scriptures associated with this. The first is Galatians 4:6,7 which says, "**6** *And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"* **7** *So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*" The second passage is Romans 8:14–17 which says, "**14** *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15* *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!"* **16** *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17* *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.*"

The third reason they can call Him Father because as His child He has given them the Holy Spirit and those who are led by the Spirit these are the sons of God.

The fourth reason they can call Him Father is because they are an heir with Christ. Only sons and daughters of the Father can be appointed as heirs. When one is an heir one can call Him Father.

The fifth reason they can call Him Father is because they are in His Son and His Son is in them. Romans 8:28–30 says, "**28** *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29* *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30* *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and*

those whom he justified he also glorified.” What a glorious truth! Whom He foreknew He predestined so that His Son would become the first born among many brethren.

What did Jesus say to Mary when He was first resurrected? He said, “Go tell my brothers” (Matthew 28:10). If you are in Christ and Christ is in you, your Savior is your elder brother. He is the Heir and you are joint heirs with Him therefore Jesus says, “I return to My Father and yours” that we might call Him Father in Christ. We not only call Him Father but we can now call Him “Our Father” because we are joint heirs with Christ with our brothers and sisters so it is a family relationship that we have.

Not only does He say who are you praying to but He then says where do you pray to Him? “*Our Father who art in heaven.*” It is literally “who art in thee heavens.” That is not giving the reader God’s location. How does one know this? God is a Spirit which means He is omnipresent. He is everywhere so this is not giving His location but it is giving the reader His position of exaltation. He is over all, the heavens and the earth. It all stands by His Word. He created it and in Him everything moves and has its being. So one calls on God their Father the eminence of God who has a relationship with Him and then one calls on God the Father who is heaven which is the exaltation and transcendence of God. There is none like Him. He is enthroned in the heavens yet He is working in one’s heart. That is how we pray.

Here are three lessons on how this ought to affect one’s everyday personal prayer life as a Christ centered disciple. The first practical lesson is that when one prays one can pray with childlike trust and confidence. As a child I am dependent upon my Father and I have a Father who loves me and a Father who has began a work in me. I have a Father who will complete that work. In other words, a prayer life of a disciple is a life of family conversation. Family prayer is what we are engaged in. Jesus says in Matthew 7:11, “*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*” “*You have not because you ask not,*” James 4:2. Jesus also says in Matthew 7:7, “*Ask and you will receive.*” But you will receive according to God’s wisdom and power. “*Seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you,*” Matthew 7:7.

He is not giving us a blank check so that whatever we say informs Him. No, He says He works through our prayers. When we ask for fish He will not give us snakes or when we ask for bread He will not give us stones (Matthew 7:9, 10). But sometimes we think we are asking for fish but we are really asking for snakes. Remember when Abraham thought he was going to get all the cities of the valleys that were lush and Lot ended up with the valleys (Genesis 13). If I were Abraham I would have thought “Those were supposed to be mine” but God says “I am going to give you what you need. The measure of My love is not in terms of the world’s measurement of money and power. The measure of My love is that I am going to take care of you and provide for you. By the way son, let me tell you what you don’t know. In those valleys is hidden a Sodom and Gomorrah and I kept it from you.” That job promotion may have had a Sodom and Gomorrah and you thought God did not give it to you because He did not hear you or love you. Oh no, your Father knows and cares and loves you. He not only answers you but He answers rightly and powerfully.

Today fatherhood is under assault. It is ridiculed. Please turn from those situation comedies today that ridicule the families and fatherhood. I talked to Chuck

Colson some time ago about something he wrote that was absolutely astounding to me. When Chuck started Prison Fellowship to prisoners they wanted to get the prisoners to come to Chapel so that they could preach the Gospel to them. They tried to think of ways to get them to the Chapel so one day they came up with an idea. The idea happened the week before Mother's Day and they told the prisoners to come to the Chapel to hear the Gospel and they would get a free Hallmark Mother's Day card to give to their Mothers. The place was jam packed. They thought they would do it again since this worked so a month later they tried the same thing for Father's Day and nobody showed up! So they went and took a survey as to why no one showed up. Some said, "My father? I don't even know who he is." One said, "A card to my father? You mean the man who left my mother and me?" Another said, "A card? I'd kill the man if I get my hands on him." We are growing up in a fatherless generation and that impacts the way one understand what has just been said about "Our Father." See what the Bible says about your Father.

Your Father has begotten you and loves you so much that He gave His Son for you so that you could have everlasting life. He knows how to give you those good and perfect gifts. You may draw near to your Father who you love because He has already sought out you. James 4:8, "*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*" This God who is glorious wants to hear from you even more than you desire to pray to Him. He is our Holy Father who loves us.

The second practical lesson is that one needs to pray with reverence. Your Father in heaven is exalted. There is none like Him. You probably feel the tension that I feel that we have all been taught that we call Our Father, "Abba Father" which is the child's word for endearment that is like "Our Daddy." It is but it is not. It is not so much the childish reference to a father it is the maturing child's reference to a father. I will draw the point because this is important. I do not think childish superficiality is childlike intimacy. When I learned this it so affected my prayer life that now every prayer I do it starts off to God as Father speaking of His glories and His position. I know I can say, "Abba." I was praying with a guy one time who said, "Daddy I want to talk to you." I just could not say it that way. It is childlike familiarity but yet with reverence. He is my Father. I have intimacy but this is the God of Glory who is my Father.

Have you ever been in a school yard hearing kids talk about their daddies? You hear, "My daddy does this..." "My daddy this..." "My daddy..." Just think what you could say about your heavenly Father in the school yard of this world. "I'd love to introduce you to my Father. He put the stars in the sky. He gave me a new heart. He'll give you a new one. He'll transform your life. He loves for sinners to repent and trust in His Son. He gave His only Son that you may have eternal life and be His son and His daughter. He gave His Son, the Bride, that the Bride might look to the Father of the Son and the same God is the Father of the Bride. He gave the Son an inheritance of redeemed brothers and now all the brothers can call Him Father. It is this God whom you can call upon."

So there needs to be intimacy and trust but I do not think we need to trivialize when we talk to Him. When we say "Our Father" we exalt Him.

I remember one time I was in the backyard playing and there were terms that boys used about their dads that were supposed to be terms of familiarity. I was pitching in the backyard with my dad and I hear my friend Rusty say to me from across the

street, “Hey Ike, who ya’ throwing with?” And I said, “I’m playing with my old man.” You do not want to know what happened to me after that. That was the last time “old man” ever came out of my mouth. I believe certainly that familiarity is apart of it but reverence is also apart of it. We have to pray with reverence. Do you know who your Father is? He is the Almighty One, the Omniscient One. One does not inform Him of something in one’s prayer of something that He does not already know. We do not empower Him with our prayers. This is God!

I was listening to a pastor preach the other day. The pastor was talking to an old lady who said to him, “Oh pastor I’m so insignificant.” He said to her, “Call upon the Lord in prayer.” She said, “God is too important to listen to me. God has got more to do than to listen to me.” With all due respect that is not humility. At best that is ignorance of God and at most it is arrogance. God does not need us to streamline His schedule. God is not too busy. God is not overwhelmed at our requests. If anything He would say, “Pile it on. I’m ready.” Philippians 4:6 says, “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*” He is ready to hear you and He wants to hear you.

People ask, “Does God really hear me when I pray?” Brothers and sisters, you are giving yourself too much credit. You would not have prayed if He had not sent the Spirit to propel you to pray. Why would He do that if He is not ready to hear you? This is the One who is enthroned, who loves you, who cares for you, and who is ready to do things beyond your expectations in your life. Ephesians 3:20 says, “*He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.*”

“Our Father who art in heaven” is a prayer of relationship, a family prayer of childlike confidence and we bring to our Father everything. That totally affects everything else in our life. More than anything else I want the name of my Father to be hallowed. Father, I want Your kingdom to come. Father I want Your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Father I cannot live without Your sustenance. Give us our daily bread. Father I need Your forgiveness. I have failed You. I have played the prodigal. Thank you Father for the Lamb that restores me, the wayward son, forgiving me my debts. Father I need your protection. Do not lead me into temptation. Deliver me from evil. Father my life is for You for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. The fatherly relationship of knowing His reverence and power and it is that God whom you may call Father.

The third and final practical lesson is about one having focused prayer with anticipation for what God is going to do. I believe with all my heart that God has ordained prayer to be the number one instrument to accomplish His purposes through His people. Jesus says, “You have not because you ask not” and that tells me that God’s decrees are entwined with the active prevailing prayer life of His people. It tells me that there are things I do not have because I have not called upon Him. I do not know how all that works out but I am responsible to pray and I am powerless because I am prayerless or I am powerless because I have been praying misguided prayers. James 4:3 says, “*You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly.*” Somehow my prayers are entwined with His divine providence and what I need to do is to have confidence in His power but get on my knees in my closet and call upon my Father in heaven.

It yet waits for eternity for you and I to see what those seasons of prayers and moments of prayers have unleashed in this world that we do not know. There will people who have been saved because of prayer, movements, revivals all those things that have taken place because of prayer. God has done great things. Will you pray to Your Father in heaven?

Here are two ways to look at the sanctity of life issue. The first is the issue itself. In the 1970's when I was a student pastor in Chattanooga, Tennessee some students from Covenant College began to deal with the issue of the sanctity of life and the places of abortion around the area as they started praying. In the 1980's I got a phone call when I was in Miami that people were still in concerted prayer over this sanctity of life issue in Chattanooga. In 1997 I came to preach at Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church and the people who were involved in the ministry on the sanctity of life came to tell me, "Harry did you know that every place of abortion in Chattanooga has been closed and we have put in place crisis care and pregnancy centers that value the sanctity of life?" Where did this begin? It began with prayer.

Now, I want to take this issue out of the larger area into the shorter area. There was a lady in August of 1987 who drank some water that was contaminated in the early stages of her pregnancy. The doctors called upon her and said to her, "We have got to treat this bacterium with antibiotics but when we do, the bacteria and the antibiotics together will not allow this fetus to be viable. You must get an abortion." She said, "Listen, this is a baby and not a fetus. It is not a tissue it is life and if the Lord gives it a short life in my womb then the Lord will give it and I am going to trust Him." The lady took the antibiotics and the contamination was done away with. She went through the pregnancy and there was born a skinny little boy. You probably know who this little boy is now. He is the man who stood up and gave Jesus Christ the praise because He had given him the privilege to play football for Him. He was the Heisman Trophy winner in 2007, Tim Tebow. The first thing his mother did was pray about it. She got a church to pray about it.

This is a glorious privilege we have to lay hold of the throne of grace and the God of glory commands and invites you to call Him Father. See what manner of love is this that we are called the children of God.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the moments together in Your Word. Lord would you renovate our prayer life? We do not ever want to dishonor Your name but thank you for the family intimacy of calling You Father, Abba Father. Yet the One whom we call Father is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Creator of All, Redeemer so Father we pray to You through Your Son and by the Holy Spirit. We come with confidence because You are ready to hear us, with reverence for You're the Lord God of Glory and we come with anticipation knowing that You are ready to do great and glorious things through a praying people. God please make us a house of prayer for all the nations. Lord, for some this is the first prayer today. God, I want You to be my Father. I want to come to Jesus Christ, Your Son and have Him as my Savior. Friend, if you made that prayer this is what He says to you. To as many as received Him, His Son, to them He gave the right to become the children of God. In Christ, by His Spirit as joint heirs of Christ you may call upon Him as Father and you may grow in your relationship with Him and you may serve Him in loving obedience. Father for those who know Christ as Savior would you build our prayer life

from the closet, conscious of my brothers and sisters, our Father who art in heaven. Oh God, thank You. You're our Father through Your Son, by the Spirit and thank you that the One who has all wisdom and power has ordained that power and wisdom to work through a praying people, then we will pray like this,

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 and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.)