



# **Talking to God**

**Thanks to the late Rev. Art Graf**



## Lesson 1



### **Our Father Who Art in Heaven**

*“Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” And he said to them, “When you pray, say: “Our Father in heaven ...” Luke 11:1-2; Matthew 6:9*

You are the privileged people, God's people by his grace. You can pray. Christ, through his suffering for your sins, has made it possible for you to approach God in prayer. Christ himself repeatedly encourages you to pray. He has even given you an aid or guide by which to do this which we call “The Lord’s Prayer.”

Christ knew the danger of teaching his church a formal prayer. Before teaching it, he warned against using it in vain repetition as the heathens do (Matt 6:7). The Lord's Prayer is not a magic charm. Simply repeating it without thinking or without understanding becomes idolatry.

In order that we might all pray this model prayer with ever deeper understanding and greater sincerity, we have planned a series of Bible studies on this wonderful prayer which we use so regularly in our churches and our homes. May God bless us we meditate on the introduction: “Our Father who art in heaven.”

**Questions:** *As Jews, the disciples would have been taught to pray. What do you think prompted them to ask Jesus to teach them to pray? Whose prayer life have you admired? Has the Lord’s Prayer ever seemed like “vain repetition” to you? What do you hope to gain from a study of the Lord’s Prayer?*

## Part I – We Pray to God as Our FATHER

The first thing we note is that Christ teaches us to pray to God as our Father - not as Jehovah, God, Lord, but Father. The terms “Lord” or “God” remind us of might, holiness, majesty; the term “Father” of love, kindness, nearness, and intimacy.

It's the term which Christ used to indicate his own intimate relationship with God. This intimate title we are encouraged to use. We can do this because he is our father. This isn't make-believe, it is not just a platitude.

God is our Father because he gave us life (Acts 17:28). God is our Father because he redeemed us in and through Christ (Galatians 4:4-5). God is our Father by rebirth. The Pharisees were told by Christ himself, “You are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). This is still true of all who reject Christ. God is the Maker and Redeemer of all, but the Father only of those who have been led to accept Christ as Savior. Paul wrote the Christians in Rome, “*All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God ... you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’*”

God is our Father. Upon this truth we firmly plant our feet and faith. This is the foundation of our trust and the basis of all our petitions in the Lord's Prayer.

**Questions:** *How does knowing God is your Father change how you pray? What might the prayers look like of someone who only knows God as the Almighty God?*

## Part II – We Pray to God as OUR Father

Jesus taught us to pray, “*Our* Father who art in heaven” - not “*my* father, but *our* Father. We Christians are family in a special sense. As we are all made of one blood, so we are all redeemed and cleansed and saved by one blood - the blood of Christ. There is no closer relationship than that found in the blood of Christ. We are one in Christ, with one faith, one task, one purpose, one goal, one heaven.

If you pray for yourself alone, then you pray alone for yourself. Since we are united in Christ we pray for and with each other. That the high priest of the Old Testament went into the holy place of the temple to pray for the people and as Jesus is now at the right hand of God making intercession for us so are we to make use of our priestly privileges and pray to our Father for each other. Our fellow Christians, all over the world, are also praying “Our Father.” We are praying for them and they are praying for us. That's what knits us together, gives us strength to keep up the fight against the devil and all that is evil, and gives us untold comfort in every tribulation.

An elderly lady, who was confined to her house for years, said, “I am always glad when Sunday comes because on that day I know that some Christian congregation is praying for me every hour of the day.” What a comforting thought. As the sun rises in the east and proceeds to the west, so the “Our Fathers” ascend to the throne of grace hour after hour, all around the world.

**Questions:** *Has your experience of the Christian life been more of an individual pursuit or more of a team effort? It's not wrong to pray, “My Father ...” and to pray for personal needs, yet what are the benefits of praying, “Our Father ...”?*

### Part III – We Pray to Our Father WHO IS IN HEAVEN

Jesus tells us to add the words, “*who is in heaven.*” By this phrase he would remind us the Father to whom we are now praying is Lord over all and has the power to give us even more than we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). Earthly fathers are limited in their means - at times too poor or unable to grant the requests of their children. Our Father in heaven, however, can answer any prayer. “*For nothing will be impossible with God.*” (Luke 1:37). “*The same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him*” (Romans 10:12).

The Lord who saved Noah from the flood and the Israelites from Pharaoh, who sent manna from heaven in the wilderness and produced water from a rock, who fed Elijah through a raven and 5,000 with a few loaves and fishes is still able to give us anything for which we pray.

**Questions:** *What motivates you to pray? Do you find it easy to believe God for big things? Why or why not? When you pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done ...” do you have any specifics in mind you are hoping for or do you just pray and leave the details up to God? Why?*

#### Wrap-Up:

The very first line of the Lord’s Prayer reminds us of the tremendous place of privilege from which we pray: We don’t pray to an impersonal deity, but to the God who relates to us as a loving Father and invites us to talk to Him about everything. We do not pray alone, but with the whole family of God. Jesus gave his life to make us one with Him so that we too call God our Father and one another brother and sister. We do not pray to a local deity limited in power, but to the God who reigns over all and holds all power and authority.

**Read:** Ephesians 3:14-21

**Questions:** *How does Paul’s prayer reflect the truths found in “Our Father in heaven”? How is Paul’s prayer like your prayers? Different?*

## **GREAT28**

**Read:** Colossians 4:2-4

*What is the relationship between prayer and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)? What would you like to be different about your prayers this week?*

### **Prayers:**

Pray the following together:

*Our Father who art in heaven,*

*Hallowed be Thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come.*

*Thy will be done,*

*On earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*



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