

When We Say Father

Adrian Rogers
and Steve Rogers

Contents

Introduction	1
1. Our Father— <i>The Person of the Prayer</i>	5
2. First Things First— <i>The Priority of the Prayer</i>	27
3. Our Daily Bread— <i>The Provision of the Prayer</i>	47
4. The Freedom of Forgiveness— <i>The Pardon of the Prayer</i>	61
5. Deliver Us from Evil— <i>The Protection of the Prayer</i>	81
6. Thine Is the Glory— <i>The Praise of the Prayer</i>	99
7. Ask, Seek, Knock— <i>The Promise of the Prayer</i>	113

Introduction

“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

≈ Matthew 6:9-13

Our Lord has given us a model prayer. He said, *“After this manner pray ye...”* This is not necessarily a prayer to be repeated by rote. Our Lord warned about vain repetitions in this same passage. Sometimes we’ll be in a public assembly and someone will say, “Let’s all stand and say the Lord’s Prayer.” Well, friend, you don’t say prayers; you pray prayers.

Suppose I come and sit down in your living room, you look at me and say, “Say a conversation.” That wouldn’t make much sense, would it? Prayer is not

talking at God, it is talking with God. It is not rattling off beautiful thoughts, or even verses of scripture. Jesus is giving us a model prayer. Jesus is saying, “Pray like this.”

Don't try to pray for a particular length of time. It is not the length of your prayer that counts. Don't argue with God. It is not the logic of your prayer that counts. Don't use fancy language. It's not the language of your prayer

“Prayer can do anything God can do, and God can do anything.”

that counts. It is the focus of your prayer. Focus on Almighty God. It is the force of your prayer. Pray in the power of the Holy Spirit of God. It is the faith of your prayer. Pray, believe, and you'll receive; pray and doubt, you will do without.”

How important it is that we learn to pray. Friend, the time will come, if it is not already here, that when for God to answer your prayer will be the most important thing to you on this earth. You can learn many things. But you can learn nothing better than to learn how to pray.

Nothing can stand against the man who can pray because prayer can do anything that God can do and God can do anything. It has well been said that nothing lies outside the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God. You do not have a need but what proper prayer would help you to attain that which you need. You do not have a failure in your life but what proper

prayer would have avoided that failure. You do not have a burden, a heartache, a tear, or a fear that proper prayer cannot help to remove, to sooth, to bless, to help, to heal. I'm telling you, my dear friend, that prayer is the order of the day.

The prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray begins with these words: "Our Father." Don't just lightly pass over these two words. They are the key to the entire prayer. When we say Father, we express His nature. God is Father. When we say Father, we expect His nurture. He will take care of us. And when we say Father, we exalt His name.

God is Father. We come to Him as His children. Incredible things are in store for us "when we say Father."



Chapter 1

Our Father

“The Person of the Prayer”

*“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father
which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”*

≈ Matthew 6:10

Think about prayer. Think about God being the heavenly Father, and ask yourself this question: Why do I pray? Why should I have to tell God what He already knows? Why should I ask Him for what He already wants to give?

We Do Not Pray to Instruct God

Many times our prayers are little more than a laundry list of the things we think God needs to do for us: “God, I need a job, and I need for You to work out this

situation, and I've got to know if it's Your will for me to get married this year, or wait until next year."

The Bible *does* tell us "*in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*" (Phil 4:6). However, there is a big difference between bringing our needs before the Father and instructing Him. We do not pray to instruct God.

We Do Not Pray to Impress God

Sometimes we think we're impressing God by using a certain kind of rhetoric—designed to impress those who are listening. Jesus scolded the Pharisees for praying like that: "*And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward*" (Matthew 6:5). Jesus also told us we don't have to use a lot of liturgical lingo, repeating the same religious sounding phrases over and over: "*And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them*" (Matthew 6:7–8).

That ought to be an encouragement to many of us—that we don't have to be a junior-size Shakespeare in order to pray. You may have been present at an event when someone has been asked, "Would you lead us in prayer?" "Oh," came the reply, "I can't pray." Well, now wait a minute. Can he talk? If he's a child, can he talk to an earthly father? If an earthly child can talk to an earthly

father, you can talk to your heavenly Father. You don't have to use King James English. You don't have to put some "thee's" and "thou's" into your prayer. It's all right to pray using everyday language. God understands modern English, and He can understand you when you pray; just speak to God out of your heart.

We Do Not Pray to Inform God

You can't tell God anything He doesn't already know. A wise man said, "Has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God?" Nothing takes the Father by surprise; nothing catches Him off guard. God knows it all, the beginning and the end. He says in this passage of Scripture, "*Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him.*" You don't pray to tell God something He didn't know. You don't pray to inform God.

We Pray to Invite God

Here is why we pray to God our Father—not to instruct Him, not to impress Him, not to inform Him, but to invite Him. Prayer is God's way of bonding us with our heavenly Father.

A while back, I was invited to speak at a college. I said, "I'm sorry. I would like to come, but I just can't. My schedule will not allow it." They said, "Please. If you'll come, we'll send a private airplane over and pick you up." I said, "All right. I'll go." When the plane came to pick me up, it was an airplane with only two seats—one for the pilot, and the other for me. The pilot said, "Pastor, can

you fly?” I said, “No.” He said, “Would you like to fly this airplane?” I said, “Sure.” He said, “Take the controls. It’s yours.”

You need to get the mental picture: he’s sitting right next to me, telling me what to do, but my hands are on the controls, flying the airplane. It was great fun, and I enjoyed doing something I’d never done before. Off course, when it came time to land, I had relinquished the controls back to the pilot. Taking off is optional; landing is mandatory. Now here’s the whole point. He could fly it without me; I could not fly it without him. But he allowed me to fly it with him, and we were having wonderful fellowship.

In the same way, God can do it without us; we cannot do it without Him, but God allows us to do it with Him. And the way He allows us to do it with Him is by prayer. By that prayer we have a bonding with God, a fellowship with God, and we can know God, not just as the great ruler of the universe, but we can know God as our heavenly Father.

I’d like you to think with me about three things that happen when we pray, when we say Father:

When We Say Father, We Express God’s Nature

What is God’s nature? God is Father. Throughout history, the philosophers have had all kinds of ways that they talk about God. Aristotle called God “the unmoved mover.” In other words, to Aristotle, prayer doesn’t affect God at all. Huxley called Him “the eternal unknown.” Arnold called Him “the absolute

unknown.” The generation that has grown up watching *Star Wars* might want to refer to Him as “the Force”—some sort of mysterious energy field in the ether out there that moves and controls things. And if you talk to the man on the street, when he speaks of God, he’ll speak of Him perhaps flippantly, irreverently as “the man upstairs.”

But who is God? Jesus taught us to call Him Father. Pay close attention. One hundred and sixty-seven times in the Bible, Jesus called Him Father. Do you think that’s by happenstance? No. God is Father to us. Now there are those today who think that God is not Father, and that perhaps we ought to call God Mother.

The following article appeared in the Wall Street Journal, April 27, 1992:

**The Lord’s Name: Image of God as “He” Loses its
Sovereignty in America’s Churches
More worshippers challenge language that describes
the Supreme Being as male**

LONG BEACH, CA. The First Congregational Church here looks every inch a bastion of religious tradition. Inside the imposing Italian renaissance structure graced with delicate rose windows are mahogany pews and a grand old pipe organ. Then the Sunday service begins. “May the God who mothers us all bear us on the breathe of dawn, make us to shine like the sun, and hold us in the palm of her hand,” intones Mary Ellen Kilsby, the pastor.

A number of theologians warn that language shapes reality. And unless the church changes its imagery, it will effectively endorse gender and race bias. By insisting on God as Father, they

say, traditionalists risk deifying a mere word, committing the sin of idolatry.

The Reverend Kilsby's preaching has encouraged her congregation toward eclecticism. And, as they gather over coffee after Sunday service, members talk about how they picture God: as a cloud, a formless spirit, mother earth.

What conclusion are we left with? If you insist on using the Bible word Father, then you have “deified” a word; you are an idolater. Now that’s slick, isn’t it? So anybody who insists on calling God Father is an idolater. Jesus, when He taught us to pray Father, what was He doing? He was expressing gender and race bias. We ought to be ashamed of Jesus.

In reality, when we call God Father, we are not just merely attributing to God human attributes, and making God in our image. Father is not what God is like; Father is what God is. Someone may ask, “Is God a man?” Of course not! God is not a man; God is not a woman. God is Spirit. But God is Father. And when we call God Father, we’re not talking biology; we’re talking theology. It’s very important that you understand this, because if you don’t understand it, your knowledge of the Bible is going to be all skewed.

Divine Fatherhood is not a reflection of human fatherhood. It is not that since we are fathers, we project that onto God, but to the contrary. All human fatherhood is patterned after the divine Fatherhood. Father is what God is.

That brings up a problem, because some have been raised by fathers who were harsh or neglectful or dishonest or cruel or maybe absent, and we ask,

“That’s what a father is like? God is like my father? Then maybe I don’t want to have much to do with Him.”

We can’t look at a human father, and infer that’s what God must be like. On the other hand, every human father ought to endeavor to be more like God. First Corinthians 8:6: *“But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. But to us there is one God, the Father.”*

Some people ask me, “Do you believe that Allah is God?” Of course not! They reply, “Well, the Muslim believes in one God, and we believe in one God, so we all believe in the same God.” That’s ridiculous. What if we were to agree that Tennessee has one capital, but I say it’s Nashville, and you say it’s Memphis. However, we say, “Isn’t that wonderful? We all believe in one capital.” Things that are different are not the same. The one God, the true God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the triune God.

Where Is God?

When the model prayer says, *“Our Father, which art in Heaven,”* what is it talking about? Is it talking about the abode of God where the saints who have graduated to glory are? Actually, this means “in the heavenlies,” in the spiritual realm. It means that God is everywhere. There is no place where your Father is not. Therefore, your Father is not an absentee Father; He’s always with you. A wise man said, “God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference

is nowhere.” There is no place where God is not. He is our Father in the heavens. That means that He’s right here with me and He’s right there with you.

My wife, Joyce, and I love to walk hand in hand on the beach when the sun is setting. It’s incredible. And when that sun is setting, there’s a shimmering path of shining gold that comes across the ocean. And as Joyce and I are walking down the beach, that path comes right to us. But, you know the amazing thing? There may be a couple up a hundred yards ahead of us, and that path is coming right to them. And another couple a hundred yards ahead of them, and that path is coming right to them.

Everybody has God all to himself. In fact, God doesn’t love us all; He loves us each. He loves every one of us. And He is our Father in the heavenlies; that is, He is here with us, not just somewhere way beyond the blue, peeking down from above the clouds. He is ever present.

When We Say Father, We Experience God’s Nurture

Do you know what the word *nurture* means? Nurture means “to take care of.” So many times we think of our responsibility to God, and we do have a responsibility to God, because He is our Father. But have you ever thought of God’s responsibility to you?

Whenever a couple brings children into this world, they’re responsible for them. If they don’t take care of them, they’re guilty of a crime in our society; they can be put in jail for child neglect. I want to tell you here some good news.

Our heavenly Father will never be arrested for child neglect. We experience His nurture. He is the God who is going to take care of us. How does He get to be our Father? He doesn't have the responsibility for all the people in this world. He does, as sovereign king, as judge, but not as Father.

There's a doctrine around called The Universal Fatherhood of God and the Universal Brotherhood of Man: It says this—that God is the Father of all, and we're all brothers. That sounds good, that sounds so sweet, but there's one thing wrong with it. It's not so. He is the Creator of all of us. And in the broadest sense, with a stretch of the word, you could call Him the Father, but not in the spiritual sense. Not all people are children of God; only those who are born into His family. Jesus said in John 8:44 when He was speaking to the Pharisees, *"You are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do..."*

"God doesn't love us all; He loves us each."

In this world, there are some who are children of God and there are some who are sons and daughters of the devil. We don't become God's child until we're born into God's family. In John 1:12 we read: *"But as many as received him [Jesus] to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."* Here's another verse: *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ"* (Galatians 3:26). God becomes our Father by conception, therefore, and not by creation.