

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Part 2 – October 5, 2008

[4-year-old Emma Burns recites *The Lord's Prayer*]

Think about your feelings toward that little girl. *Our* feelings toward Emma can't compare to the pride and joy that her *parents* must feel. And yet, their feelings are only remotely similar to how our Father feels ... when *you* pray. He thinks you're so precious, so cute ... so adorable!

That's the lesson! The rest of this message is just commentary. We're looking at the first two words of The Lord's Prayer today.



When Jesus opened his model prayer with "Our Father", He was emphasizing the closeness that *God* Himself desires to have with us. Because ...

- God is a Father not a force.

He's not a distant, detached, impersonal power; He's a *person*.



And He's *asking* to be approached on an intimate basis; the same exact way a small child would jump onto her father's lap to say, "I love you!"

- Prayer isn't just for us ... it's also for Dad.

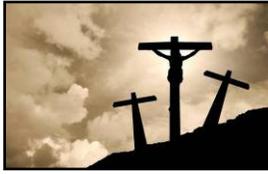
God receives a blessing and a benefit from *your* prayers. Time spent with our Dad is one of the chief ways we "bless the Lord". Does it seem weird, calling Him, "Dad"?

It was even weirder when Jesus started calling Him "Father".



In the 39 books of the Old Testament (written over 1000 year period), God is referred to as "Father" about *fourteen* times; and then mostly as the Father of a nation, not an individual. But Jesus comes along and (in the book of John alone, accounting for a three year period), He refers to God as "Father" over 120 times!

Q: Did you know that *every* prayer Jesus prays in the N.T. (except for just *one*), begins with Him saying, "Father ..."?



Q: So, which is the *one* He didn't begin with "Father"?

A: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Q: And why didn't He say "Father" that time?

A: He was quoting the Old Testament! (*Psalms 22:1*)

Prior to Jesus, God was approached with apprehension and dread.

When the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai, God descended onto the mountain to give Moses the Ten Commandments.



Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, "Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death." - *Exodus 19:12 NIV*

After they had the commandments, God instructed them to build the Ark of the Covenant to house them. And regular folks were strictly forbidden to touch it ... even to keep it from falling.



... Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God. - *2 Samuel 6:6-7 NIV*

In hindsight, God had good reasons for His actions. But, they only knew that the closer they got the more *dreadful* He seemed!

Jesus' disciples grew up with the temple sacrificial system.



Inside Herod's temple, only the high priest would *dare* to go behind the veil into the Holy of Holies (where the Ark held the Ten Commandments); and then just once a year (on Yom Kippur), in order to offer the blood sacrifice and incense.

They knew full well the stories of Mount Sinai and Uzzah, so for them, calling God "Dad" was a risky, radical departure.



And in fact, Jesus used the Aramaic term: "Abba", which is an affectionate term that more closely equates to our words: "Daddy" and "Papa".

And this is how He chooses to open His Prayer.

The disciples didn't think of God on such intimate terms and this greatly hindered their relationship and their prayers. So Jesus said, "When you pray, try saying: 'Our *Papa*; Our *Daddy* ...'"

How about you? Are you on such intimate terms with Papa God?

Thanks (or no thanks) to King James, many believers grow up thinking that God prefers some formality in our prayers.

I'm pretty sure God created parenting so we'd better understand *His* heart; and I don't think I would've wanted to hear my kids say: "We beseech thee to bestow thy humble allowance upon us."

My "kids" are 21 and 19, and I *still* like it when they call me "Daddy" (though my son usually calls me "B"). And I like it when they let me in on their personal lives and we just talk. And they've learned how to take full advantage of my love.

Notice how Jesus places the personal ownership in there. He doesn't just begin with, "Father", but with "*Our* Father". This is the sweet "Our" of prayer right there!



He's *ours*! He belongs to *us*, just as *we* belong to *Him*. Not in a selfish sense, but in the same way a child possesses the heart of a loving parent. And in that same way ...

- We own His heart.

But sadly, not all of His kids can call Him Father.



In one respect *every* human *ever* born *is* His child because He created them; but, as we all know there's more to being a dad than creating a kid.

- After we're created we must be connected.

Only one connection gives us the right to become God's children:

To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave **the right to become children of God** – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. - *John 1:12-13 NIV*

Q: "Received" and "believed" in whom? Who we talkin' about?

A: Jesus! The only Son *begotten*, not made. (*John 1:18*).

So when we pray, "Our Father," we're not just affirming that God *created* us. We're declaring that, through Jesus, God saved us!

But a whole lot of believers have a huge barrier when it comes to connecting with their *Heavenly* Father. Any guesses as to what it is?

It's their *earthly* fathers!



For many, "Father" is synonymous with hostility and rejection and abuse; and the feelings we associate with it are repulsion, anger and scorn.

- Bad dads distort our perception of God.

We all tend to project the weaknesses of our fathers onto God.



If dad was unreasonable or unpleasable, we'll unconsciously transfer those attributes to God.

If he was unreliable, unconcerned, unpredictable, or unjust we'll project *those* traits instead.

Here's what we need to realize: Jesus wasn't looking for a warm, fuzzy metaphor to humanize an otherwise indescribable being.

He didn't look back on His happy childhood memories of fishing with Joseph (His own dad) and think, "Yeah ... God is like *that*."

God is not "like" a father. God isn't a reflection of all that is good about human fatherhood - just the opposite. All that is good about human fatherhood is a reflection of Him!



Jesus uses this word, because in its *most* inspiring and gracious sense, it is the *essence* of who God is. It is fundamental to His nature and unique to His relationship with creation.

- God is the standard for all fatherhood.

And all human fathers should be measured by, judged by, and will ultimately fall short of the one and only *genuine* definition of *Father*.

Jesus *knew* the Father ... and so we do too, because He also said:

If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. - *John 14:7 NIV*

When we draw close to God, we're approaching a compassionate Father who is sympathetic to our limitations and our struggles.

And an affectionate Father who is greatly moved by the least inclination on our part to resist evil and do good.