

Our Father in Heaven

Matthew 6:9 (New American Standard Bible)

“Pray, then, in this way:

*‘Our Father, who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.*

Introduction

Happy Father’s Day! Today, we honor our earthly fathers and appreciate them for what they have done for us. From the bottom of our hearts, we say, Thank You. To our Heavenly Father, we also can say, Thanks. Amen.

This morning, I am going to talk about our Father in Heaven, not on our earthly fathers. I have already spoken about our earthly fathers before, so I decided to talk about God our Father in Heaven today.

By the way, please pray for those who have a bad experience with their earthly fathers. Some of us have wonderful earthly fathers, yet others don’t. I once saw a sister in Christ who refused to call God in Heaven Father due to her troubled relationship with her earthly father. In a sense, I understood her trauma that paralyzed her relationship with God in Heaven. However, we ought to learn to separate the image of Heavenly Father from that of our bad experience of our earthly fathers. Unlike our earthly fathers, our Father in Heaven is perfect and loving. He never hurts you. He always helps you. He is sacrificial and unconditional. He does everything for our own eternal good. Therefore, we can still have God in Heaven as our perfect Father. We can still call Him Father without associating with the imperfect image of our earthly fathers.

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Bible trivia: Did you know that you can actually pray without mentioning of the word ‘God?’ Not even once? Look at the Lord’s Prayer. As we all know, it begins with the sentence: Our Father which art in heaven.

Our Father: When we begin our prayers to God, most of us would be fine with ‘Dear Lord,’ or ‘Lord,’ or simply ‘God’ instead of ‘Our Father.’ In fact, that’s how the disciples of Jesus would typically pray. But Jesus taught them to begin their prayers with ‘Our Father.’ Such a teaching and calling the Holy God ‘Father’ was unheard of among Jews, and to the

first century Jewish mindset, it was such an unconventional way to pray. Actually, calling God 'Father' in such an affectionate term was considered a blasphemy against God by the religious leaders—that deserves the penalty of death by stone.

A bit of background information on how radical Jesus was in His time. As I said, ordinary Jews would not dare to even think about calling God Father. Up until that time, for over 2000 years, they often called their human ancestors 'father(s)' such as Abraham (Matthew 3:9, John 8:41), Isaac (Romans 9:10), Jacob (John 4:12), or David (Luke 1:32, Mark 11:10). They also would call the LORD '**God of our fathers,**' but seldom 'our Father.' *Never call God the Father, they were taught, because it makes you too high above or too close to God. Know your place: you're human. He is divine.*

I looked up in the Hebrew Scripture to find out how many times the Israelites called God Father: three times altogether. The first one who ever called God his Father was King David. In fact, there's no evidence that David actually called God his father: rather it was God who gave David a permission to call Him thus: *He (David) shall cry unto me (God), Thou art my **father**, my **God**, and the rock of my salvation* (Psalm 89: 26, KJV). Prophet Isaiah once prayed to God: *For **You are our Father**, though Abraham does not know us. And Israel does not recognize us. **You, O LORD, are our Father**, our Redeemer from of old is Your name* (Isaiah 63:16, NASB). Another time Prophet Malachi called God Father. He was lamenting the fact that people of God treacherously dealt with each other: *Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?* (Malachi 2:10). Malachi was not calling God as his own Father; rather calling God as a common Father of all. Besides these instances, no one in the entire Old Testament ever called God Father. The people of God restrained from calling God their Father. They showed their utmost respect when it comes down to the name of God and calling thereof.

Well, that tradition was about to change. When the disciples of Jesus asked Him to teach them how to pray, He gave them the Lord's Prayer. He instructed them to start their prayer with calling God 'Our Father.' Well, they might have reasoned, *Rabbi, You can do so, but not we. You are intimate with Him; You are the Son of God; the Messiah, so You can call Him even Abba* (Mark 14:36) (Luke 2:49—I had to be in My Father's House). *But us? No way.*

The best part of prayer and the most appealing power of prayer to God in Heaven comes from two words: **Our Father**. It tells me that prayer is not a religion (cf. the older son in Luke 15:29). It is a relationship (cf. the younger son in Luke 15:12, 18, 21). You begin the prayer with the right status before God remembering who God is, who you are, and to whom you pray: He is your Father (holy and righteous—John 17:11, 25), you are His child, and you are praying to your own Father! By instructing His disciples (and us) to start their prayer

by calling God 'Our Father,' Jesus elevated their (and our) status from a slave of sin to a servant of God: from a commoner to a royal child of God, and from a complete stranger to God's adopted child.

It gets even better. Later on, after His resurrection, Jesus ultimately promoted us to the same status as His: *My Father Your Father, My God Your God* (John 20:17). From then on, every writer of the New Testament was inspired and instructed by the Spirit of God to boldly call God the Father, Abba. E.g. Philip called God Father (John 14:8). Peter did, too (Acts 2:33). Paul called God Abba, the most affectionate term (Galatians 4:6). We the believers in Christ today also call God Abba Father because we are His adopted children: *For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father* (Romans 8:15, KJV). Jesus called Father Abba all the time. In fact, He called God 'My Father' over a hundred times in the Gospel according to John. He called out to His Father Abba in good times (John 11:45) and in the moment of distress (Mark 14:36). So did His disciples (all the writers of the New Testament called God Father). So are we commanded to cry out to God our Father. Both in good times and bad times. Call onto Him Abba Father. All the time. In prayer.

By the way, what does God the Father do for us? Three things: *Provide. Protect. Prune*. First, He provides all things to us (John 13:3). He knows every need of ours (Luke 12:30). No good thing does He withhold from us (Psalm 84:11): *how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* (Romans 8:32, KJV).

Next, He protects us from any harm: *He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him* (1 John 5:18).

Thirdly, He prunes (sanctifies) us (Jude 1:1, John 10:36, Ezekiel 37:28): Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. God the Father is the vine dresser. Why pruning? So that we may bear fruit worthy of God's name (John 15:2). He prepares us for our life together with Him both on earth and in Heaven. If we reject and gripe about God's pruning (sanctifying) acts in our lives, we don't understand our relationship with God at all. He sanctifies us in our spirit, soul, and body so that we may be worthy of His calling and presence in Heaven (2 Thessalonians 1:11). He is committed to this pruning job through and through (1 Thessalonians 5:23) until we reach in Heaven.

One more thing: by calling God our Father in prayer doesn't automatically get you into Heaven. God invites everyone to be His child, but each one must believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord. Anyone can recite the Lord's Prayer and call God Abba Father until his/her face is blue. Yet, it doesn't make them God's children. Faith in Jesus does. For instance,

Jesus said to some of the Jews *your father is the devil* (John 8:44). What made them the children of the devil? Not because they didn't believe in God. Yes, they did. What, then? Because they rejected Jesus and refused to acknowledge Him as the Messiah (John 8:45). Same thing with anyone today that refuses to call Jesus the Messiah. Once again: what makes a person child of God? Believing that Jesus was sent from God and loving Him by keeping His word (John 16:27, 14:21). If anyone fails to believe in Jesus, they cannot become a child of God.

Conclusion

Prayer is not a religion. It is a relationship. You speak with your Heavenly Father. So, begin your prayer with the confidence calling your Father in Heaven: He is your loving Father and you're His child. Your prayers delight Him. His eyes are on you and His ears are attentive to your prayers. He is delighted to see you in prayer and give you eternal life in Heaven. Amen.