

Life Group Study Guide
Our Father in Heaven
Matthew 6:5-9

Introduction: Our Incredible Privilege

There must have been something striking about the way Jesus prayed—something so striking, in fact, that it prompted the disciples to plead, “Lord, teach us to pray!” (Luke 11:1). What could have made Jesus’ prayers so compelling, arresting, and unusual? When we consider *who* Jesus is, it only makes sense. For, when Jesus prayed, he prayed not as a mere human, but as God the Son, speaking with God the Father—continuing the divine dialogue of love and reverence that had been going since eternity past (John 17:20-26). In fact, in all but one of Jesus’ prayers (his prayer of dereliction from the cross, Matthew 27:46), he addresses God as his *Father*.

We understand why Jesus prays to God as his Father. After all, He is the Son of God. But what we find astonishing is that Jesus teaches *us* as his followers to also pray in the same way: “Our Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:9). Unless Jesus authorized and enabled us to address God in this way, it would be an arrogant presumption to address the God of the universe as if we are his sons and daughters. Yet in this opening address of the Lord’s Prayer, we are reminded of a fundamental reality that must inform our lives as followers of Jesus: We have the incredible privilege of approaching God as our Father in Heaven.

Prayer Is Putting Into Words Our Purpose for Living

- God created us to glorify him in a right relationship with him. How does prayer relate to the purpose for which God created us?

So Why Is It So Hard to Pray?

- What is true about our condition as humans that makes prayer so difficult?
- Why are we engaging in spiritual warfare when we pray?

- How would you reply to a person who objects that prayer is just wishful thinking? or that prayer just an escape into a fantasy world?
- What kinds of distractions often keep us from praying?
- How does the structure of the Lord's prayer inform the way we think about our needs?

Why It Matters That We Can Call God "Our Father in Heaven"

- As noted in the sermon, Muslims begin their prayers by proclaiming "Allah is the greatest." How do you think this way of addressing God impacts their approach to life?

It shapes how we pray to God.

Read Matthew 6:5-6.

- What motivates the hypocrite to pray, and what does this tell us about his view of God?
- How does the reality that we pray to God as our Father "who sees in secret" affect how we pray?

Read Matthew 6:7-8.

- What motivates the "babbling" to pray, and what does this tell us about his view of God?
- How does the reality that we pray to God as our Father "who knows what we need" affect how we pray?

- In what ways do we tend to be like the “babbling” who thinks he can coerce God into answering because of his own efforts?

It shapes how we perceive God.

- What do each of the three words—“our,” “Father,” “in heaven,”—tell us about God’s character?

- In our view of God, which aspect of God’s character do we tend to let go of, and how does this manifest itself in our lives?

It shapes how we praise God.

- What had to happen in order for us to become the sons and daughters of God?

- What are some reasons that calling God our Father in heaven bring him great praise?

- What are some circumstances in which we find it comforting to remember that God is our Father in heaven?