

Fresh Insights on the Lord's Prayer
Linking hearts with the Father's heart
Scripture: Matt.6:5-15

Introduction

One of life's most precious experiences = having children – developing a close relationship with them as they grow up – cf. One of life's saddest experiences = being estranged from one of your children

How does a father express his desire for relationship with his children? In many ways, but primarily through staying in touch with them – keeping open the lines of communication with his children and hoping that they will want to do the same with him

HOW does this apply to us in our relationship with our Father? Speaking with Him in prayer – see Jesus' teaching in Matt.6:5-15 – not as a formal speech as if normal children make formal speeches with their parents – rather with joyful and open spontaneity – using our Lord's Prayer as a pattern for all praying

FOCUS in *this* message = praying for our Christian brothers and sisters everywhere – praying our Family Prayer for God's worldwide family, not just for ourselves or our limited circle – note the personal pronouns “our” and “us”

Throughout this prayer – discover more depths of our God's great FATHER-HEART

TWO PARTS:

- The words of address – how we are to address God in prayer – meaning
- The requests – God's interests and man's needs

How may we address the invisible, infinite, all-powerful God above? Jesus taught ...

“OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN”

STORY: This week I spoke with a friend in Sydney (originally from Iran) to understand what Middle-eastern fathers are like (similarities to how people in Jesus' day would have understood “Father”) – he spoke warmly of his father “a family man” who loved his children – enjoyed spending time with them (came straight home from work) – he also said that Muslims in the ME cannot imagine addressing God as “Father” – never thought of Him as “Father” – a new idea that they have to learn – compare with their own father

WHO IS THIS GOD? WHAT IS HE LIKE? JESUS MAKES HIM KNOWN TO US:

- His Father isn't like the gods of the nations = unknowable, far removed – “draws near” out of a longing for a relationship with His chosen people – expressed in the address word “Father” (= Abba = first Aramaic word spoken by Jewish child, cf. “dadda”) – used by Jesus when He prayed to His Father – see Luke 11:1 – note the request of Jesus’ disciples based on watching Him at prayer

OUR FATHER’S HEART:

- Longing for an intimate relationship with His beloved children – more than just saving them “from” sin and hell but saving them “for Himself” (Titus 2:14) – enjoying a personal relationship
- Reaches out with compassion to ALL His children everywhere – not just interested in the oldest, or in his sons, or in one particular child as His favourite – all are equally precious to Him – all loved in the same way – TO BE REFLECTED IN OUR PRAYING

How then does this influence the way we pray? How does this move us?

PRAY, saying “Our Father in heaven” ...

- these words are a confession that we belong to God’s universal FAMILY – thinking beyond the parochial limits (both ... and) – not just thinking about the members of our small circle of Christian friends; and
- “Our Father in heaven” also expresses our oneness and solidarity with our Christian brothers & sisters EVERYWHERE – whoever they are, wherever – they are “family”, therefore, their needs become “our” concern

Because of Who God is as “our Father”, Jesus teaches us to offer up six prayer requests:

1) “HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME” (“May Your name be honoured” – NLT)

STORY: Our friend from Iran also mentioned that a father in the Middle-East is respected and honoured within the family – a child would not disagree with his father even if his father may say something that he knows isn't true, eg to a guest – “yes, my son has eaten” – he will agree (even though he has not yet eaten) – would never shame his father before others – SHAME in Middle-eastern and Oriental cultures one of the strongest elements in their culture – hence guarding the family honour and name is one of their highest priorities in life

OUR FATHER’S HEART:

- to reveal to peoples everywhere the honour and glory of His holy name – through proclaiming His trustworthy words and working His mighty deeds
- to spread the fame of His holy name spread among all peoples so that they might fear Him and put their trust in Him – Joshua 2:9-11 (conquest of Jericho):

9 and (Rahab) said to them, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you.

10 We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed.

11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below."

cf. Psalm 145:3-7

PRAYING THE PRAYER "Hallowed by Your name"

- praying asking our Father that the glory and honour and reverence due to His holy name spread among all peoples – that He will so work among the nations that many people will know the *real* Jesus and know the Father through Him – so that all tribes and nations might know Him, love and worship Him

2) "MAY YOUR KINGDOM COME!"

Why would Jesus teach us to make this request? What is the nature of the kingdoms of this world? Violence, destruction, terror, hatred, eg Indonesia

OUR FATHER'S HEART:

- to reveal His Son as His appointed King (Messiah – Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:6-7) – the Father loves and delights in His Son and longs to reveal Him in all His glory to all the world – *"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory."* (Matt.24:30)
- to bring to a final, forever end the cruel, tyrannical rule of the prince of the kingdom of darkness

PRAYING THIS PRAYER, "Your kingdom come" ...

- NOW – asking our Almighty Father to establish His rule and reign in the hearts and lives of MANY people from EVERY people-group, eg in Afghanistan – God is answering this prayer NOW
- THEN – pleading with our Father that He will SOON gather all His beloved people together – from every tribe and people – to be joined with our Bridegroom: The longing of the bride and her cry: *"Come, O Lord!"* (1 Cor.16:22) *"He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."* (Rev.22:20)

Yet "ora et labora" ...

CH Spurgeon (Oct.29 Morning): “The child lisping, ‘Abba, Father,’ grows into the cherub crying, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy.’ There is but a step from rapturous worship to the *glowing missionary spirit*, which is a sure outgrowth of filial love and reverent adoration – “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

3) “YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!”

STORY: Traditional Middle-eastern father desires to have many children – no children a serious problem, cf. the name that God gave to Abram (“exalted father”): “Abraham” (“father of a multitude”) – as many spiritual children as sands upon the seashore and the stars in the sky = MANY

OUR FATHER’S HEART:

- His will and His heart is primarily to SAVE = “*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*” (John 3:17) “*This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*” (1 Tim.2:3-4)
- His will is to save people from every tribe and nation and people – to rescue people held captive by the lies of the evil one – to have trophies of grace like the apostle Paul from among those who seem so far away – including the salvation of Muslim leaders and scholars, cf. Jusuf Rony

PRAYING THIS PRAYER, “Your will be done on earth as in heaven”

- asking our heavenly Father that He will be pleased to save many from the evils and deceits of the kingdoms of this world and to give them an inheritance among the redeemed – those closest to us, and those we only hear about through the media

4) “GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD”

STORY: Michael told me that for the ME father, his primary role is as “provider” – who cares for the needs of his family – in the ancient world of Jesus’ day (cf. today in many non-western countries) “our daily bread” meant literally what the father or the mother were able to provide for their children today – “sufficient for today!” – looking to our Father to meet our every need

OUR FATHER’S HEART:

- to bless and enrich His people from the abundance from His table – to meet all their needs – to satisfy them with good things – Psalm 103:5 “*who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.*” “*And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*” (2 Cor.9:8)

How many and overwhelming are the needs of God's people around the world! We cannot meet all their needs with our material gifts – so MANY – but our Father and their Father has the power to meet their every need, material and spiritual – *“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.”* (Psalm 145:15-16)

PRAYING THIS PRAYER, “Give us this day” ...

- We cry out on behalf of God's precious ones all over the world asking Him to give them their “daily bread” – their physical food and drink, and the bread that most satisfies the deepest hungering and thirsting of their souls (*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”* Matt.5:6)
- We plead with God to send rain but most importantly “showers of blessing” upon spiritually parched ground – to send them shepherds and teachers who will feed them God's nourishing food, eg in China and similar other places

5) “FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES / SINS AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS / SIN AGAINST US”

THE FATHER'S HEART:

- Our Father is the loving Father, the Father of mercy and grace: *“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.”* (Psalm 103:8)
- His longing is to forgive and to be reconciled with His estranged creation: *“He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”* (Psalm 103:9-12)

PRAISE BE TO HIS HOLY NAME!

What does this prayer mean to us as we pray for the nations? We have sinned. They have sinned. All of us have rebelled against God's commands. None of us deserve one iota of God's mercy and kindness. Us ... and them! God is reaching out in forgiving grace – to be reflected in our praying, eg for our enemies, those who persecute us – Instead of pointing the righteous finger at the nations, God is calling us to forgive them for what they have done ... “Forgive them for they know not what they do!”

Rather we are to PRAY THIS PRAYER, “Forgive us”

- confessing both our personal sins and also our sins as a body of believers (“forgive us OUR sins”), eg our prayerlessness for the needs of the world, our lovelessness towards the “outsider” and the “foreigner” – for in this way we may have kept some out of God's kingdom

If we come with a contrite and broken heart to our loving Father, He will freely forgive us all our sins – He has promised to remove them and our guilt from His presence forever.

6) “AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE”

STORY: Egyptian family in Vienna – a ME father is a “protector” or “guardian” for his children – he is very protective especially towards his daughters, keeping them under his watchful eye all the time – only allowing them out of the home with an escort or guardian

God’s people everywhere face a vicious and cunning enemy (“the evil one”) – Satan is a determined enemy out to decimate the church of Jesus, to bring down the witness of God’s appointed leaders, to intimidate Christians so that they remain “silent” or retreat, to remove leaders from among the flock – consequently the believers are seriously tempted to compromise, retreat, flee for their lives (sometimes necessary), return to the old way, eg Sudan, Pakistan, Laos, etc.

BUT GOD is our faithful Father who protects and guards us from being snatched out of His hands (John 10:27-29; Psalm 121)

OUR FATHER’S HEART:

- “for” His people working on their behalf – spreading His protective wings over and around His beloved ones, like a mother hen (Ps.91:1) – always thinking and working for the good of His people – even transforming “bad things” in order that they accomplish His good purposes, eg using the murder of Graham Staines and their two sons in 1999 so that the Good News of God’s forgiveness could be proclaimed clearly throughout India

PRAYING THIS PRAYER, “And lead us not into temptation”

- praying for God’s canopy of loving protection to keep His precious children, our brothers and sisters, from the grip of the evil one – from the lies and deceits, from vicious attacks = attacks on their minds and bodies – and to bring GOOD instead of evil upon His people
- praying that God will stand in the way of Satan’s evil intentions to use the trials against them and their work in God’s kingdom, eg removing leaders – Satan’s strategy is to bring bad results out of bad experiences, whereas as we pray to our loving Father in heaven, He brings good results from bad experiences and circumstances

Conclusion

Christian brothers and sisters, it is our God-given family responsibility and duty to take hold of these different prayers and pray standing in the shoes of God’s family

To pray prayers expressing our Father’s heart of holy love and compassion for ALL members of His family around the globe

The encouraging truth is that we know that such prayers are “effectual” – that the Father answers them in ways that go far beyond the limits of our understanding and vision in this world

Therefore, pray in faith in our faithful, heavenly Father, knowing that He who knows each and every one of His beloved children will work through our prayers for the accomplishing of His purposes, the blessing of His people and the extension of His kingdom

Let God’s heart for all His children take hold of your heart as you pray according to the pattern of the Lord’s prayer

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