

# Learning to Pray with Jesus: Our Father Who Art in Heaven

Matthew 6:7-13 || Pastor Shawn Gendall || 20 February 2022

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,  
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,  
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.  
– CG Mission Statement*

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**Icebreaker:** What did you want to be when you grew up when you were a kid (say 5-8 years old)?

**Worship:** [Numbers 6:22-27](#) (Remain a few moments in worship with this passage. What is God's invitation?)

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**Sermon Summary for [Matt 6:7-13](#), [Eph 1:3-6](#)** (Read the passage aloud before reading the sermon summary.)

Following Christ's resurrection, early communities of believers were trying to live out His mission in the world. Into one of these, the apostle Paul sends a message of hope and belonging, reminding the Ephesian church of their adoption into God's family. These words echo the Lord's Prayer – welcoming of God's children into the house of God. Similarly, the Westminster Catechism asks what the preface of the Lord's Prayer teaches us. Its answer: "**Our Father who art in heaven** teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others."

Draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence // In prayer we learn to trust, to hope, to seek and find the mind of God, and to resist the safety of cynicism or the muted life of withdrawal. There is safety in cynicism and in only hoping for measured outcomes that we can control. But we have a wise, faithful King who has invited us into so much more. As one writer said, "Prayer is the deepest and highest work of the human spirit. In real prayer, we seek God's thoughts, we desire what God desires, we love what God loves, and we seek for God's will to be done. We also learn lessons we don't want to learn, tell secrets we don't want to tell, walk bridges we don't want to cross, face battles we don't want to fight... and then, we change the world. We stand at the door of Heaven, and then we rush in. But as we go, we ourselves change. Because to pray is to change." And: to pray is to hope ([Heb 4:16](#)).

Draw near to God as children to a Father, who is ready and able to help us // By using the word "father," God binds Himself to us. And because we become what we pray for, let us pray as trusting, worshiping children of a wise and loving Father. What can we therefore learn from and become through prayer?

- > A willingness to respond to needs ([1 John 5:14](#)).
- > A generosity of counsel ([Ps 32:8](#))
- > A longing to listen, even in troubling times ([Ps 120:1](#))
- > Forgiveness ([1 John 1:9](#))
- > An eagerness and availability ([Ps 148:8-9](#))
- > An enjoyment of time ([Ps 116:1-2](#))
- > Truth and courage when correction is needed ([Heb 12:7-9](#)).

Our God desires to adopt us as His children and to bless us with the rights, privileges and responsibilities of childhood in His family. In Christ we have received our inheritance, so that we might bring praise and glory to our Father. And we have redemption through His blood – forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. So we pray with holy reverence and confidence, as children to our Father, Who is able and ready to help us.

Pray with and for others // Since we are part of God's family, we need to learn to pray together. The New Testament is clear that our union with Christ binds us together as family. This brings meaning, love, purpose, and identity to our community. It also saddles us with a responsibility for (and toward) one another. Our lives are no longer our own; they belong to Christ and to His family. And so we not only pray *with* others but *for* others. Paul describes in Ephesians 2:7 that God is building and bringing this new family to Himself through the Gospel: "so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Our Father offers deep, powerful lasting community that could be ours if we truly embrace unity in Christ. So let us pray for one another in Christ, as our Savior taught us.

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**Discussion Questions** *(You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussions.)*

**Draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence**

- How do you pray? Are you alone? With family? Do you have lists of requests? Praises? Do you use Scripture? Share some of your best prayer practices.
  - What part does the Lord's Prayer play in your life today?
- What seems significant about "Our" being the first word Jesus gives us in this prayer? What seems significant about the 2nd word "Father"?
  - What does this phrase teach us about our true identity and relationship to God and others?
- Read the section summary, if you have not already, and reflect on the quote included that describes the power of prayer. What stood out to you as we read this?

**Draw near to God as children to a Father, ready and able to help us**

- Why do you think Jesus teaches us to address God as a Father who is in heaven and how does this impact your prayers?
  - How does this offer hope?
- Why do you think it is important to distinguish between our earthly "dad" and our heavenly "Father"?
  - Is this personally significant to you or anyone you know? How might you be able to help someone see God as a good and righteous Father always ready to help us?

**We should pray with and for others**

- Read [Acts 2:42](#). Which of the four things in this verse do you find is the easiest for you to be devoted to? Why? Which is the hardest? Why?
  - How can we be equally devoted to all four? How can your group be equally devoted to all four?
- Why is it important for Christians to pray together?
  - What biblical examples of Christians praying together can we follow?
- What kinds of things would need to happen for PCC to become known as a "house of prayer"?
  - What might God be calling you to do?

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**Engage & Experience: Prayer & Gratitude**

Last week, you were encouraged to write a prayer (6-8 sentences) where you tell a story of gratitude to God.

This week, contemplate our Father in heaven. So long as we are guided by Scripture (see Isaiah 6:1-13; 1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 102:19; Daniel 7:9-11; Acts 7:55-56; Revelation 4:2-8), prayerful reflection of heaven can lead us into a wondrous experience of our heavenly Father's nearness. Write a 6-8 sentence prayer that focuses exclusively on the wonder of our Father in heaven. What does He communicate to you? How does this make you feel? To learn more about this way of praying see [Pray With Your Eyes Open, Chapter 5: Seeking the Presence of God](#).

If your group wishes to work through the book [Pray With Your Eyes Open by Richard Pratt](#), along with the discussion guide, you can find the link to purchase [HERE](#). Take your time in practicing the exercises in this book; it can serve as a resource for the entire year of our focus on prayer.

For this week's Prayer Guide for personal or group use, click [HERE](#).