

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray” III (Matt 6:9)

Introduction – Having been duly warned not to pray in order to impress others or to babble in vain repetition, Jesus instructs the disciples, “*In this manner, therefore, pray:*” We often begin our prayers, whether the Lord’s prayer or our own, with “Father”. Thinking carefully about ‘the manner’ of this prayer, the selection of the words, the pattern that we are given, we must be careful to avoid vain repetition. There is great brevity and simplicity in the Lord’s Prayer. There also is great profundity. We begin with the address, “*Our Father in heaven.*”

Our Father in Heaven – God is the Father of all people in one sense (Acts 17:28), revealing His power. He is especially Father to His elect (Eph 1:5), revealing His judicial mercy. But it is even more evident that He is Father by His special grace and love towards those who are born again (1 John 3:1), with hearts crying out by the Spirit, “Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6). We are addressing One who says He loves us as He loves His only begotten Son (John 17:23). This prayer is a privilege only to those who are in Christ (John 1:12-13), and all others are excluded from this prayer for God does not allow them before Him (Psalm 5:4-6).

The Character of the Name, “Father” – What are the ultimate characteristics of the perfect father? What do children normally assume about their fathers? There is more to be considered in this name of God.

He is Most Ancient (Dan 7:9) – What do kids think when they learn you were once a baby?

He is Perfect (Matt 5:48) – The child believes his parents can do no wrong.

He is Wise (1 Tim 1:17) – Children ask their parents about everything – and expect answers.

He is Loving (1 John 4:17) – And the perfect father pours out this love upon His own (Zeph 3:17).

He is Rich (Eph 3:8) – He owns the cattle on a thousand hills and delights in giving.

He Never Dies (1 Tim 6:16) – We do not naturally expect our father to die.

Implications of God Being ‘our Father’ – His name, “Father,” is consistent with what the Word declares He will do for His children. Therefore, all of this flows into the context of opening our prayer, “*Our Father in heaven.*”

He will teach us - Isaiah 48:17

He is full of affection towards us – Isaiah 43:4, Eph 3:19, 1 Pet 5:7

He is full of sympathy towards us – Psalm 103:13, Isaiah 63:9, Zech 2:8

He will correct us, leading us towards holiness – Heb 12:5-6

He will protect us from the evil one – the Lord’s Prayer, and 1 Cor 10:13

He will pour out His grace – Heb 4:16

He sends His angels as ministers for us – Heb 1:14

He will not withhold any good thing from us – Psalm 34:10, Rom 8:32

He makes us heirs to all His promises – Heb 6:17

Our Response – As we pray, “Our Father,” with all that His name implies, there are obvious implications we must acknowledge in order to avoid our prayers being vain.

We Must Trust Him – Our salvation is in Him alone, and that by faith alone.

We Must Imitate Him – We are to look like our Father in our good works, in our mercy, in our forgiveness, in our hatred of sin and evil, and in our delight over that which is true, good and beautiful.

We Must Submit to Him – We must wait patiently to Him for His answers in His time according to His good pleasure.

We Must Honor Him – with childlike reverence (Mal 1:6).

We Must Obey Him – “as obedient children” (1 Pet 1:14).

We Must Look Like Children of the Victorious King/Father – Optimistic as He is about His promised future for the world (Isaiah 11:9) as well as our own destiny (Phil 1:6).

We Must Love His Children – Psalm 133:1, 1 Pet 2:17

Our Father in Heaven – We must learn to pray this way and destroy the sin of autonomous individualism rampant in today’s church. In one sense, all of our individual prayers are never ‘individual’ for we are always members of a body. This is one of the reasons we will be saying (and possibly one day singing) the Lord’s Prayer together in our service of worship

The Good of the Family in Mind – When we pray for ourselves, as we should, we must keep in mind that our greatest desires must include the good of the entire body. One application suffices as an illustration: What if God wants to use your trials as a means to knit us together closer in sacrifice and service?

Our Father *in Heaven* – The intimacy of our relationship with our Father in no way detracts from the infinite chasm between the Creator and His creation. His majesty and glory are unending. His power and sovereignty are exhaustive and absolute. He dwells in the realm removed from change and decay, for He is immutable and eternal.

In Jesus' Name – As we studied earlier, we come in the name of Jesus to God the Father. And Christ Himself is in heaven, seated at the right hand of God the Father. Our approach is guaranteed in Him but that is not to say that we come in a breezy fashion, but rather with fear and trembling (Psalm 2:11).

“Father of us, the One in the heavens” – This address reminds us of the joy and obedience that is ours in Christ Jesus. Meditate upon this; mutter it upon your lips – Our Father in heaven – that the powerful love of God would get a hold of us. And we would pray.

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