

LEARNING TO PRAY LIKE JESUS_3

(His Perception of Our Father)

As we continue with our series **"Learning to pray like Jesus"** - open your Bibles to **Matthew 6**. We're going to take a look today at what is commonly called the **"Our Father"** or **"the Lord's Prayer."** I'll begin by reading the verses immediately preceding it.

⁵ When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they've received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, don't keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they'll be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Don't be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. ⁹ This, then, is how you should pray:" If you would, **join me** in reciting the next portion together. The most familiar version is from the KJV- but we'll use the term **"trespass."**

⁹ Our Father, Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done_ on earth, as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

As I have often said, I do not believe that Jesus' intention was ever for this *"prayer"* to be part of a routine practice of the church. The context certainly indicates that even if it were a prayer we were to say by rote, praying it in public would be contradictory to His instruction about going into our room to pray in secret. And take note that He did not say this is what we should pray, but how we should pray. It is a model to learn from, not a prayer to be chanted. Yet, what I do propose today is to see what we can learn about Jesus' perception of His Father from this model for prayer. And remember, He says that His Father is our Father, too.

In this prayer, Jesus teaches us that **Our HEAVENLY FATHER'S Name is to be hallowed.** To hallow is *"To respect or honor greatly; to revere. The word is used to describe something or someone that is respected and admired_ because of a good reputation."* We might hear the word used to refer to something we should treat with awe _ such as a *"hallowed hall of learning"* or *"hallowed ground."* Our Father in Heaven's name is renowned. His reputation precedes Him. When you hear His name or call on His name, you should recognize who you're talking about or too. Which name? God was known in Scripture by many names. **"Yahweh"** (*the Great I Am*) and **"El Elyon"** (*God Most High*) and **"El Olam"** (*The Everlasting God*) are some of the most common. The idea in **Matthew 6:9** is to *"cause God's name to be respected."* It is a plea for God to move us to revere His name in our hearts and praise Him in the world. Yet, Jesus refers to this amazing, awesome, mighty, majestic, glorious God_ calling for us to address Him as *"Father."* Wow! And perhaps more than we may ever understand, this has bearing on why He insists our earthly **fathers deserve our respect.** Some of the reasons *"Our heavenly Father"* has such an amazing reputation are listed in the introduction to this prayer...

Jesus teaches us that **Our HEAVENLY FATHER sees and knows everything.** Theologians call it being omniscient. In the Old Testament, God was called **"Yahweh Roi."** (*The Lord who sees*) There is nothing we go through that He does not notice; No feeling or thought that He is oblivious to. Jesus' intent does not seem to be to fill our hearts with fear with this knowledge.

Instead, He wanted to assure us there is not a need that we have of which He is unaware. Though there can be value in itemizing our needs, or being specific in our petitions, He knows what we need before we even ask. Don't let the Geico commercial that suggests "genies" take things very literally cause you to wonder if God might misinterpret our requests. You don't have to describe in detail what you mean. God knows. **No father on earth** can be with his kids 24/7. But the best fathers spend enough time with them to know their individual needs. They are in tune to the needs of their children. They sense when their son or daughter is afraid or worried. They "perceive" more than what is seen with physical eyes. They pick up on body language and voice inflections. They develop an "intuitiveness" with their kids_ and respond to them as needed.

In this prayer, Jesus teaches us that **Our HEAVENLY FATHER has a divine will for us.** David knew Him as "Jehovah-Raah" (*The Lord My Shepherd*). His plan is not for us to just go along with the crowd. He has something better in mind for us. His will is to lead us out of a valley of darkness into a kingdom of light. He will lead us into green pastures, if we'll follow Him. That's why Paul warns us in **Romans 12** not to conform to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed in the renewing of our minds. To understand who our Father God really is and_ in the fullness of time_ His will "**WILL**" be done. I'm thankful for **fathers who understand** that the way of the world is not the best for their children. They try to instruct them and to direct them along better paths. They don't impose their will, but they do try their best to impress God's will upon their children.

In this prayer, Jesus teaches us **Our HEAVENLY FATHER is our Great Provider.** People knew God as "Yahweh Jireh" (*The LORD who provides*). Though we may not always recognize it, every good thing we have is a gift from God. He provides more than our daily bread; the air we breathe, the water we drink, even the gravity that keeps us from floating off into space, shelter and clothing, friends and family_ not to mention all the luxuries we have, all come from Him. I'm thankful for **fathers who provide** for their children. Who bring home the bacon; working hard to pay the rent or the mortgage_ to put food on the table and clothes on our backs_ laboring long hours, going to work when they're sick or tired or "sick and tired" of a job they don't particularly love. They don't abandon their children. They can't even understand "dead beat dads." They do the best they can to provide_ and it never ends, no matter how old they get. (*Helping my kids yet today. The car loan from my dad*)

In this prayer Jesus teaches us that **Our HEAVENLY FATHER is incredibly forgiving.** He had been known as "Yahweh Rophe" (*The LORD who heals*). Our Father can and does grant physical healing, but His #1 goal is not to indefinitely extend our lives on earth, but to eternally heal our relationship with Him. That's why He sent His Son: to cleanse us of the disease of sin, to heal our rebellious hearts, and mend wounded souls. He is so forgiving and gracious, that it seems scandalous. (**Ephesians 5:1-2**) (*Charleston SC church shooting*) **The best fathers** are forgiving. They forgive when we don't deserve it. They forgive when we mess up for the umpteenth time. Why? They bear the image of God.

In this prayer Jesus teaches us that **Our HEAVENLY FATHER is our Deliverer & Defender.** He was known as "El Shaddai" (*God Almighty*) and "Yahweh Sabaoth" (*The Lord of Hosts*)_ or as we sometimes sing, "The Lord of Angel Armies." He had rescued His people from famine and sword, from flood and plague. He had delivered them from enemies and kidnapers. Somehow, He goes before us and watches our backs at the same time. Now, Jesus says, the One who has done all of this is "our Father." I thank God for **fathers who are refuges** for refugees. Who defend their children, standing up for them when they feel threatened or under attack.

Those fathers who bail their kids out when others would leave them to rot closely resemble our heavenly Father. *(My girls still want to rest in my arms sometimes)*

In teaching them to pray, Jesus didn't tell them "what" to pray but "how" _ which has to do most with understanding "Who" we're praying to...