

great a gift God has given us. God is not just our father, but our father who sits enthroned above all creation as its sovereign Lord.

For us to be able to approach God in confidence, as our perfect loving father, knowing that he will never turn us away, that he will continue to love us and care for us no matter what, gives us a new strength, confidence and joy in our lives as Jesus' disciples.

As our father God invites us to approach him in prayer, and can be relied upon to meet our needs, to have pity on us and to sustain us in difficulties, to watch over us, and yes, sometimes to discipline us. But over all to lead us ever into a deeper relationship with him, through the Lord Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So we acknowledge God as father and approach him with reverence, with love and with gratitude. All of the prayer that follows builds upon that realisation.

Next week we continue our look at the Lord's prayer, with this understanding of who God is; that he is our father, in a covenant sense, by virtue of his grace, and our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his saving work on our behalf, and we start to look at the first three petitions that concern God and his person.



TRINITY
BIBLE CLASS

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Reflections on The Lord's Prayer

"Our Father who art in heaven"

Over the next few weeks we will be looking at the Lord's prayer as a guide for our own prayers and for our self understanding as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord's Prayer is recorded in both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke.

In Matthew's gospel, chapter six, it comes as a part of the Sermon on the Mount, while in Luke's gospel, chapter eleven, it comes following a direct request to Jesus from the disciples, saying "Lord, teach us to pray."

From the very earliest days this prayer has been the model of prayer for Christians across the world.

While many of us repeat the words pretty much as given, we must acknowledge that it was intended as a model, rather than something only to be said by rote.

The Lord's Prayer is as much about how to pray as it is about what to pray.

As a model for prayer, the Lord's prayer is, one may say, also a model of Christian discipleship itself.

Today we start with the most fundamental understanding of ourselves in relation to God, one which determines how we address God and sets the tone for all that follows.

“Our Father who art in heaven”

Jesus invites us to address God as "Our father,"

In many respects all human beings everywhere can address God as father. He is our creator, and every one of us, without exception, owes our very existence to him.

As our creator, God is also our father, and as such we can approach him, as dependant creatures, looking to him for our daily provision and safety.

But, Jesus is inviting us to enter in to more than that.

While we acknowledge the natural fatherhood of God, there is also another fatherhood, one which is not common to all people, one which belongs to a special covenant relationship with God.

The New Testament, when talking of God as father, refers to this special fatherhood, which brings with it a whole new relationship, with unique privileges, blessings and, yes, responsibilities.

So, how do we come to know God as father?

Sadly, even the fatherhood we could enjoy from God by virtue of our creation is marred by the presence of sin in our lives.

God is a holy and perfect God, above all sin and beyond all corruption. God demands a complete and faithful obedience from us. God demands that we be holy because he is holy.

[Leviticus 11:44]

Sadly, we have all failed in that responsibility, and our relationship with God is broken, to the point that all we can expect from God, all we deserve from God, is his judgement and condemnation.

This is not just some of us, it is all of us. Every human being without exception, has failed to live up to God's righteous demands on their lives.

[Romans 3:23]

Happily, God's fatherly kindness goes beyond our sinfulness, and God provided for us a way to be reconciled to him.

God in his holiness will not just sweep our sins away and pretend they were never there. God will not compromise his righteousness and justice by acquitting the guilty.

God provides the only solution in the person of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being God himself, became a human being to live and die for us.

It was no less than the death of Jesus on the cross that dealt with our sins, cleansed us and opened the way for us to return to God.

On the person of Jesus, God laid all our sins, and all his displeasure at our sin was poured out on Jesus, and our sins were taken to the cross, and destroyed once and for all.

We now have the simple invitation to repent of our sins, to put our faith in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, and to enter into a new restored life, where we know God as father again. Not just by virtue of being his creation, but by virtue of our saving relationship with Jesus.

[John 1:12]

When Jesus invites us to call God, "our father," this whole new relationship is put before us. It is a celebration of the new intimate relationship that we have with God.

This new relationship is an overwhelming privilege, both when we realise how unworthy we are by nature, and when we realise how