

# “Praying With Jesus: Our Father In Heaven”

Matthew 6:7-15

[www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:7-15](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+6:7-15)

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**THEME: “Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere!”**

## Jesus’ prayer: A Response to the community.

Do you know how to pray? Have you wondered whether your prayers are making it past the ceiling? Do you sometimes feel that prayer is futile? The majority of Americans say they pray. 91 percent of women and 85 percent of men told a recent Gallup Poll that they pray sometime. 100 percent of golfers reported praying while on the course. If Jesus were sitting beside you, would you ask Him to teach you how to pray?

- **The Disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray.** The disciples noticed the power that moved through Jesus. They noticed his capacity for sharing unconditional love. They were aware of his strength in facing evil. They were constantly amazed at his wisdom. The disciples rightly assumed that the key to Jesus’ life was prayer. They decided to ask Jesus to teach them to pray.
- **Jesus responds to a community of people.** Do not assume that Jesus responded individually to them. Jesus did not take each one of them aside and instruct them personally. Jesus knows that the basic unit of all creation is community. Jesus knows that community exists within God. We call that community the Trinity. God lives and creates within community. Jesus knows clearly that powerful prayer is centered in community. Therefore, as Jesus accepts the disciple’s invitation to teach them to pray he does so in community. Jesus begins His model prayer with a statement of relationship, OUR FATHER! Jesus’ prayer unites all Christ followers. We cannot agree on the Lord’s Supper. We certainly cannot agree on worship, ethics, or politics. But, we can all come together and pray Jesus’ prayer. Prayer unifies God’s people. Prayer is the center of powerful, hope-filled living. When Jesus teaches you to pray, Jesus teaches you as a member of a world-wide family of God.
- **Three actions we can do for God.** You might ask what we can do for God. Obviously, God wants to be in relationship with you. God created you to be inwardly restless until you are in community with God. God desires three actions from you.
  1. **Praise:** God loves your praise. God loves to hear you give thanks! God wants you to experience the joy of being free to praise. Throughout Holy Scripture praising God is a key element of the healthy life.
  2. **Serve:** God desires your work. God gifts each one of you with special talents to build up God’s new community. God empowers each Christ follower with strength to overcome evil by living the good life. God desires for you to work with God making this world a better place for the next generation.
  3. **Prayer:** Most importantly, God wants to enter into a continual dialogue with you. Prayer is not what one small child defined as messages sent up on Sundays and late nights when the rates are low. Prayer is a continual conversation with God. God wants to hear your voice. God wants you to know the power of living in direct connection with the Creator of all power. Prayer is dialogue with God. Prayer is lifting your eyes from off yourself and looking upward to the magnificent, incredibly wonderful God who is the Father of us all.

## The upward look to God brings forward progress to our lives.

When Jesus begins with “Our Father” He is immediately taking us beyond ourselves. Jesus begins with an upward look. No self-absorption here! No self-centeredness with Jesus. Jesus begins giving honor and glory to the One who is the Father of all time, energy, and matter within the universe. Jesus begins by honoring the Father of every human being on planet earth. Jesus moves our vision off of ourselves and into the very presence of God. Jesus knows that as we address the Father our lives will move in a forward direction.

God Our Father: “*Pateras*” and “*Abba*” Jesus uses various words to describe God as our Father. Jesus uses the formal Greek term, “*Pateras*” in this passage. In other places Jesus uses the Aramaic family term, “*Abba*.” To understand God as our Father means that we must step beyond easy answers. We move into the realm of mystery knowing that we can experience the Father, but never define the Father. Holy Scripture variously describes God as Our Father using terms listed below.

- **Psalm 8:3-5 -----Your Creator** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+8:3-5](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+8:3-5))
- **Isaiah 40:27-28 --The Eternal One** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=isaiah+40:27-28](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=isaiah+40:27-28))
- **Luke 15:11-32 ---The Loving Dad** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=luke+15:11-32](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=luke+15:11-32))
- **Psalm 23 -----The Good Shepherd** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+23](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=psalm+23))

There is a sin that keeps us from praying: Creating our own god in our image. Our problem is that we want to define God. We want to make God into our image so that we can understand God and therefore control God. We regularly make God much too small by seeking to make God in our own images. We think of God as:

- **The Grandfather:** We expect God to bail us out of the messes we have created. I am thinking of the student who prayed to God after taking a test. “God, either make Boston the capital of Vermont or have the teacher lose my test paper.”
- **The Dreadful Judge:** We think of God as a dreadful Judge who has no mercy and will do horrible things to us or to others if we don’t act just right. I am thinking of the woman whose marriage of over fifty years was troubled and difficult. She had enough and took her petition to God the righteous judge who had seen all and knew all and would certainly judge properly. She told her husband, “I am praying God will help us by taking one of us to heaven. After God answers my prayer, I am going to live with my sister.”
- **Santa Claus:** We think God has nothing better to do than to give us everything we want. Our prayers to the Santa Claus God goes like this: “Hi, Dad, Love you, miss you. Need to get some stuff, got any money? Thanks Dad.”
- **The Spoilsport causing us trouble:** Some of us think that God is out to keep us from enjoying life. We think of God as a cosmic party pooper. We avoid prayer because we are afraid God might ask us to live somber, dry, boring lives. We do not pray because we want to ignore this God we think will rob us of joy and happiness.
- **Just like me.** So many people actually make Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud out to be right. Marx said that God was just a creation of people to make their lives better. Freud said that we fantasize about God as our Father so that we can work through the unresolved conflicts of our childhood. Unfortunately, we give them some basis for their arguments because we do have a tendency to practice transference when it comes to God. Transference is the psychological practice of taking an attitude we have and transferring it to another person. I remember having a very difficult time relating to a youth choir director in another church. I could not understand why my stomach turned whenever I was with her. Finally, I realized she reminded me of my mother as a youth choir director when I was growing up. When I finally stopped placing my

mothers face over the face of the other person, I could get along with her very well. Transference messes up most relationships especially your God relationship.

- **Legalist-----The Great Lawgiver:** If you need to have everything in order. If you need to be sure everything is in control. If you have your socks counted and carefully placed in a particular drawer and God help anyone who messes with them, then you probably have legalist tendencies. And, you probably relate to God as the Great Lawgiver. You are interested in justice and righteousness. You are transferring your personal preferences onto God.
- **Moralist-----The Great School Teacher:** If you are very interested in right and wrong. If you want things always in black and white categories. If you are very concerned with certain people's acting out and you want them punished. You probably see God as the Great School Teacher. You could be considered a moralist and you want God to be the one who makes everything right.
- **Scientist-----The aloof, impersonal, causative force:** If you like hard data. If you approach the world from a mathematical point of view; if you want proof before making any commitment; then you are probably approaching the world from a scientific point of view. Your view of God is more than likely that of Aristotle and many like him. God is aloof, impersonal, a causative force, but not involved in the day-to-day operation of the world. You transfer your scientific assumptions and seek to create God in your way.
- **Materialist---The Great Provider of all my wants:** If your primary interest is in having the latest cool auto, living at the best address, wearing the latest clothes, and vacationing in the latest exotic location, you probably have bought into the materialist world view. Interestingly enough, within this world view everything, including family members become possessions. And, God is the Great Provider. God is the giver. You will give later.

When we make a god in our own image, we lose the reality of the One True God and Father of us all. Certainly, God is the Lawgiver, the Judge, the Provider, and the Teacher. But, God is so much more than any of these words. We cannot box God into our limited understandings. We must look up to God who is the Creator of the universe. We must get outside our familiar, cozy cultural boxes and see God's miracles all around us!

- Our God is more loving than we can ever imagine.
- Our God is more just than any law code ever invented by humans.

And, the mystery is that Our God is both unconditional love and unrelenting Judge simultaneously. I do not know how God can be both. But, I know that God is both and more than that! Our God is an awesome, majestic, marvelous, mysterious Father of us all.

### **“Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your Name!”**

When you pray, “Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name”, you are praying to a God who is greater than you can ever imagine. Allow me to share Holy Scripture with you that points to the awesomeness of our Father God.

- **“Abba loves you as if you were the only child in the universe to love” St. Augustine** The great North African theologian of the Fourth century summarized our Father God's attitude towards each one of us.

- **Abba's love is unconditional-----John 3:16 ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+3:16](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+3:16))** Imagine the incredible love of God made real in Jesus Christ our Lord. All you need to do is to look up at the blood stained cross to know how much, how often, and how long is God's love.
- **Abba's forgiveness is real-----Luke 23:34 ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=luke+23:34](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=luke+23:34))** Jesus taught that forgiveness was to be at a minimum of 7 times 70. From the cross Jesus actually made that teaching real as he forgave the ones who had placed him upon that nail scared tree. God's forgiveness for every one of you is real!
- **Abba will discipline-----Amos 7:7-9 ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=amos+7:7-9](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=amos+7:7-9))** Under God's inspiration, the prophet Amos held up a plumb line and told us all that God will hold us accountable for living a righteous life. God will discipline us when we stray away from the plumb line.
- **Abba will give strength and focus---Matthew 11:29 ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+11:29](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=matthew+11:29))** Jesus tells us that a relationship with God is like being in an oxen yoke. We are linked to the one who is the strongest, most powerful, most courageous Father of the universe. When we pray "Our Father" we are asking for a focused, power filled life.
- **Abba is relational-----John 15:12-17 ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+15:12-17](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+15:12-17))** Jesus tells us that God wants to be our friend. God does not want to take from us any joy. God wants to fill us with joy, overflow our lives with blessings, and live in a close personal relationship with each one of us. Jesus reminds us that we are as related to God our Father as branches of a grape plant are related to the vine.

We honor and hallow the name of our Father God when we relate to God as God. When we do not attempt to control God, make God over in our own image, or place God in an impossibly limited box. We honor and hallow our Father God when we allow God to be the One whose love is unconditional, whose forgiveness is real and eternal, whose discipline is strong, whose yoke focuses our lives, and who wants a loving relationship with each of us.

### **Life's forward progress comes from the upward look.**

When God is our Father our life can be focused beyond ourselves and we can move forward into a joyous life. God's great desire is for us to mature, to grow, to continue to learn, and to reach a point of living with great joy.

God wants you to grow up! In **Ephesians 4:15** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=ephesians+4:15](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=ephesians+4:15)) we read; "God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love---like Christ in everything." Do you sometimes wish that you could just grow up? You might be 85 years old, but you are still stuck within an old habit that bothers you and you wish you could grow past it. Jesus' prayer is one that will help you grow up. If you take Jesus' prayer seriously, you will be able to:

- **Look up and step out of your cultural/political box and experience Your Abba.**
- **Look up and let go of your limited vision of life**
- **Look up and let go of the boundaries you have placed on your love**
- **Look up and let go of that past sin, those past failures, the buried burdens of guilt and shame!**
- **Look up and enter into a deep, joyous, hope filled relationship with your ABBA**

Your forward progress as a human being is completely dependent upon your relationship with your Father God. I challenge you today to step into Jesus' prayer. Step out of your limited, finite understanding of God and allow the Father of all the universe to show you miracle after miracle! However, allow me to warn you about Jesus' prayer. You cannot pray this prayer and be the same person. Jesus' prayer will change you if step into it and seriously pray it.

I cannot say **OUR** if my religion has no room for others and their needs.

I cannot say **FATHER** if I do not demonstrate this relationship in my daily life.

I cannot say **WHO ART IN HEAVEN** if all my interests and pursuits are in earthly things.

I cannot say **HALLOWED BE THY NAME** if I, who am called by His name, am not holy.

I cannot say **THY KINGDOM COME** if I am unwilling to give up my own sovereignty and accept the righteous reign of God.

I cannot say **THY WILL BE DONE** if I am unwilling or resentful of having it in my life.

I cannot say **ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN** unless I am truly ready to give myself to His service here and now.

I cannot say **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD** without expending honest effort for it or by ignoring the genuine needs of my fellow men.

I cannot say **FORGIVE US OUR SINS AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US** if I continue to harbor a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say **LEAD US NOT INTO A TIME OF TESTING** if I deliberately choose to remain in a situation where I am likely to be tested.

I cannot say **DELIVER US FROM EVIL** if I am not prepared to fight in the spiritual realm with the weapon of prayer.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE KINGDOM** if I do not give the King the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE POWER** if I fear what my neighbors do or say to me.

I cannot say **THINE IS THE GLORY** if I am seeking my own glory first.

I cannot say **FOREVER** if I am anxious about each day's events.

I cannot say **AMEN** unless I honestly say "Cost what it may, this is my prayer."

The Upward look of Jesus' prayer is directly connected to your forward progress as a human being. When you pray with Jesus, you are becoming like Jesus. You cannot pray Jesus' prayer with a sincere and loving heart without the Spirit of Christ our Lord flowing into you. And when the Spirit flows you will grow.