

Our Father
Luke 11:1-4
The Lord's Prayer Series #1
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If you were asked to tell someone about Jesus, would you include the fact that he prayed, and that he did it often? Probably, because prayer was one of the things Scripture says Jesus did regularly. Sometimes, a particular prayer time was really long, and we hear him chide his disciples for going to sleep, while he prayed. In Luke 6:12 Jesus prays all night to God because he had a big decision to make: which of his many disciples would be the special twelve, the ones he would send to the world?

Jesus prayed a lot. His disciples watched and wondered about their own prayer life, so they asked Jesus, "how should we pray?" "Is there a way we ought to be doing it to get it right?" In Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus told them. The Matthew 6 prayer is more familiar, but Luke records it this way:

Luke 11

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| 1 | One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." |
| 2 | He said to them, "When you pray, say,
(Our) Father,
(who art in heaven)
Hallowed be your name
(May) Your Kingdom come
(May Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven) |
| 3 | Give us each (this) day our daily bread |
| 4 | Forgive us our sins,(debts)
as we also forgive everyone who sins against us (our debtors) |
| 5 | And lead us not into temptation, (but deliver us from the evil one) |

(For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen)

Now, you're probably wondering why I left some parts out. I didn't. Luke has all the points, but his version is a little more terse. Matthew expands it a little, and early manuscripts show we humans have added the last sentence somewhere along the way. Remember, Matthew was there as he was a disciple, and remember he was skilled with keeping records and information as a tax collector. And remember Luke was writing the Gospel through Paul's eyes as to this part and the information was second or third hand by then.

No matter which version you read or use, the essence of what Jesus recommends is in both versions. And, the essence is what Jesus wanted his disciples to hear. We call the prayer the Lord's Prayer, but it wasn't one Jesus regularly prayed. He gave it to his disciples to use and they preserved it for us.

It is a model,
a standard,
a beginning.

It was never intended to be their only prayer, but it was meant to outline for them what a prayer ought to contain, ought to include. Instead of understanding the intent of the prayer, we have venerated and elevated it to a level I doubt Jesus would have wanted. You see, the prayer has the elements that ought to be in a prayer:

it is personal.
It acknowledges our place in the world.
It has praise.
It has petitions.

Paul teaches similar elements: Adoration, Confession, Thanks, Supplication and Self (ACTSS).

Jesus meant the prayer to be much more than just words to be remembered and recited; he meant for us to think about its components as we used it, to understand what was going on inside the prayer. When you were little, did someone ever read Aesop's Fables to you? How about the one where the fox jumped up and jumped up and tried to reach a cluster of grapes hanging from the vine, but he never could reach them; so he gave up and as he left he said aloud, "who wanted them anyway?" Sour grapes we call that fable, but it's not the story that's important; it's the moral that comes from it. So it is with Jesus. By giving us a model prayer, he is saying: look inside and understand what else you see.

Today, in our first consideration of the elements of this prayer, I want us to hear again the beautiful words of the beginning –

"Our Father,"

These words are what we would call a sea-change today. It was a completely new way of praying. Until this prayer, a Jewish person would start their prayers with something like this,

"Lord," or "Master."

They were not allowed by their priests to ever say God's name. It was too holy, too far from them. They even spelled God's name JHWH. Try saying that. God was so powerful, so magnificent, so distant, they could only imagine.... They had priests who spoke to God for them, who only went into the Holy of Holies in the Temple once each year, and they went in with a rope tied around one leg, so that if they mistakenly looked at God, and died, as they believed they would, at least there would be a rope to pull them out of that part of the Temple. God was distant, over – there, not to be trifled with. Yet, when they asked Jesus how to pray, Jesus said, pray this way: "Our father,"

Pray directly, pray to God calling Him the Aramean language familiar word for God, Abba, Father. Jesus was telling them they were to pray to a close, personal God was personal, not some "gotcha" way away. And, it meant God and man were in a relationship, a relationship of Father and child. It meant we were to understand that we were part of God's immediate family –children. It meant God has adopted us because of Christ and that from that moment we first believed onward forever, we are a part of God's family. God is no longer distant. God is just a word away. Wow!

A second point --he is to be called "ours." Our father, he belongs to us and we to God. And, by praying to "our" father we join all others who pray to God as members of one family, the same family, with the same brother Christ. And, by this simple pronoun, we are meant to see all who believe in Christ, through Christ, belong to this family. It's not my father, it's our father. So, if the one praying is another

denomination, or another sect, it doesn't matter, we are all part of God's family, one people, living in God's kingdom.

A third point—Jesus tells us that since we are in a relationship with God, we are to talk with God daily, we are to talk freely, and we are to talk fully. Our prayers are to be personal, not flowery words or showy rhetoric. Key words for prayer! Write them down:

Personal,
basic,
honest,
open.

Jesus wants us to know that the prayer is not to become the religion itself, not to be worshipped itself, but is to be seen as a guide to understanding how the relationship God wants with us works. We talk, he listens; he talks we listen.

One last point: The prayer Jesus teaches is the prayer of the believer; it is not the prayer of one still wondering, still seeking. It is the prayer of the one who has said "Yes" to God. It is the prayer of the one who is willing to follow, to walk with God, to obey as best possible. And the believer is praying to a living being, a being who is listening and who loves more than we will ever know, a being who is connected to us and us to him. Because of prayer, we will never be alone again. And as Paul said it in Romans 8 — nothing can separate us from that connection. Nothing, not even death!

Before we leave the prayer, we should not see it as something brand new, unique with Jesus. Jesus was a great student of Scripture and he had a unique ability to synthesize Scripture, pull it together, and help us see how all of Scripture ties together. Remember, Jesus said he did not come to abolish what had gone before or take away the word but to give it meaning and explain it. A good example of this synthesis and interpreted meaning occurred when Jesus was asked which Commandment was the greatest by the Pharisees who were trying to trap him into saying the wrong thing. His response:

"The greatest commandment is to love God with all you mind, heart and soul,
and a second is like unto it: Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

Keeping that synthesis in mind, when Jesus was asked about prayer, he reached into the Scriptures—the Old Testament-- and pulled together parts from here and parts from there to give them this model, this pattern we call--- The Lord's Prayer. God is not called father by all in Scripture, but in Psalm 89:26, God speaks about David, his anointed, saying

"He will call out to me, you are my Father."

A second place where God is called Father is in Isaiah 63:16, where Isaiah prays about the kindness of God, saying,

"But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us
You, Lord, are our Father, our redeemer from of old is your name."

And, a third place is Malachi 2:10

"Did we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? So, why do we proclaim
the covenant of our ancestors by being unfaithful to one another?"

The idea of seeing God as Father was not foreign to Israel. While the priests may have put God way out of bounds for the man in the pew, so to speak, Scripture was already telling us to see God in a

Isaiah 63:15-16

- 15 Look down from heaven and see,
 From your lofty throne, holy and glorious
 Where are your zeal and your might?
 Your tenderness and compassion are withheld from us.
- 16 But you are our Father,
 Though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us;
 You, Lord, are our Father,
 Our Redeemer from old is your name.

Isaiah 64:1-4. 7-8

- 1 O that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble
 before you
- 2 As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down and make your name
 known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you.
- 3 For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down and the
 mountains trembled before you.
- 4 Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God
 besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait upon Him.
- 7 No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you, for you have hidden your face from
 us and given us over for our sins.
- 8 Yet, you, Lord, are our father. We are the clay, you are the potter, we are all the work of your
 Hand.

Malachi 2:10

- 10 Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us?
 Why do we profane the covenant of our ancestors by being unfaithful to one another?