

# Our Father in Heaven

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn to Matthew chapter 6, verse 7 to 15. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand.!

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Pray then like this. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

[ 1 : 27 ] This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. Please be seated. In Acts chapter 6, the 12 apostles identify two main things that are absolutely necessary, integral for the advance of the gospel, for the upbuilding of the church, the progress of the kingdom of God.

And those two things are ministry of the word and prayer. Ministering God's word and praying. But of those two all-important activities, we find specific instructions from Jesus about only one of those two activities.

Nowhere in the gospels do we find Jesus' disciples asking him, please teach us how to pray or how to preach, rather.

We want to learn to preach like you, Jesus. We don't find that anywhere in scripture. Nowhere in the New Testament do we find specific instructions for what an outline for a sermon should look like.

This is how you should preach. This is what you should include. We find many examples of it. But we don't find specific instructions for it. Apparently, the basic contours of proclaiming the gospel is simple enough.

[ 2 : 48 ] Can we receive training to do it better? Of course. That's what you have trained pastors for. But if you are a Christian, then you know the gospel. Because if you don't know the gospel, then you cannot be a Christian.

The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God for salvation for those who believe. That means if you are here and confess Jesus as your Lord, you know the gospel and you know how to proclaim it.

But in Luke 11, we do find Jesus' disciples asking him, Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples. Jesus' intimate and trusting relationship with his heavenly Father demonstrated in prayer was clearly a source of his power in ministry and his disciples knew it.

So Jesus taught his disciples to pray. We have specific instructions for how to pray in the Bible from the mouth of Jesus himself.

In fact, the way Matthew has structured his sermon on the Mount, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount here in the gospel, it centers around the Lord's Prayer. This is one of, this is Jesus' most famous sermon.

[ 3 : 59 ] It's one of five major discourses of Jesus in Matthew, and it's structured chiastically. It has a mirroring structure where the two ends match each other, and then the next elements match each other until it comes to the very center of the entire sermon, which here, in this case, is the Lord's Prayer.

In Matthew 5.1, Jesus, seeing the crowds, went up on the mountain. In Matthew 8.1, Jesus, it says, came down from the mountain, and great crowds followed him.

In chapter 5.2, Jesus begins his sayings and teachings to his disciples. In chapter 7.20, it says that he finished his teachings and sayings to his disciples.

Verse 5.3-16 describes the blessed ones who have and possess the kingdom of heaven. Chapter 7.13-27 describes those who will enter the kingdom of heaven.

So you see these mirroring elements. Chapter 5.17-20 speak of how Jesus fulfills the law and the prophets. In chapter 7.12, we have Jesus' summary of the law and the prophets. In 5.21-6.4, Jesus talks about how to love our earthly neighbors.

[ 5 : 06 ] In 6.19-7.11, Jesus talks about how to love our heavenly father. So again, that's summing up that the greatest command to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. And then, as Ed preached last week, in chapter 6.5-6, we are told not to pray like the hypocrites to be seen by others.

And then, skipping over the Lord's Prayer to verse 16 and 18, it warns us not to fast like hypocrites to be seen by others. Every aspect of Sermon on the Mount has these matching elements, except for one.

It's the Lord's Prayer. Because it's the very center of Jesus' most famous sermon. That's how important this passage is, and that's how important prayer is. I think prayer is given such a prominence in Jesus' teaching and central place in Scripture for a number of reasons.

I think in many ways, and I say this as a preacher, who is the last person to discount the importance of preaching. Because praying is harder than preaching. I know many pastors who struggle with praying.

I don't know that many pastors who pray well but struggle with preaching. When we're preaching and serving and otherwise busily occupied, it feels very productive and that feels good.

[ 6 : 27 ] When we're praying, it feels like we're not accomplishing anything. Because we're not. We are not accomplishing anything. We're asking God to accomplish something.

In prayer, we become helpless, needy, and dependent people, and this is a very hard thing for a prideful and self-sufficient and self-important people to do.

That's why I think prayer is harder than preaching. That's a long introduction to highlight just how critical prayer is, and the main point, I think, of this passage is that we should pray as children to our Heavenly Father.

First, he tells us how not to pray. Don't pray like this, in verse 7 and 8. And then he tells us how to pray. Do pray like this in verses 9 to 15. Let's first talk about how not to pray in verses 7 to 8.

It says, Jesus is using the term Gentiles here not as an ethnic term primarily, to mean non-Jews, but to refer to unbelievers, all those who are outside of his community of disciples.

[ 7 : 50 ] It was used in the same way in chapter 5, verse 47. Those who do not believe in the true God heap up empty phrases. Their prayer is characterized by two things.

One, empty phrases. Two, many words. And Jesus teaches us not to pray in these manners. First, we should not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do. The Greek word behind heap up empty phrases is literally a word that means babble, to prattle.

It refers to idle talk. Imagine someone who prattles on and on about foolish and inconsequential things. They don't have any real reason for communicating these things to you, but they're just prattling on.

These are empty phrases that have little meaning. In the first century Greco-Roman world, Gentiles used these foreign, unintelligible words and sounds that they called barbarous names, which they believed to possess magical powers.

And you find these barbarous names, these magical incantations in the Greek magical papyri that have been discovered. And that's the kind of thing that Jesus is condemning here. Prayer is not about heaping up empty phrases as if the words and phrases that mean nothing to us will mean something to God.

[ 9 : 09 ] That ancient practice is really not all that different from the mantras that Hindus and Buddhists all over the world use today. The utter phrases and words and sounds called mantras, which they believe carry sacred vibrations or divine energy.

But Jesus teaches us here that such babbling, heaping up empty phrases, have zero efficacy. With God. Secondly, we should not pray many words as if God will hear us just because our words are many.

Pagan prayer often has little substance and meaning, but there's much vain repetition. The Greeks were known for repeating the names of their deities over and over again because they believe that maybe with one time saying the name, their gods might miss it.

If they get their attention, you say their names over and over again. It's not all that different from how Muslims today used prayer beads called the tasbeeh, 99 beads for the 99 names of Allah.

They repeat them over and over and over again. Many Buddhists likewise use prayer wheels that they spin repeatedly while uttering their mantras, thinking that each turn of the wheel releases a prayer and more prayer the better, so they just keep spinning these wheels.

[ 10 : 36 ] Even the Catholic use of the rosary, I believe, sometimes runs afoul of Jesus' command. The Catholic rosary contains 59 beads with five introductory beads, one Our Father, the Lord's Prayer, three Hail Marys, and one Glory bead, five sets of ten Hail Marys, each one beginning with Our Father, which then it closes with the Hail Queen, which is a prayer to Mary.

The Catholic rosary is problematic in a number of important ways. It includes prayers to Mary, but as we see in this passage, Jesus teaches us that we should pray to God, not to other believers, not even to believers who are dead and in heaven already.

Sure, we should pray for one another. The Bible does teach us to pray for one another as saints, but that's very different from praying to one another. The rosary often leads to vain repetitions where people thoughtlessly recite prayers in rote and mechanical way as if the sheer number of repetitions is going to make God hear us and answer us.

God cannot be controlled in such a way. God is not hard of hearing. God is not susceptible to flattery. God is not able to pray for one another. God is not able to pray for one another. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus gives us a model and a pattern according to which we should pray.

I don't think this means that Jesus intends for us to say precisely these 52 words in the English Standard Version of the Bible in verses 9 to 13. How do I know that?

[ 12 : 11 ] Well, because we have two versions of the Lord's Prayer in the Scriptures, one here in Matthew 6 and another one in Luke 11. And though those two versions are very similar in their themes, they're not identical in their wording, which I think shows us that it's not the exact wording that matters, but rather the substance of what we're praying to God.

With that said, let me add a couple qualifications. I'm not saying that we should not have prolonged prayers or persistent prayer. Maybe you'll think, well, if we shouldn't pray many words, then all my prayer time should be really short.

Sure, that makes things easier for me, right? I'm not saying that because if you look at Luke 6, 12, we're told that Jesus went out on the mountainside to pray, and it says that he prayed there all night.

Jesus prayed for long periods of time. Every time I pick up a biography of a Christian saint, a godly man or woman that I admire, respect, and read about their life, they inevitably, invariably have a robust prayer life.

They not only pray frequently, but they pray for extended periods of time. There are Christians who say, you know, who pray only very short and limited prayer times, and then they say, you know, you know, it's quality, not quantity.

[ 13 : 36 ] That counts. That's true to a point, sure, one hour of quality prayer time is perhaps better than two hours of scattered and distracted prayer time. But isn't two hours of quality prayer time surely better than one hour of quality prayer time?

Maybe some of you are married or you have significant others. If your significant other complains to you, says, you know, I feel like you've been too busy lately, and I've not gotten enough time with you, I feel like you're not really drawing me out, we're not having good quality conversations, try telling them, you know, with me, it's quality that matters, not quantity.

It will not go over well. Because if you are so busy hard that you have a hard, you are so busy that you have a hard time even spending one hour with someone that you love, then you're going to be so busy hearted when you spend that one hour with them that that one hour is going to be, is not going to be a quality time.

You're going to be rushed and hurried. Paul Miller writes in his book, *A Praying Life*, any relationship, if it is going to grow, needs private space, time together without an agenda, where you can get to know each other.

This creates an environment where closeness can happen, where we can begin to understand each other's hearts. You don't create intimacy, you make room for it. This is true, whether you are talking about your spouse, your friend, or God.

[ 15 : 11 ] You need space to be together. Efficiency, multitasking, and busyness all kill intimacy. In short, you can't get to know God on the fly.

We don't pray for a long time because we think that God only listens if we pray over a certain number of hours. That's not the point. But prolonged prayer, that's an expression of our intimate trust in God, our Father, is to be commended.

Secondly, I'm also not speaking against persistent prayer. In Matthew 26, 44, in the Garden of Gethsemane, shortly before his betrayal and death, Jesus, he says, prayed for the third time, saying the same words again.

My Father, if it be possible, remove this cup from me, but not my will, but yours be done. He says, Jesus prayed that prayer three times. Clearly, it's not a problem to repeat things.

But that's desperate, persistent prayer. Paul had a similar instance in 2 Corinthians 12. It says three times he pleaded with the Lord so that a messenger of Satan that had been harassing him in his flesh would leave.

[ 16 : 31 ] Three times. Same prayers. In Luke 18, Jesus gives us a parable of the persistent widow who wore down an unrighteous human judge by bringing her plea for justice repeatedly until he granted her request.

So Jesus, and then Jesus commands us to pray like her. He says, to cry out to God day and night. So Jesus does not condemn persistent, repeated prayers.

The difference is that these are persistent, repeated, heartfelt, faith-filled prayers, which is a far cry from the heaping up of empty phrases and the vain repetitions of many words, thinking that only prayers that go above a certain number of word count can be heard by God.

Prayer is not a way to manipulate God. It's a way to submit to God, to depend on him. It's a conversation with God and an outworking of our relationship with God.

So Jesus says in verse 8, do not be like them. For your father knows what you need before you ask him. That's so wonderful to think about.

[ 17 : 42 ] Do you know that your heavenly father knows what you need before you ask him? Don't think that that he is aloof and distant and unaware of our needs.

Our earthly fathers sometimes struggle with that because they have limited knowledge and they've limited attention and they've limited time and limited resources and limited power, but our heavenly father has no such limitations.

He's attentive to his children and he knows what we need before we ask him. God says concerning his people in Isaiah 65 verse 24, before they call, I will answer.

While they are yet speaking, I will hear. He says in Daniel 9, 20, 21, while Daniel was still praying to God that God already sent his angel Gabriel to answer his prayer.

In Genesis 24, 15, when Abraham's servant is seeking a godly wife for his master's son, Isaac, he begins to pray and he says that before he had finished praying, God already answered his prayer because the Rebecca is coming out even before he's done praying.

[ 19 : 01 ] It's almost like, I hope this is not irreverent, but it's almost like God is a contestant on Jeopardy who's just like waiting with bated breath to hit the buzzer to give an answer.

God is not a reluctant, aloof person that you need to pry his hands open to get stuff that you want from him. He's a loving, attentive father and you begin to pray to him and he's there.

You begin to say and you begin to speak and he's already answering. That's the posture of God our father to us. Lloyd-Jones puts it helpfully, as the father cares for the child and looks at the child and is concerned about the child and anticipates the needs of the child, so is God with respect to all those who are in Christ Jesus.

He desires to bless us very much more than we desire to be blessed. He has a view of us. He has a plan and a program for us. He has an ambition for us which transcends our highest thought and imagination.

But if our God so knows what we need before we even ask him, why do we pray at all? That brings us to the second point.

[ 20 : 29 ] Do pray like this. Jesus says in verse 9, pray then like this. Our father in heaven. Prayer is addressed to God, our father in heaven. And this explains why we pray even when God already knows what we need.

Prayer is not transactional as much as it is relational. When my children ask me if they can have certain foods or if I can buy them a certain present or if I can help them with their homework or if I can play a game with them or watch a movie with them, it doesn't merely give me useful information so that I can know what to act on or what they need.

No, it brings me joy when they come to me to ask me for these things. Even when I'm going to say no. I still want them to come to me because it brings me delight that my children would ask me because it shows that they trust me.

It shows that they depend on me. It shows that they know that I love them. It's the same with our Heavenly Father. He's not a vending machine that's useful only for dispensing gifts.

He's our Father and He wants us to come and speak with Him as His children. This is why every prayer recorded in the Bible begins with an invocation of God.

[ 22 : 07 ] It's a personal address to God. Recognizing the fatherhood of God is key to Christian prayer and really a key to the entire Christian life.

Theologian J.I. Packer puts it this way in knowing God. You sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's Holy Father.

If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his father.

If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.

For everything that Christ taught is summed up in the knowledge of the fatherhood of God. Father is the Christian name for God.

[ 23 : 11 ] Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption. Since Jesus spoke Aramaic during his life when he taught his disciples this prayer the word for father that he would have used would have been the word Abba which means father in Aramaic.

Almost every language in the world has a similar word for father. In Korean it's Abba in Arabic it's Ab in Chinese and Swahili it's Baba in English and German Spanish it's Papa every language.

as the Eastern Bible dictionary helpfully puts it it is a term Abba it's a term that expresses warm affection and filial confidence to capture that familial affection and and confidence filial confidence the New Testament scripture writers sometimes preserve that word Abba even though they're writing in Greek you see that in multiple places in scripture and this is the sacred privilege of all of God's people there is a limited sense in which all people including Christians and non-Christians are offspring of God because God is our creator we see that in Acts 17 28 to 29 where Paul says addressing non-Christians we are all his offspring but there is a special sense in which only Christians who have confessed

Jesus as their Lord and call upon God can call upon God as their father it says in John 1 12 to 13 but to all who did receive Jesus Christ who believed in his name God gave the right to become the children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God only those who believe in Jesus Christ is given the right to become children of God 17 times on the Sermon on the Mount God is called our father this prayer is traditionally called the Lord's prayer because it's the prayer that our Lord Jesus taught us but it's not actually a prayer that Jesus could have fully prayed because it speaks of forgiving us forgive us our debts Jesus doesn't have sin Hebrews 4 15 says Jesus was without sin so he could not pray forgive us our debts this is instead a prayer for the disciples of

Jesus it's the prayer of the disciples for all those who call upon God as their father this is why I love how D. Martin Jones puts it in passing in his sermon one of his sermons he calls this the children's prayer I love that this is the children's prayer those who call upon God as their father the fatherhood of God is the premise the basis for all of our prayers some of us have a hard time relating to God as a loving father they have a hard time praying to God as father because of the troubled relationship that they have with their own earthly fathers many of you have had wonderful earthly fathers but a few of you have had really bad earthly fathers fathers who physically abandoned you or abused you or emotionally neglected you manipulated you fathers who didn't provide for you fathers who were not there for you when you needed him but you must not let that taint and color the way you look at our heavenly father he's not like that when you think of your relationship with your earthly father do you think of yourself primarily as a disappointment and a failure don't project that onto our heavenly father he says in psalm 103 8 to 14 that our heavenly father is merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love he says that he does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities why because he says he shows compassion to his children as a father for he knows our frame he remembers that we are dust

[ 28 : 04 ] God knows that we are only children God knows that we are not fully grown yet God knows that we are weak and fallible creatures of dust so as our heavenly father he says that he has compassion on us when the bible speaks of god the father the primary attribute and action that is most frequently attributed to him in the bible is love it says in first john three one see what kind of love the father has given us that we should be called children of god and so we are even look at the benediction that we use every sunday after service at the end of service second corinthians 13 14 which says the grace of the lord jesus christ grace associated with jesus and the love of god love is associated with god the father and fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all the first thought that comes to our minds when we think of our god it should be love that our father loves us it says in first john 4 8 anyone who does not love does not know god because god is love it says in romans 8 15 that we did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but we have received!

the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry abba father slaves have to work for everything they have to earn everything nothing comes to slaves for free but if you're a son that's a different story you're an heir you get your father's inheritance by right how did Alexander the great come to lead the most powerful army in the world the kingship of Macedonia at the young age of 20 because his father was Philip II of Macedon how did Augustus become Caesar of the Roman Empire not because he passed some great test but because he was the son of

Julius Caesar how did John D. Rockefeller Jr. come to inherit the modern equivalent of billions of dollars of course because his father was senior John D.

Rockefeller senior founder of Standard Oil how did James Murdoch become an executive of 21st Century Fox News Corp because his father is Rupert Murdoch the global media tycoon how did President Donald Trump become a multimillionaire because he inherited it from his father who was a multimillionaire real estate developer the same is true for us we are not slaves who have to earn the favor of our master we are the children of God our father we are all sons because we have been united by faith to Jesus Christ God's only son we are all heirs sons and daughters of God I often tell my daughters that I love them and then I like to ask them do you know why I love you and they always have the same answer they know what answer

I am looking for they say because I am your daughter they answer that way because that's what I've told them over and over again because I want them to know that they never have to compete for my affection or earn my affection it's theirs by right because I am their father and they are my daughters they have a privileged relationship to me that no other children in the world have because simply they are mine it's the same for us do you know brothers and sisters you are God's child you belong to him and therefore it is your special privilege to cry out to him in prayer and say our father in heaven after addressing

[ 33 : 03 ] God which is the first prayer item we could get to what we call the overarching purpose of prayer verse 19 hallowed be your name the name of God in scripture frequently stands for God himself it represents God and to hallow his name is to want to see God honored as holy that's what it means to hallow holy means set apart consecrated first God is holy and set apart in contradistinction to other gods or idols secondly God is holy and set apart in contradistinction to us his creatures and when we pray for God's name to be hallowed that means we're praying for God to be distinguished from these idols and distinguished from creation in this way!

God to! God which on the surfaces makes it seem like it's inclusive of all religions but is actually exclusive of all other religions except the religion of pluralism Islam Judaism Buddhism Christianity they all make mutually exclusive truth claims to claim that they're all equally valid is to invalidate all of them except for your own brand of pluralism to claim that no religion has an exclusive claim to truth is itself an exclusive religious claim but why was that rug offensive because it says to me that our

God is one among many because it says to me that our God is like these other gods that they're on par with each other that they are peers it is offensive to suggest that God has rivals or peers our God does not have rivals our God does not have peers the name of our God Heavenly Father should be hallowed set apart from all other names the Bible declares over and over again that God is peerless and unrivaled in every way Deuteronomy 33 26 that there is none like God who rides through the heavens to your help Hannah prays in 1 Samuel 2 2 there is none holy like the Lord for there is none besides you there is no rock like our God Moses sings to God in

Exodus 15 11 who is like you oh Lord among the gods who is like you majestic and holiness awesome and glorious deeds doing wonders there is no one like our God that's why his name must be hallowed God declares in Isaiah 42 8 I am the Lord that is my name my glory I give to no other nor my praise to carved idols God will not give his praise to idols why because God has never forfeited his divine glory to these other so-called gods glory is like a summary of all of God's attributes J.A. Packer calls it deity on display it's the manifestation of godness that's what glory is and the ultimate goal of all that we pray for is God's glory for who he is and his divinity to be manifested to all for his name to be hallowed secondly we want

God's name to be hallowed because we want him to be recognized as separate from us unlike us as God says in Isaiah 55 my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways declares the Lord for as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts God is not like us so prayer is not about making much of ourselves prayer is not about manipulating God for our purposes prayer is not about therapeutic catharsis much of humanity's relationship to the so-called gods throughout the world is a patron client relationship you offer your prayers and you make your sacrifice and you expect God to pat you back on and to listen to you and you acquired his services or purchased his services through sacrifices and prayers in that view



[ 38 : 58 ] God exists to answer us to make much of us and we are the center of the universe but in Christian prayer and in Christianity God is the center of the universe the ultimate goal of prayer is to make God's name hallowed not get what we want this point is made very pointedly by the very form and structure of the Lord's prayer it begins with three petitions that pertain to God first in verses 9 to 10 hallowed be your name your kingdom come your will be done only after that does it move to petitions that pertain to us in verses 11 and 13 give us this day our daily bread forgive us our debts and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil Christian prayer is first and foremost grounded in who God is and in his purposes and priorities all of our petitions get subsumed under that that's the thesis that's the purpose that's the hallowed be your name your kingdom come your will be done also notice that there isn't a single eye in this prayer this doesn't mean that we're not allowed to pray personally for ourselves as individuals we can do that but it does highlight the importance of praying to

God as a community which is what we do together as a church even when we pray alone in our personal prayer closets we speak to God as members of the family of God so whenever we address God as father remember that we have brothers and sisters in Christ that you can also intercede for the second and third petitions are related to the first your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven the kingdom of God refers to God's rulership his reign we're longing for his reign his rule to be manifested on all the earth of course God is already king in one sense over all the earth he has been and he forever will be however this rule of God is not fully manifested in all the earth so your kingdom come then is a prayer that God's rule right his rule de jure would become his rule de facto that his rule by right would become his rule in reality in all of life that desire for the consummation of

God's rule is expressed in Zechariah 14 verse 9 and the Lord will be king over all the earth on that day the Lord will be one and his name one the day is coming when the one true king will be worshipped in all the earth and on that day finally the Lord's name will be one God promised us in Isaiah 45 23 to me every knee shall bow every tongue shall swear allegiance!

in our church in our city in our country or among all the nations in the world we can pray your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven now let's turn to the personal petitions that mention us in verses 11 to 13 the first of those is for provision in verse 11 give us this day our daily bread daily bread it can mean continual bread or bread for our need or it could be bread for tomorrow however you render it or translate it it refers to our present need and not for a need in some distant future it points to our continual dependence on God and that's confirmed by the phrase this day give us this day our daily bread most laborers in Jesus' time were paid only one day at a time they literally lived hand to mouth day to day and so for them this would have been a very real prayer dependence and something that we need to recapture in our dependence on

God give us this day our daily bread that expression daily bread harkens us back to Exodus 16 when God supplied bread from heaven manna for his people and amazingly this bread from heaven this manna that came down God told them specifically to not collect more than what they need for that day and if everyone got greedy and collected more it would rot and stink it would become inedible the next day and whatever was left over and was not picked up on the field would dissolve under the heat of the sun it's amazing bread engineered in heaven to cultivate dependence so you can't have a weak supply of bread waiting for you you have to force to daily depend on God for it I've shared this before but it's such a helpful illustration for me in his book

[ 44 : 45 ] Adopted for life which is a book about adoptions author Russell Moore writes about his experience with adopting two boys from Russia he says we knew the boys had acclimated to our home that they trusted us when they stopped hiding food in their high chairs they knew there would be another meal coming and they wouldn't have to fight for the scraps this was the new normal Moore's adopted sons were stashing away food in their high chairs because they didn't know when they were going to eat next they I have to save this but when they finally realized that they're no longer orphans but they have parents when they finally realized that they are sons they stopped hiding the food and started depending on their father to provide if you're a parent like me you're probably often telling your kids finish your food you know but if you think about it this way it's actually something to be really grateful for that they sometimes don't finish their food they could afford to do that because they know the next meal is coming they can do that because they trust in their parents to provide for them and they don't have to worry about their food that's what

God is telling us don't save manna from the previous day for the next day don't depend! on your grace that God has given you last year or yesterday there's fresh grace for you this morning there's fresh mercy for you new mercy!

this morning God wants to provide for us and that applies I think both physical provision and spiritual provision since Jesus says in John 6 that I am the bread of life whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst do you cry out to God for your daily bread or have you been going hungry for a while once again Paul Miller is helpful by the way this book is on our book bingo Trinity reads bingo Rachel Park who left us a few weeks ago I asked her for her exit interview what are some ways God has worked in your life how has God changed you and she mentioned the prayer seminar and the book that we recommended there which was A praying!

Life by Paul Miller and she says in the book a needy heart is a praying heart dependency is the heartbeat of prayer it's not ruthless self discipline that ultimately helps us to pray more it's poverty of spirit it's humility it's neediness before God that drives us to prayer more mature Christians do pray more that is true but it's not because of how strong they are it's because of how keenly aware they are of their weakness I think I have a diagram to show here people am I is my head in the way is the the there's this diagram of when you're when you're a new

Christian a relatively new Christian you you see only little bits of your sin and you see little need for God and so the cross of Christ only need be a big and sufficient to bridge that gap between you and God or at least that's how you perceive it the more you grow in maturity the more you realize that your distance the distance between you and God is insurmountable it is unfathomable and the more you get to know God and his holiness the more aware you become of your own sins so the need for God does not diminish as you mature it grows and the cross of Christ does not get smaller and smaller as you get holy and holier no it gets bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger dependency is the heart of prayer we should pray as children to our heavenly father the second personal petition is for our pardon oh my I debated whether to break this up it's too late guys

[ 49 : 48 ] I just keep going forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors guys trust me I already cut out a lot of stuff as I was going this is figurative it's a metaphor for spiritual debt it's why later it says in verse 14 and 15 the word debt is replaced with trespasses and in the parallel Lord's prayer in Luke 11 it says forgive us our sins it's about our sins I don't know where you're coming from this morning maybe you're wrestling with some shameful sin and you feel yourself unworthy to approach God in prayer but there's forgiveness for you in God our heavenly father is gracious to forgive this is in first john chapter one verse nine if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness when you feel unworthy and when you feel dirty because of your sin that should not drive you away from

God it should drive you toward God because we have a heavenly father who is merciful who forgives us of all our sins and it says if you do not forgive others their trespasses neither will your father forgive your trespasses this is consistently taught everywhere in scripture mark 11 25 whenever you stand praying forgive If you have anything against anyone so that your father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses if you do not forgive others their trespasses your heavenly father will not forgive your trespasses why!

why Jesus illustrates that principle in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18 right the servant who owes the king the modern equivalent of 7.2 billion dollars is forgiven all of his debt by the gracious king and he goes to a fellow servant who owes him a meager \$12,000 in comparison and chokes him and says you must repay everything you owe me And then when the king sees that, he says, you've been forgiven 7.2 billion.

Clearly, you have not even understood the magnitude of my forgiveness. If that's how you will treat your fellow servant, then you will be expected to repay back everything. The principle is this, the forgiven people forgive others.

Our forgiveness of other people who sin against us is a true test of whether or not we have really believed in the forgiveness of God. Whether we have really grasped God's radical forgiveness for us.

[ 52 : 44 ] Our forgiveness of others is the fruit, the proof, the evidence of the forgiveness we have received from God. That's why he says in Ephesians 4.32, forgive one another as God in Christ forgave you.

And that's why if we don't forgive others when they sin against us, it will be evidence against us that we have never truly grasped the forgiveness we have received from God. And the final petition of the children's prayer is for protection.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. The prayer for pardon for sin flows naturally to prayer for protection. They might be kept from further sins. The word tempt is sometimes translated elsewhere in scripture as the word test.

It really depends on the context. When you tempt someone, it's the devil who tempts people. He tempts to make them fail, to discredit them. When God tests his people, he does it to refine them and to accredit them, not to discredit them.

James 1.13 tells us that God cannot tempt. He does not tempt anyone. But we were told in Matthew 4.1 that God himself led Jesus up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

[ 54 : 01 ] So for Christians, we seek God's help for such times. We don't cultivate this warrior bravado that says, bring all the temptations.

I will face them all. If you have fallen upon your face enough times like I have, you never pray that kind of prayer. You pray desperately, Father, lead me not into temptation.

And when you are led into temptation by the devil, when you are tested by God, then you pray, Father, deliver me from evil. Deliver us from evil. Brothers and sisters, I know many of you sometimes struggle with different sins and besetting sins and you wrestle with them.

But have you gone to God to fetch power for you to fight those sins? There is power for you. God the Father is waiting. He's waiting at the ready to hit that buzzer, to go, to answer, to help you.

But of course, I've taken for granted that we are his children. How can we, who have sinned so much, who have rebelled against God so much, still have the shamelessness to come to God, approach him as our Father and ask him?

[ 55 : 28 ] You know, God has always had a soft side for orphans. That's good news for us. He's called the Father of the fatherless in Psalm 68, verse 5. In you, it says in Hosea 14, 3, the orphan finds mercy.

We don't have that many orphans around us here in Cambridge, but there are some, and we partner with the, the foster care organization that we have here in Cambridge every Christmas to get them gifts.

But can you imagine the pain of being an orphan, a true orphan? Imagine the insecurity, the low self-worth, the fear of being unloved and unwanted.

Imagine the kind of identity crisis that they go through. Who am I? Where do I belong? Imagine being a child, a child, and having to provide for yourself, having to fend for yourself in this world of grown men, harsh world of men.

Is it any surprise that traffickers often prey on orphans? They target children living in poverty in foster homes and group homes or on the streets because they have no father to protect them.

[ 56 : 41 ] According to the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court judges, an estimated 60% of all child sex trafficking victims have histories in the child welfare system.

In a spiritual sense, we were all one of those trafficked children. We were all orphans, exploited, abused, and raped by Satan and these evil forces at work in our sinful world, this depraved world.

We were enslaved to sin and death. That's what we were, all of us. But it says in Galatians 4, 4 to 7, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who are under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts saying, Abba, Father, so you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

God saw us in our desperate state as orphans and he sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to pay the ransom price for our freedom, to win our freedom, to rescue us from that slavery and then so that he can tell us, you have a father now.

[ 58 : 10 ] You are my child now. So don't you go on living like that orphan again. That's what Jesus did for us when he died for our sins on the cross and was raised from the dead.

He secured for us our redemption and our adoption and that's why he says in John 16 that when we pray, we pray in the name of Jesus. We pray out of our union with Christ, God's only son because we now have that sonship and direct access to God the Father.

You guys will have to talk about more of this in CGs.

There's so much here that we can unpack but I'm going to pray and close now. Father, Father, show us what it means that you are our Father.

Teach us how to be more childlike in our faith, in our humility, in our dependence on you. So we might pray as you want us to, as you command us to here in this passage.

[ 59 : 34 ] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.