

Lord, Teach us to Pray 1 – OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

FATHER

- * OT = COLLECTIVE (Deut 32:6, Mal 2:10) or COVENANTAL (1 Chron 22:10, Psalm 89:26).
- * NT = RELATIONAL INTIMACY, PATERNAL PROVISION, NURTURING CARE.
- * Jesus took it a step further, calling God ABBA, conveying new levels of CLOSENESS, TENDERNESS, TRUST & DEPENDENCY (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:6).
→ What does calling God 'Abba' stir in you personally – closeness, trust, tenderness? Why? Is it possible to take that idea too far if we lose sight of the reverence element?
→ How has your understanding of God as Father shaped your prayer life?

HALLOWED

- * On one hand, God is Father, on the other He is deeply, intrinsically, characteristically HOLY, uniquely & untouchably PERFECT, blindingly PURE, a consuming FIRE.
- * One who is SET APART, unlike all others, as such WORTHY of the utmost RESPECT & REVERENCE.
→ Why is it important that Jesus balances God's closeness as Father with His holiness and majesty?
→ What happens when we emphasize one without the other – closeness without reverence, or reverence without intimacy?
→ How can we practically honour God as holy when we pray?

THE GOSPEL

- * Under the Old Covenant, He was GOD ALMIGHTY, but He wasn't ABBA.
- * God to them was terrifyingly HOLY & they were starkly SEPARATED from Him by their SIN.
- * But Jesus came and said, 'You can call MY Father, YOUR Father!'
- * We have passed from OLD Covenant through the CROSS to the NEW Covenant (Heb 10:19-22, Rom 8:15) & that changed everything.
- * Prayer is not FEAR & TREMBLING, neither is it RITUAL & OBLIGATION. It is Matthew 6:9: REVERENTIAL RELATIONSHIP.
- * We pray FROM relationship & WITH reverence.
→ Before Christ, God's holiness made Him seem terrifyingly unapproachable. How does the cross change our access to Him (Heb 10:19-22)?
→ Why is it significant that prayer is no longer about fear or ritual, but about 'reverential relationship'?
→ Was there a time in your life when prayer felt more like ritual or obligation? How has (or how could) that change?

We Pray with REVERENCE

Prayer should METAPHORICALLY, if not PHYSICALLY, take place ON YOUR KNEES.

- How does this work & why is it important?
- How do you feel about fall to your knees in public?

3 POSTURES

1. ADORATION = "God I LOVE You"
I fall to my knees to show You I know You are the WORTHY KING
2. HUMILITY = "God I NEED You"
I fall to my knees to show You I know You are GOD ALMIGHTY
3. SUBMISSION = "God I YIELD to You"
I fall to my knees to show You I know You are the SOVEREIGN LORD
→ Which of these comes most naturally to you in prayer?
→ Which one do you find most challenging, and why?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

1. Start your Prayer with PRAISE
2. Pray the NAMES of God
3. Adopt a worship POSTURE
4. Create HOLY MOMENTS: Special PLACES & TIMES
→ What role does physical posture (kneeling, raising hands, bowing) play in helping us express reverence in prayer?
→ What is one practical way you could create a 'holy moment' (special time or place) this week to draw near to God?

We Pray from INTIMACY

Heb 4:16, James 4:8, Rev 3:20

We have the INVITATION to DRAW NEAR to HIM, in the sure knowledge that if we do, HE will DRAW NEAR to US.

- Read Hebrews 4:16 & James 4:8. What do these verses promise us about drawing near to God?
- What can we learn from our own parenting about how God desires to relate to us through the practice of prayer?

PRACTICAL IDEAS

1. Start from FATHER
2. Pray CONVERSATIONALLY
3. SILENCE & LISTENING
4. DRAW NEAR
→ When might you start your prayer, 'Our Father' and when might you opt for 'Almighty God?' Why?

PRAYER ACTIVITIES to try

1. Start with Adoration (Our Father in Heaven)
 - Activity: Each person speaks out a short sentence beginning with *"Father, I love You because..."* or *"Father, thank You for..."*
2. Hallowed Be Your Name – Praying the Names of God
 - Activity: Write or print a few names/titles of God (e.g., Jehovah Jireh, Shepherd, Rock, Holy One, Abba). Invite group members to pray short prayers of praise using one of the names.
3. Postures of Prayer (Reverence)
 - Activity: Invite everyone to kneel (if able) for a moment of silent prayer, then pray short one-line prayers of adoration, humility or submission.
4. Listening Prayer (Intimacy)
 - Activity: Read Hebrews 4:16 or James 4:8 aloud. Then sit quietly for 2–3 minutes, asking God, *"Father, what do You want to say to me tonight?"* Afterwards, those who feel comfortable can share.
5. Pair Prayer – Drawing Near Together
 - Activity: Pair up and pray briefly for each other, focusing on one area where the other wants to draw nearer to God this week.
6. Holy Moment Commitment
 - Activity: Each person chooses one way to create a 'holy moment' this week (special time/place, posture, starting with praise, listening prayer). Close by praying blessing over each other's commitment.