



The Address

Introduction

As Christians, prayer is a constant in our lives, for we are always in need. Prayer is a habit for the Christian, but experience teaches us that it is a habit easily broken. While mindless and unthinking repetition presents a problem, repeating the same prayer throughout one's life does not. Christ gave us the Lord's Prayer so that we will both know how to pray and for what to pray, but also to whom to pray. Because the prayer Jesus taught us is God's Word, we can know that he loves to hear it. True prayer is never offered to earn or merit God's favor, but rather flows from a thankful heart justified by faith. Prayer is our weapon against the devil's many temptations, and our direct line to our creator and our God.

Opening Prayer: *With the confidence Jesus gives me I come to you, Father. He shows me what a wonderful Father you are, and he has made me your child. I bring my needs and the needs of my fellow Christians to you, for you are able and eager to help us. Amen.*

Lesson Aim: Why do we address our prayers?

Part One

This story is one of the most dramatic in all of Scripture. Ahab was the king of Israel at the time. Ahab was influenced by his wife Jezebel to build a pagan temple, and to allow the worship of Baal and other false gods. Elijah the prophet warned Ahab that the country would suffer from drought if the Baal worship was not removed from the land of Israel. Elijah's words came true and God allowed three years of drought to cause a famine in the land of Israel. Now Elijah challenges Ahab to call the prophets of Baal to a sort of contest to see who worships the true God.

Read 1 Kings 18:22-39.

- 1) In this "contest," how were the people to know which was the real God? (v. 24)
- 2) The prophets of Baal called on his name all day. What was the result of doing so? (v. 29)
- 3) What did Elijah have done with the altar he built that makes the response he received even more impressive? (vv. 33-34)
- 4) How long did it take for Elijah to receive a response from the Lord?

The people of Israel had been led astray by a sinful king and prophets of a false god. Elijah showed them that there is no point in praying to anything other than the one true God, because only he can hear and answer prayer.

Read Luke 15:11-24

- 5) How did the younger son treat his father?
- 6) How did the father treat this son?

In this parable, God is represented by the father. No matter what we've done, and no matter how long it has been since we have last prayed to God, he will always welcome us and love us like a good father.

KEY POINT 1 - We address our prayers to the only one who can hear and answer prayer, and who loves us no matter what.

What I've learned so far:

Part Two

Read Matthew 6:9 and Luke 11:2

Jesus teaches us to pray to God, the creator and controller of the universe, as "Father." When we know God as the Father of Jesus and through Jesus know God as our own dear Father, then we recognize the Lord's Prayer as a profoundly Christian prayer. Faith gives us all boldness and confidence to ask God as dear children ask their dear father. Thus we have every reason to pray with the boldness and confidence of dear children talking to their dear father.

"Father" is a title that the Pharisees and even John the Baptist would not have even dared to teach their disciples to use in referring to God.

1) How is God our father according to...

Genesis 1:1, 27?

Galatians 3:26, 4:4-5?



In Luther's day even, this was still a big deal. God was feared. People did not know him as the loving God that he reveals himself to be in his Word. Let us not overlook and take for granted the blessing of praying to God with comfort and joy.

Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6:9 to address God in prayer as "Our Father." The word "our" indicates that when I pray it's not just about me, but others are involved too. Through all the times you've prayed the Lord's Prayer, have you ever thought about that before? Jesus didn't teach us to say "My Father," but "Our Father." Who is included and referred to when we use the word "our"? Using those last passages that we just looked up, we know that God is the father of all by creation, and also the father of all believers through faith in Christ. We also learned last week that we pray in Jesus' name because it's only through Jesus that our prayers are heard and acceptable to God.

2) So, who do you think is included when we pray using the word "our"? All people or all believers?

3) If God is our Father, then what does that make us to each other (Malachi 2:10, Philippians 1:3-5)?

God is our Father by faith in Christ and that is how we pray to him as our Father. Now we realize that also gives us a sense of intimacy with one another as well.

4) As you read Jesus' instruction to us on how to pray, does it seem like Jesus would encourage us to pray to his mother, Mary, or to any of the apostles, or to any of the leaders of the Church, or angels, or even to pray to someone we love after they die?

Read Ephesians 3:12

When Jesus teaches the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11, he leaves some things out from the time that he teaches the prayer in Matthew 6. Consider why Jesus might have made sure to include the Address both times he taught the Lord's Prayer.

I think that Jesus made sure to include the Address to the Lord's Prayer both times he taught it because it's why he came. He lived and died for us, so that we could be reconciled to God, and therefore speak to him as our beloved heavenly Father.

KEY POINT 2 - God the Father is the Father of all of us and of every person who has ever lived, including Jesus.

What I've learned so far:



Part Three

Study pages 243-247 in the Catechism and answer the following questions in your own words.

- 1) To whom should we pray?
- 2) What does Jesus want us to remember when he tells us to address God as "Our Father"?
- 3) Why does Jesus want us to remember the relationship we have with God by faith?
- 4) Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father who is in heaven"
 - A. because this tells us where God lives, and we must direct our prayers to the right place if we want them to be heard.
 - B. so as to identify which God it is to whom we are praying.
 - C. to remind us that the Almighty God is our dear Father who is not only willing, but also able to help us.

Helpful Passages

Although praying to the Almighty God is a very humbling experience, with the following verses, describe the comfort and assurance that we have knowing that God is our Father.

Psalms 103:13

Matthew 7:9-11

1 John 3:1

Hebrews 4:16

Daniel 9:18

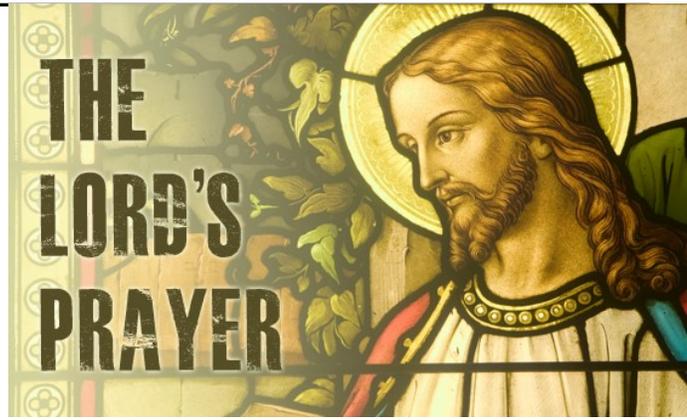
Psalms 50:15



Read Ephesians 6:1 and Colossians 3:20

What does having a relationship with God as "Our Father" teach us about the respect that we should have for him?

This little title teaches us to set our mind against all flippancy, inconsiderateness and pride when we pray. We are to trust God, but also obey him and acknowledge that we already have a relationship with him and he has told us what he wants and expects from us. Each time we pray to God, it is not the first time we are doing so. We already know what his expectations of us are, and so each time we pray we do so with that in mind.



Our Father, who from heav'n above
Bids all of us to live in love
As members of one family
And pray to you in unity,
Teach us no thoughtless words to say,
But from our inmost hearts to pray.
(Hymn 410 v.1)

Main point — Our prayers are not aimless. We prayer confidently and persistently to our loving Father, just as Jesus did.

Final Considerations:

- 1) What benefit might there be if someone who does not believe in the one true God says the Lord's Prayer?
- 2) Is it wrong to pray to Jesus or the Holy Spirit?



What I've learned about the Address of the Lord's Prayer:



Commit to Memory:

- 1 Peter 5:7
- 1 John 3:1
- The Address (with *What Does This Mean?*)