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Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy Name.

thy Kingdom come,

thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever.

Amen.

WEEK ONE

*THE
INVITATION
TO KNOW GOD
AS FATHER*

“Our Father in Heaven”

MATTHEW 6:9

WEEK 1 | DAY 1



RADICAL THEOLOGY

My friend Annabelle grew up in Uganda in a Muslim home. One night, her stepbrother abused her, and to her horror, Annabelle realized her father would do nothing to protect her. Things only got worse as Annabelle (only thirteen at the time) discovered there was a plan to marry her off to a teacher of Islam who was already married. Terrified, Annabelle ran away.

Annabelle described her pain with these words: “As time went by, I never trusted people. Not even my parents. I learned to cover my pain in work. I disconnected from my father. I felt he didn’t want us. He didn’t protect us enough. He didn’t stay. I wondered if life was worth living. They say incest is a curse—I struggled with the perception that I was going to live all my life a cursed girl. Who was going to ever marry me? I hated men—and I detested the word FATHER!”

In high school, Annabelle attempted to take her own life. The pain was too great. It wasn’t until Annabelle met Jesus that her life was radically changed. Annabelle and her husband, Isaac, now lead a ministry called the Remnant Generation that seeks to rescue girls from trafficking. Annabelle’s husband is seeking to teach dads how to be the fathers God calls them to be.

As I travel and speak, many women have shared with me their stories of father wounds and how those hurts have left them scarred and broken. It's not just women who have suffered, but many men have also suffered. They've spoken to me about how their own father wounds have impacted their confidence as fathers. Unfortunately, the stories are all too common.

Father wounds run deep and are at the root of much of our brokenness. They are also at the root of many mental health issues. In one article I read, the author listed just a few of the ways that father wounds impact our lives: low self-esteem and low confidence, anxiety, depression, anger and rage, and either rigidity or the inability to set clear boundaries.¹ Wow!

I am no stranger to father issues. My father, though in ministry, was abusive: spiritually, emotionally, physically, and sexually. I remember well the counselor who told me I had to separate my earthly father from my heavenly Father. I'm not going to lie; it wasn't easy. I spent countless hours on my knees asking God for a new picture of Him as my Father.

As I've had the privilege of traveling and speaking around the world, I have seen and heard firsthand that thousands have trouble seeing God as a loving Father because of deep wounds from their earthly father. Maybe that's true for you as well.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray the Lord's Prayer, He introduced rather radical theology. Almighty God, the maker of the heavens and the earth, wanted a Father-child relationship with us. I imagine the religious leaders in the crowd listening to Jesus shook their heads in disbelief. As religious rule followers, they were accustomed to teaching people to pray at certain times of the day and using very specific words: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deut. 6:4). The prayers of the religious leaders were rote and pompous, done for show to impress their followers. They declared allegiance to the kingdom of God; however, this was more an allegiance to their own religiosity. Their prayers lacked both authenticity and warmth. Instead, they were filled with lofty theological phrases. As a result, many saw God as a distant deity concerned with people keeping all the rules.

Jesus came to reveal the truth about the Father heart of God. He wanted folks to realize they could have an intimate relationship with God. Let's dive into this theology a bit deeper. Before we get to the Lord's Prayer, we need to consider the context for Jesus' teaching. Open your Bible to Matthew 6.

EXPLORE

Before Jesus told His disciples, "This, then, is how you should pray" (Matt. 6:9), He described the prayers of the religious leaders.

READ MATTHEW 6:5-8

What phrases did Jesus use to describe how the religious leaders of the day prayed?

The Greek word for "hypocrite" that Jesus used here described a person who is playacting or reading a script.² Jesus is basically accusing the religious leaders of the day of playacting for the approval of people. To put it simply, the religious leaders were praying for show.

God wants to have an intimate relationship with us, but in order for that to happen, our prayers have to be vulnerable and authentic.

READ MATTHEW 6:6-8

How does Jesus describe the way we are to pray here?

Does this mean we are never to participate in corporate prayer? Why or why not?

READ MATTHEW 6:8

What does this verse teach us about our relationship with God as our Father?

REFLECT

READ MATTHEW 7:10-11

If the “stone” in this verse represents emotional coldness and the “snake” represents abuse, these could describe some of the “gifts” our earthly fathers gave us.

What do these verses teach about the Father heart of God?

Circle in your Bible the phrase in verse 11 that says “good gifts.” What are some of the good gifts God the Father has given you because He loves you? List ten of those gifts in the space below:

How might your life look different if you truly believed God the Father was madly in love with you and delighted to give you good gifts?

APPLY

What is God's invitation to you personally from this passage?

PRAY

Dearest Father God, what an incredible privilege to call You Abba, Father, just as Jesus did. Thank You for pursuing my heart and wanting an intimate relationship with me. I praise You that I can authentically bring before You every wound of my heart, and that You, as a loving Father, bend down to listen. I praise You that as I begin this study of the Our Father prayer, Your Holy Spirit will awaken my heart to love You more dearly. (Based on Rom. 8:15; Ps. 116:2 [NLT]; Matt. 6:9.)

Now It's Your Turn

Write your prayer of praise based on Scripture in the space below:

LISTEN

“Our Father,” sung by Jenn Johnson (Bethel Music)³

MEMORIZE

Use the translation of your choice to memorize Psalm 103:13.

WEEK 1 | DAY 2



ADOPTED!

Our family is passionate about adoption. In fact, one of my grandsons is adopted. I remember so well going with my daughter and her husband to meet our new grandson. Excitement and anticipation filled my heart. I remember the exact moment I laid eyes on him and held him in my arms. Oh, my! There are not adequate words! Tears clouded my eyes, and my heart completely melted. Months of prayer had led to that moment. I fell categorically, madly in love with this tiny little boy. When the adoption was finalized, we celebrated big-time as a family.

Adoption is costly. I remember all the fundraisers we had as a family to raise the money for our kids to be able to adopt. It's costly in other ways as well. Even if parents adopt through the foster care system, which is usually free, the child being adopted has experienced trauma that often plays out in the family system. Adoption is costly to the family system.

As we consider the opening of the Lord's Prayer, and specifically the phrase "Our Father," we can't ignore what our adoption cost the Father. Today, we're going to look at our adoption into God's family—after all, that's why we can call God our

Father. We're going to consider what our adoption cost not only Jesus but also Father God. Our adoption process begins at the cross. Open your Bible to Matthew 27.

EXPLORE

The older I get, the more the crucifixion of Jesus means to me. I cannot even fathom the agony of our Savior Jesus on the cross. The love that drove Him to finish the work of our adoption is mind-blowing.

READ MATTHEW 27:26-56

Using your own words, describe the crucifixion of Jesus.

Sit with the pain of the crucifixion for five silent minutes. Ask the Holy Spirit to help your mind grasp the depth of the pain. Ask Him to awaken in your heart a new appreciation for the agony Jesus suffered as He hung on the cross.

Write down the first adjectives that come to mind when you consider the horror of Jesus' death.

READ MATTHEW 27:46

What do you think Father God was feeling at this time?

Pastor and author Tim Keller, in his book *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, writes that Jesus . . .

was abandoned, denied, and betrayed by all the people he had poured his life into, and on the cross he was forsaken by even his father (Matt. 27:46). This final experience, ultimately unfathomable to us, means infinite, cosmic agony beyond the knowledge of any of us on earth. For the ultimate suffering is the loss of love, and this was the loss of an eternal, perfect love. There is nothing more difficult than the disruption and loss of family relationships, but here we see that "God knows what it is like to suffer . . . because he has personally suffered in the most severe way possible . . . the agony of loss by death, the separation from a beloved, [and] the disruption of his own family (the Trinity) by the immensity of his own wrath against sin."⁴

God the Son took all the brunt of God the Father's wrath against sin for you and me. It cost the Son His life. It cost the Father the horror of watching His own beloved Son tortured and crucified for crimes He never committed. It cost the first separation of the family system of the Trinity. Ah, friend, make no mistake, the price of your adoption was beyond anything you can imagine!

READ ROMANS 8:1-8

According to this passage, for those of us who have put our faith in Christ, how do we benefit from Christ's death on the cross?

READ ROMANS 8:9-16

How does the Holy Spirit help us realize the fullness of our adoption?

READ ROMANS 8:15

Circle in your Bible the phrase “Abba, Father!” This was the most tender of all names with which children in Middle Eastern culture could address their fathers. What does this verse teach you about the type of relationship God the Father wants to have with you?

REFLECT

Today, we’ve studied the cost of your adoption. *What emotions has today stirred up within you? Journal about your feelings in the space below.*

After studying the cost of your adoption today, how would you describe the Father heart of God to a friend?

When you think of the Lord's Prayer, how does understanding your adoption change your understanding of the phrase "Our Father"?

APPLY

What is God's invitation to you personally today?

PRAY

Father God, that You, the God of the universe, have adopted me as Your precious child is beyond my human understanding! It staggers my mind to think about how much You love me and how much love You continue to lavish on a daily basis. I praise You and thank You that You have chosen me and adopted me. Thank You for cherishing me as Your beloved child. (Based on 1 John 3:1; Eph. 1:3–4)

Now It's Your Turn

Write out a prayer of praise to God the Father for His initiating your adoption into His family.

LISTEN

“Run to the Father,” sung by Cody Carnes⁵

MEMORIZE

Write out Psalm 103:13 from memory in the space below.