

Our Father
Matthew 6:9-13
Pastor John Miller

Now if you're like me, I think you would have to admit that you long for a more effective and satisfying prayer life. Do you find your prayers are effective? Do you find your prayer life is satisfying? Do you find that you are able to connect with God when you pray, or do you have difficulty when it comes to time of talking to God, or do you misunderstand the purpose and priority and the power of prayer in your own life? If so, you're not alone. It seems that even the disciples of Jesus felt that they needed help when it came to their prayer life.

In Luke 11:1—by the way, the second place you find the Lord's Prayer recorded is in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. The disciples were observing Jesus as He prayed. Jesus prayed quite frequently. And they saw, no doubt, the peace and the power and the joy that he had, and they saw the connection He had with the Father, and so one of the disciples—the Bible doesn't tell us which one—came to Jesus, and he asked the question, which is the title for the series, "Lord, would You teach us to pray?" even as John taught his disciples to pray.

I don't know about you, but that's the cry of my heart; I need the Lord to teach me how to pray. And for the next eight weeks we are going to be delving deeply into this Lord's Prayer and learning what Jesus, I believe, gave us as a model or pattern for prayer.

Next to Psalm 23 it is perhaps the most loved and well-known text in the Bible. Sixty-six words in the King James translation, and yet its depths cannot be exhausted. I feel like the proverbial little boy trying to capture the ocean in his little bucket.

Now, there are a lot of things I cannot talk about or draw from this text. And one of my frustrations as a preacher is that the beauty and the depth that is here—I don't feel like I will be able to really do it justice. But I pray that as we spend these next eight weeks, that God will open our eyes and our hearts, our ears, and transform our lives. I believe in understanding of this Lord's Prayer can transform not only your prayer life but also our very lives.

Now let me first of all—let me say some introductory things about the Lord's Prayer. But they are important things, and I encourage you to write these down. Number one, it is not really the Lord's prayer. You go, "Well, that's a great place to start. He just told us we're going to study the Lord's Prayer, and now you're telling us it's not the Lord's prayer." What I mean by that is that this is not a prayer that Jesus actually prayed. If you notice in the 12th verse He prays, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." That's a prayer for forgiveness. Jesus would never have prayed that. Jesus didn't need to pray that. Jesus didn't pray that. Notice that in verse 9, Jesus says to His disciples, "After this manner pray ye." Notice what He did not say. He did not say, "Pray these words." I believe that Jesus is giving us a pattern for prayer. It's not the prayer that Jesus actually prayed; that would be in John 17.

The second point I would make is that it is not a prayer to just be recited. And I think the

context warrants that. Jesus warns us of two things. In verses 5 and 6, He warns us of being hypocritical when we pray. And then in verses 7 and 8, He warns us of being mechanical when we pray. You say, "Well, what do you mean?" Look at it with me. Go to verses 5 and 6. Jesus says, "When you pray..." Now notice He doesn't say, "if you pray." But He says, "When you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogue and in the corner of the streets..."—Why?—"...that they may be seen of men. Truly I say unto you, they have their reward. "But..."—Here's verse 6—"...when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father, which sees you in secret..."—In other words, He knows your heart—"...He shall reward you openly."

Now He warns us about the hypocritical prayers of the religious community. And a lot of times people can be religious and they can pray prayers, but they aren't really talking to God for the right reasons or for the right motive, such as the case in this warning. Jesus says they love to pray—He doesn't stop there—standing on the corners of the street and in the synagogue. He doesn't say they love to pray—stop right there—He says they love to pray when they are on the corner and everyone can see them. They love to pray in the synagogue when everyone is there and can listen to them and go, "Aah, isn't Rabbi Hallal awesome!" And if you were to invite him to go into the closet and pray, they'd say, "What for? No one can see you." Well, that's not the purpose of prayer. They love to pray so they can be seen of men. You know, I fear that even in our modern evangelical church in the western world we have hypocrites that love to pray in the congregation. Why is it when we pray we have to get our prayer voice on, our prayer intonations in? "Oh, Goodddd, we come before Theee..." And it's got to be in the King James English or God won't hear it. I don't know what that is. It's like God's thinking, "What happened to you?" Sometimes it's, "Oh, Goodddd..." What's happened? The guy's having a heart attack or something? I mean, you know, He's our Father. We can talk to Him naturally.

But many times the motive—and this is the point here—the motive is to impress people. So Jesus uses a metaphor of going in your closet. Now some of you can't get in your closet it's so messed up. Clean it up; okay? You open the door, and it would fall on you. You'd have to pray for a healing afterwards. But He's saying that by the closet He means don't pray to be heard of men. Don't pray to impress people. I've known people in prayer meetings, "I don't want to pray because I don't know what to say, and I can't pray that intelligently, or I don't want to pray because I'm embarrassed." Why? You're talking to God. You're not talking to men. You're not talking to impress people. You're talking to your Father, Who is in heaven.

So when we pray this prayer, we're not to just recite it hypocritically and then secondly, or mechanically. This is so important. In verses 7 and 8, He says, "When you pray use not..."—Here it is—"...vain repetitions as the heathen do." Now the first warning was the religious community. The second warning is the heathen community or the irreligious community. So when you pray, don't use vain repetition, verse 7, as the heathen do. Why? "For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

So the first group loved to pray to be seen of men. The second group thinks that God will only hear when they speak a lot. But notice what Jesus goes on to say in verse 8: "But you, be not

like unto them”—these heathen who do vain repetition—“for your Father, Who knows what things you need before you even ask Him.” And again, some people think they’re going to be heard for their much speaking. “Oh, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thank you Jesus, thaaank you Jesus.” Now if that comes natural, God bless you. But when you run into your friend in the mall you don’t go, “Dude, how you doin’, how you doin’? Good to see you, good to see you, good to see you.” Aah, ha. It’s like, “What’s wrong with you?” Why do we as Christians just have to get weird, flat out weird? God help us be normal. So you don’t want to do it to impress people, and you don’t want to think that if I say it over and over and over and over enough—like when Baal—the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel were contesting with Elijah, and they prayed from morning until afternoon, “Oh Baal hear us, oh Baal hear us, oh Baal hear us.” And they thought the repetition would have effect. Your Father knows what you need before you even ask Him. Sometimes people think they need to explain everything to God, convince God why He should do it, and give God a good argument. God knows your heart. He knows your needs. He knows more than we could ever imagine, so we pray sincerely, and we pray simply. Our praying should be sincere, not hypocritical, thoughtful, not mechanical. In other words, you would say, we should pray with our hearts and with our heads. Amen? We should pray with our hearts, and we should pray with our heads.

Let me say this thirdly about this prayer. Jesus’ pattern for prayer defines the spirit in which we would pray. The spirit in which we should pray. And I think this could be one of the most important things we learn in this whole series. There are five ways our spirit—in which we should pray. Number one, we should pray with an unselfish spirit. You say, “What do you mean?” In the Lord’s Prayer, there are no personal pronouns. Did you ever notice that? When you pray it’s not, “My Father, which is in heaven.” It is not, “My kingdom come, my will be done. Give me my bread. My kingdom come, my will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Lead me not into temptation. Deliver me from evil.” It ain’t there. That’s bad English, but I just thought I’d do that for emphasis. My wife’s always saying, “Do you know you said ‘ain’t’?” I know I said “ain’t.” I said it on purpose, to get your attention. There are no personal pronouns in the Lord’s Prayer. “Our Father...” From the very get-go—I could preach a whole sermon on the word “our.” We could spend three weeks. “Our Father” and then “in heaven.” Three-week sermon. And we’re just going to scratch the surface today. We’re just going to look at the invocation. We are part of a family. When I pray, my prayers affect others. The things I’m asking for. I should learn to pray for others. Pray with others. There are no personal pronouns. So the spirit of the prayer is a family prayer. It is an unselfish prayer.

Secondly, it is a pattern in that we should pray with a reverent spirit. A reverent spirit. Notice verse 9: “Our Father Who is in heaven.” Number one, He’s your Father, and you’d better speak reverently to Him. I think it’s tragic today that young people call their Dads “old man” or “Hey, you” or call them by their first name. I’m old school. It should be Mr. and Mrs. or it should be Father and Mother when you speak to your parents. You’re talking to your Father, Who is in heaven. We’re going to see that “Father” indicates intimacy, and “in heaven” speaks of His Majesty or His imminence and His transcendence. So we need to realize I’m talking to God, so I need to pray not only unselfishly but reverently.

And thirdly, we need to pray worshipfully, with a worshipful spirit. Verse 9: "Hallowed be thy Name." That's our text next Sunday. Let your name, your character, your nature be set apart, be considered holy. If there's anything God wants to be known as, it's known as a Holy God. So when you think of "Father," you could be overly sentimental, but when you think of the fact that He's in heaven, let Your Name be considered holy. A worshipful spirit.

And then fourthly, we should pray with a submissive spirit. And this is so important. In verse 10: "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done." Not "my will" but "Thy will." Submitting to the will of God. The purpose of prayer is not to get my will done on earth; it's to get God's will done.

And then fifthly, we are to pray with a dependent spirit. In verses 11, 12 and 13: "Give us" verse 11 "forgive us" verse 12 "lead us" verse 13 "deliver us" verse 13.

So prayer starts with "Thy kingdom"—"Thy name, Thy kingdom, Thy will" and then it moves to "Give us, lead us and deliver us," a dependent spirit. "I need You to lead me." "I need You to protect me and to forgive me and to keep me from evil."

I want you to note fourthly about this prayer. I want you to note what this pattern for prayer does not say. It doesn't tell us three things. It doesn't tell us what the posture of prayer is. It doesn't say when you pray, fold your hands, close your eyes and bow your head; that's the right posture. I think that was invented by a Sunday school teacher. It's to keep kids from goofing off in class. Nowhere in the Bible does it say fold your hands, close your eyes and bow our head. Sometimes people say, "You were peeking; you had your eyes open." "You had your eyes open to see I had my eyes open. Why were you looking at me? Ahaa." You know how the Jews prayed in the Old Testament? They prayed with their eyes open, looking up and their hands outstretched, because they expected to get something. I think that's kind of cool. When we pray we kind of go like this [bent over]. They like, "Okay Lord, lay it on me." But nowhere in the Bible does it tell us we have to pray kneeling, which is a good posture, we have to pray standing, which is fine, or we have to pray lying down—that's my favorite, preferred posture. I love the prone position of prayer. I love to get in bed and pull the blankets up and go, "Oh Lord, thank you for my [yawn] bed. In Jesus' Name, Amen." Do you ever kneel by your bed and you lean over your bed and you put your hands like this [together] and you put your forehead in there and you start to pray, and it's just a perfect position to sleep in. "Oh, Lord, I come before You," and the next thing you know, you're out, you know. You wake up an hour later, there's a big red dot on your forehead. It's like, "I just gotta go to bed right now." It's happened to me so many times. So Jesus doesn't say you gotta kneel, you gotta stand, you gotta lift your hands.

Secondly, He doesn't tell us the place of prayer in this prayer. You can pray wherever you want. You can pray in a battlefield. You can pray in a cave. You can pray in a church. You can pray in an open field. You can pray on the back of a donkey. Jonah prayed in the belly of a fish, a whale. What a great place to have a prayer meeting; right? In the belly of a whale as he cried out to God.

Now thirdly, He doesn't tell us the time of prayer. Some people say, "The morning, morning

hours. That's when you should pray. So get up and give God your fresh, morning hours." And that's good. I encourage that. And Jesus prayed in the morning. But we're not commanded to do that. Jesus prayed at noonday, Jesus prayed in the evening. You can pray morning, noon or night; it doesn't matter. The time of prayer, the posture of prayer, the place of prayer is not the issue.

Let me mention a fifth thing, and this is the last. I believe that this pattern for prayer reveals the priority of prayer. "Priorities" or "priority" of prayer. And again, this is so very important. The prayer has six petitions. The first three deal with God's Name, God's kingdom and God's will, verses 9 and 10. The second three deal with our bread, our debts and our deliverance, verses 11, 12 and 13. So the priority of prayer is what? God; amen? The focus of prayer is God; His Name being hallowed, His kingdom coming, His will being done. The purpose and priority of prayer is God and His will and His way. Not your will, not your way. People say, "Pastor John, I prayed and God didn't answer my prayer." I said, "Yes, He did. He said 'No.'" Do you know that's an answer? "Well, I don't like that answer." "Well, it's an answer; isn't it?" And you know what? By the way, God knows better than we do. Do you ever think about that? God is smarter than we are. We tell God exactly what to do, and "I need it by Friday night at 5 o'clock, in Jesus' Name. And you better come through for me God, or I ain't goin' to church this week, and I certainly ain't goin' to tithe. Take that, God!" Like we got God's arm up behind His back and "Okay, okay, I'll give you the new car!" It doesn't work like that. The purpose of prayer is God's Name being hallowed, God's kingdom coming, God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. That's the priority of prayer.

Only after God's Name, kingdom and will does it move to our bread, "Give us this day our daily bread"—which, by the way, notice it's "bread" and it's not caviar, it's not fillet mignon. It's not "Give us this day our daily 'fillet mignon.'" It's "bread," the basic substance for life. By the way, I wouldn't eat caviar if you paid me to eat caviar. Who wants to eat fish eggs? I will eat fillet mignon, though, if you want to invite me over for dinner. And I'll pray for it. God provides our bread, our needs, not our greeds. He forgives our sins, our debts, verse 12, "as we forgive those who have sinned against us." And He delivers us: "Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from"—literally in the Greek it's "the evil one." Protect me and keep me.

So here's the focus. I believe the first three petitions are realignment. And then the second three petitions are result. When you align yourself properly with God, as your Father, His Name, His will, His kingdom, guess what? He provides your bread, He forgives your sins, He protects you and delivers you and keeps you. It's interesting the Ten Commandments were called the "Decalogue." That the first five Commandments deal with our relationship to God, priority number one, and the second half deals with our relationship to other people. And again the same kind of division there; God first and our needs come second.

Now, let's look at this first invocation here. This isn't really a petition; it's the invocation beginning in verse 9. "Our Father, which art in heaven." So the first step in prayer is recognition of who we are praying to. A lot of people pray, and they don't really stop and think, "Who am I talking to? How am I to think about God? If I'm to center on God, what kind of God am I to

center on?" So it's centering our minds and our hearts on God. Now what are the first thoughts we should have about God? Here Jesus gives it to us, that God is our Father. Isn't that awesome? If you get nothing else out of this message today, I want you to leave church today saying, "God is my Father. He loves me, He forgives me, He provides for me, He takes care of me, He watches over me, He's my Father." And what beautiful words came from the lips of Jesus: "God is my Father." Now this concept of God as our Father may not seem like a big deal to us today, but it certainly was in Jesus' day. Do you know that in the entire Old Testament God is addressed as "Father" only 14 times? 14 times. And even then, it's in the greater context of the Father to a nation, that is Israel. Never individual Father, never personally. It's always in the bigger, sovereign sense of God our Father of our nation. But when you come down to the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, 66 times—not taking into consideration all of the epistles—66 times Jesus made reference to God as "Our Father," and He addressed God as "Father," and He taught you and I to do the same. This would be mind-blowing to the mind of the Jew. They wouldn't even pronounce the name of God. They wouldn't even read the name of God in sacred text, let alone come before God and call Him "Father." So an amazing revelation and understanding that Jesus brings. And when Jesus prayed, by the way, He always used that phrase for His Father, "Father."

There is only one place—and I want to share that lest I forget—only one time Jesus prayed and didn't use the word "Father." You know when it was? Hanging on the Cross. And when the sins of the world were placed upon Him, He quoted Psalm 22:1: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" At that moment when He became sin for us who are sinners—He took our sin. But isn't it interesting that His last words that He uttered on the Cross, He finally came back to "Father"? "Into Your Hands I commit My spirit." And He bowed His Head and dismissed His spirit. You know what the first words recorded in the Bible out of the lips of Jesus are—were? Jesus was found at 12 years old in the temple, and His mom and dad said, "Don't you know that we've been worried about you, trying to find you?" And Jesus said, "Don't you know I would be about My Father's business, I would be busy about My Father's business?" Some translations add "in My Father's house." The last words He uttered were "Father, into Your Hands I commend My spirit." So Jesus is telling us that when we pray, we are talking to God, Who is our Father.

Now it's even more amazing when you realize the actual word that Jesus used. When Jesus expressed this "Father," He was speaking an Aramaic word. The Aramaic word was the word "Abba." It's spelled A-b-b-a. And when Jesus uttered the words, this is actually what He would say, this is actually how it would sound. He would say, "Abba." "Abba." Well you would say, "What's significant about that?" It was the common, everyday word used for infants expressing love and intimacy to their father. The equivalent to us would be "Daddy" or "Papa." So it's a word of intimacy, it's a word of love. It's a word of simplicity. "Oh, Father." "Oh, Abba." And again, the Jews who were listening would just be blown away. He's actually calling the God of all the universe "My Abba, My Daddy, My Papa." And think about Him Who is in heaven, Who spans the universe with a span of His Hand, Who spoke the whole universe by His divine fiat, said "Let there be light" and light was, created out of nothing. He's your Father, Who loves you and knows you and cares about you. So Jesus is using this very intimate word, "Abba." This is to

be the foundational awareness of all our prayers, that I am talking to my “Abba,” my “Father,” Who is in heaven.

But the big question is, is God your Abba? Is God your Father? You say, “Well, what do you mean?” What I mean by that—listen carefully—the Bible does not teach the universal fatherhood of God. In other words, not every person is a child of God. The only sense in which we are the children of God is more accurately said we are the creation of God, that we are brothers in our humanity by the fact that God created us, all equal in His image and in His likeness, that we have a brotherhood. But in the spiritual sense, in the Biblical sense, in the sense of a child of God, you must be born into God’s family. The Bible says in John 1:12, “As many as receive Him”—that is, Jesus Christ—“to them”—this is receive Him—“He gives the power”—or authority or the right—“to be called the children of God.” Jesus looked at the religious community of His day and He said, “You are of your father, the Devil, and his deeds you will do.” You go, “Wow, that’s not politically correct! That isn’t flat out very nice!” But it certainly is true. He’s speaking the truth in love. I don’t take it for granted that everyone sitting in this place this morning is a child of God. But if you haven’t been born again, you’re not a child of God. If you don’t know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you haven’t been born into God’s family through the work of the Holy Spirit, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, then you can’t rightfully come before God and say, “Abba,” because you’re not a child of God. You need to be born into God’s family. And so Jesus is telling us that we have to have a relationship with God and that we’re a part of the family of God. In Galatians 4:6 Paul says, “Because you are the sons of God, God sent forth His Spirit into your hearts,” the Spirit Who calls out “Abba, Father.” And then again in Romans 8:15-16, Paul says, “You have received the Spirit of adoption whereby you cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

So again, my question for you today is, “Are you a child of God?” Do you have this inner witness of the Holy Spirit? Do you know for sure that you are His child? It’s only through faith in Jesus Christ that we can cry, “Abba, Father.” Now you say, “Big deal. What does it mean? How does it help me to know if I’m a child of God, that God is my father?” Let me give you some reasons why this is important. Number one, it reminds me that I’m loved. And I know there are fathers who haven’t loved their children, but that’s unnatural. The natural thing for a father is to love his children; amen? I’ve had fathers come to me with tears. “I love my kids, but I don’t know how to show them love, because my dad didn’t show me love, and I don’t know how to express my love to them.” And that’s heartbreaking when you do love somebody, but you don’t know how to show it. Just a little quick footnote: If you’re a dad, tell your kids you love them; okay? I don’t care how old they are. My kids are getting older, because I’m getting older. But just tell them, say, “I love you.” Send them a text, call them up, send them a letter. Tell your kids you love them. “Okay, Dad.” And then show them that you love them. Sacrifice for them. Do something for them. And live a Christ-life before them, so they can see their Father in heaven in their earthly father. But a lot of fathers don’t show that love.

But it does convey the idea that God loves me and will listen to me. I now have three grandchildren, and when my—especially the girls—when my little granddaughters come into my

office and they say, "Papa," whatever you want. Whatever I can do. I just melt. And my youngest little granddaughter, Caitlin, when she squeezes my neck and goes, "Hi, papa," it's like, I could just stay here forever, for this is so awesome. You don't think your Father in heaven loves it when you come to Him, so to speak, and put your arms around His neck and go, "Papa"? He loves to hear your voice; He loves to hear you talk to Him. And if you have a need or a problem, don't you think He wants to know about it? Don't you think He's concerned with the things that concern you? God is more concerned than you could ever imagine about everything in your life. And He loves to hear you cry out to Him. "Papa, Abba, Father." So it means that I'm loved.

Secondly, it means that I should want several things. First of all, if I'm His child, then He's my Father. Verse 9, look at it. I should want God's name to be hallowed in my life. I cannot pray, "Our Father" and live selfishly. I cannot pray, "Who art in heaven" and not want Him to be glorified and magnified. So if I'm a child of God and He's my Father, I want His Name to be hallowed, verse 9, and then secondly, verse 10, I want His kingdom to come. In other words, I need to live for eternal things; I need to live for heaven. I need to have eternal perspective.

And then thirdly, if God is my Father and I am His child, I want His will to be done in my life, verse 10. "Thy kingdom come," and then one of my favorite petitions in the whole prayer: "Thy will be done." I want you to take whatever it is you are praying for, whatever you're asking God for, and I want you to put underneath that prayer, "Thy will be done." Say, "I'm afraid to do that." "I'm afraid to do that." Why are you afraid to do that? "'Cause I think God's will is different than what I want." He's your Father. He loves you. He wants what's best for you. And He knows what's best for you, and He will take care of you. Never be afraid to say, "Not my will but Thy will be done." Now there are some of our "positive confession" brethren who say that that's a cop-out prayer. Nothing could be further from the truth. The greatest faith is the faith that says, "Not my will but Thine be done." Because in Thy will I'm going to trust You. I'm going to trust You. Wherever Your will leads me, whatever path it takes me, whatever purpose You have for my life, "Not my will but Thine be done." It's more important for me to be in the will of God than having my way out of the will of God. You don't want to go down that path. Never be afraid to say, "Thy will be done." Because He's my Father, He love me, I can trust Him.

And then it also means that He will take care of me. I want you to notice verse 11. If you're taking notes, I want you to write this down. He'll provide for me. "Give me this day my daily bread." Now we're going to teach a whole sermon on this verse, so I won't tarry on it. But it's bread, it's a basic substance, and he gives it to us how often? Daily. What do we want? We want the decade provision. "Give me this at least this year; don't let me come every day. Would you give me enough bread for the year so I could rest? Could You give me a little extra so I don't sweat?" No. He says, "I want you to come every day, in daily dependence for Your strength, for Your help, for Your wisdom, for Your bread." This is what God wants from us. He wants us to come every day and say, "Lord, I need you today. Help me in my marriage, help me with my kids, Lord, help me on my job. Lord, help me with my health. Lord, help me with my finances. Lord, I look to You, Abba. Take care of me today, Lord. Give me today my daily bread." He's not talking just about literal bread; He's talking about all the things that we depend

on God for. And I think that it's talking about that spirit of dependence.

I have His provision, but I also have, secondly, I have His pardon. I love verse 12 when He says, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Did you know that because He's your Father, He forgives your sins? When my kids come to me and say, "Dad, I'm sorry. Will you please forgive me?" "Yes. Yes, I will." Because I love them, and I will forgive them. You know, God loves you and He'll forgive you. And you know, what it means to forgive somebody means you treat them like it never happened. One of the best definitions of forgiveness is God forgives us, and He treats us like it never happened. You don't forgive somebody if you remember and treat them rudely or meanly or ostracize from. I had a parent come up to me after first service and said, "I have a son that has never forgiven me. He won't talk to me. He says he's forgiven me, but he says he hasn't forgotten." That's not forgiveness. Forgiveness is treating people the way God treats us. He doesn't treat us as though we are sinners. He treats us as though we are His children. He treats us as though it never happened. And because God is my Father, when I say, "Abba in heaven," I have His pardon.

And thirdly, I have His protection. In verse 13, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." God will protect you. I think it's the grace of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the kindness of God that protects us. There are times that God brings to my awareness how God has kept me and protected me and sustained me and watched over me. Spiritually, physically, emotionally all these years. And it's because He's my "Papa." He's my Father in heaven. He takes care of His children.

I shared a couple of years ago with you that probably about—pushing 20 years ago now—I was kidnapped at gunpoint in Los Angeles. I went out to get in my car from a restaurant, there were a couple guys there with guns that forced me and my friends into my vehicle, held us at gunpoint, robbed us. I thought they were going to just jump out and say, you know, "Okay, go." Said, "Start the car." Drove us around at gunpoint for an hour, lined us up execution style in a dark Inglewood park. Midnight. Cocked their guns like they were going to shoot us. And you know what the Lord gave me the ability to do at that very moment? As I'm standing at this fence hearing these guys cocking guns behind me, we all raised our hands and we just said, "Abba." We just raised our hands, we said, "Lord, we are Your children. Do you see what's going on here, Lord? You get the drift? Your kids are in trouble right now." I'm serious; this is what happened. We actually stood there. I had two friends with me. I said, "Let's pray." We raised our hands and said, "Father, Father. We belong to You. We're in Your hands. Your will be done." And a couple seconds later we heard them. They got in our vehicle and drove off and left us standing there. We ran out into the street, got some help. It was quite an ordeal.

But I'll never forget that sense of I am the child of God. I am a child of God. I belong to God. God is my Father. No one can do anything to me but what He allows. I am in His hands; amen? And how wonderful to know that God can protect you and keep you from the evil one.

Now, in closing, there's one last phrase I want to point out in verse 9. And that is the phrase, "which art in"—What?—"which art in heaven." I love what Oswald Sanders says about this

phrase. He said, “‘which art in heaven’ is not God’s address, but it indicates rather not His location but His elevation.” I love that. It’s not God’s location, as though God is confined to a specific location. “Where is God?” “Right now, He’s way out there up there in heaven.” You know, God is here right now. Your Father is here right now. You get in the car, drive home, God is with you. God’s in the house with you. Wherever you go, your Father’s with you. So it’s not just His location, it’s His elevation above man. His complete separation from man’s corruption. Our Father awakens love in our hearts. “Who art in heaven” engenders awe. These together constitute worship.

This invocation is a blending of intimacy and majesty. I love that. When we say “Our Father,” intimacy. When we say “which art in heaven,” majesty. And it creates a perfect balance there. Lest we become sentimental: “The big guy in the sky” or “my dad in heaven” and we become too flippant in our conversation with Him, realize He is in heaven. He’s the omniscient, omnipotent, all powerful, all knowing, everywhere-present God, Who is my Father in heaven. Our Father is high, and He is holy. Our Father is in heaven and combines fatherly love with heavenly power. And I love this. What His love purposes, His power is able to perform. You got that? What His love purposes, His power is able to perform. I’m not always able to take care of my kids, because I’m limited by space, the resources, knowledge and by strength and by ability. I’m quite limited as a father, but guess who is unlimited. His resources are infinite, He goes with me wherever I go, and His love is unfluencable. And there’s nothing to hinder that manifestation of His love to me. So I have this Father in heaven. Well, some people say, “I have a hard time relating to God the Father because my father on earth, my biological father, was an ogre, was a mean father or he molested me or abused me or abandoned me.” And I understand that. But your Father in heaven is not like any father on earth. You have a Father Who’s in heaven. He’s not your father on earth, so don’t compare the two. Would to God that earthly fathers pictured the God in heaven, but they are limited. They are sinners. So don’t let that confuse you or create a problem with trying to relate to God as your Father. Your Father is in heaven. He’s holy, He’s loving, He’s caring, and He’ll take care of you.

Now three things, and I’ll wrap this up. Because of all that I shared this morning, I think, number one, we can pray with confidence; right? If you are His child—big “if”—but if you are His child, guess what. You can come with confidence. Your Father cares, knows your needs before you even ask Him. Secondly, you can come with simplicity. You don’t have to use fancy words, you don’t have to weigh your words, you don’t have to say, “Am I saying it right?” Just pour out your heart to God. And thirdly, you come with love. “Abba, dearest Father.”

So how does this prayer start? Invocation. “Our”—we’re part of a family—“which art in heaven.” So it engenders two things. Number one, intimacy. He’s my Father. Majesty, He’s in heaven. The two come together and it’s worship. Amen?