

# OpenTheo

## Matthew 6:9 - 6:13 (Part 2)



### Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this discussion, Steve Gregg examines the famous prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, found in Matthew 6:9-13. Gregg discusses the phrase "Our Father in heaven," pointing out that Christians can address their prayers to either the Father or Jesus, as long as they pray in Jesus' name. He then emphasizes the importance of treating God with reverence and considers the scandalous lack of reverence for God in many modern Christian lives.

### Transcript

Let's look together now at Matthew 6. In verses 9-13, we have the famous prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, which we usually call the Lord's Prayer. Some object to this term because it is a prayer that Jesus himself never did pray and never really would pray, because of certain elements that are requests that Jesus would never have to make. But I do not object to the term the Lord's Prayer, because it is the prayer that the Lord taught us to pray.

And therefore, we will now look at the so-called Lord's Prayer. It is found in Luke, but it's also found in Matthew. And we are looking at Matthew 6, verses 9-13.

I will read it. Jesus said, Now, it is possible that that last clause, that last sentence, I suppose, which says, For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

It's possible that that is missing in your Bible. It depends on what translation you are using. It is found in the King James and is found in the New King James, but it is omitted from most other modern translations.

And the reason it is omitted is not because of any conspiracy, a New Age conspiracy or anything that is involved in those translations being made, but because it is actually not found in some of the older manuscripts of the New Testament. Now, there are some differences. They are not usually very significant, but there are some differences between the older manuscripts of the New Testament and the somewhat later manuscripts.

And these differences are reflected in the different translations, because the King James and the New King James both follow the manuscripts of which there are a majority reading, which are not quite as old as a couple of important manuscripts which are followed by the newer translations. The newer translations would include the New International Version, the NIV, the New American Standard, the Revised Standard, and a lot of other modern Bibles. They almost all follow the older manuscripts.

Now, I'm not saying that's the right thing to do. I'm just pointing out that's what they do. And because of that, you'll find some omissions in some Bibles of things that are found in other Bibles.

This is not a translator's conspiracy. This is simply reflecting that some of the manuscripts are a little different than others. This is one of those places.

The older manuscripts of Matthew do not contain the words, And therefore, because some manuscripts contain them and some don't, some may wonder, are they authentic? Did Jesus really say those words? Well, it's not really known for sure, because the manuscripts that include them may be correct, or the manuscripts that don't include them might be correct. We really don't know for sure. But I will say this, even if Jesus, let's say we don't know whether Jesus said these particular words or not, there is certainly nothing wrong with including them in the prayer, because they actually are part of another Biblical prayer.

In 1 Chronicles 29, when David had made a collection for the building of the temple, he prayed and gave thanks to God. In 1 Chronicles 29, verse 11, in David's prayer, he said this, Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty, for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, Lord, and You are exalted as head over all.

Now, you'll notice, Yours is the kingdom, Yours is the power, and Yours is the glory are all found in this prayer of David's. And that would be reflected also in this traditional ending of the Lord's Prayer. Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

So, whether Jesus included that line or not, we can say that that line has a Biblical precedent, and to include that in the prayer certainly doesn't hurt a thing at all. But let's look at the Lord's Prayer a bit. I would like to take more time than I will be able to with it.

For example, I'd like to take a whole session on each phrase in it, but I don't know that we could justify the time. We'd hardly ever get through Matthew if we took it that way. But let me just look at it overall, first of all, and I don't know how much time we'll take with it when we finally get done with it.

It starts with the words, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Now, God is to be addressed as Our Father. How many Christians pray to Jesus? That is, when they pray,

they say, Jesus, or Dear Jesus, or Lord Jesus, and they address their prayers to Jesus.

Well, all I can say is, Jesus did not teach us to do that. Jesus said, when you pray, say, Our Father. Now, all the prayers in the Bible, with two notable exceptions, that is, in the New Testament, are addressed to the Father.

They are not addressed to Jesus. Let me give you an example of this. In Acts chapter 5, I believe it is, I'll know in a moment, I'm turning there, if I'm right or not.

Actually, Acts chapter 4 is what I want to look at here. We have the apostles praying. And it says this, this is Acts chapter 4, here's a good example of early Christian prayer.

It says in verse 24, so when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them. Now, at this point, it's not clear if they're addressing the Father or if they're addressing Jesus, because Jesus is God, He is Lord, He was involved in the creation of the heaven, earth, and the sea, and so forth. So, the way they address it, Lord, You are God, You made these things, it leaves open the possibility that they are speaking either to the Father or to Jesus.

However, as their prayer progresses, in verse 27, they say, For truly against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed. Now, who are they speaking to? Obviously, they're not speaking to Jesus. They're speaking to the Father who anointed Jesus.

So, it's clear that the prayer that they offered was directed not to Jesus, but was directed to the Father. And this is normative, really, in the New Testament. In Ephesians chapter 5, the Apostle Paul said, For this cause I bow my knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, notice that. For this cause I bow my knee to the Father. That is how Paul prayed.

He prayed to the Father. So, we have the Apostles praying to the Father in the book of Acts. We have Paul saying he prays to the Father.

What's more, Jesus Himself said, When you pray, pray our Father. Now, Jesus is even more emphatic about this later on. When you get to John chapter 16, and Jesus is in the upper room with His disciples, and He's teaching His disciples that they will have the privilege of praying in His name after He is gone.

And He says, basically, in the 16th chapter, and there's a fair bit of discussion here. We'll have to just pick a few verses out in order to avoid getting bogged down here extensively. He says in John chapter 16, in verse 23 and 24, He says, In that day you will ask Me nothing.

Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to

you. He says, Until now you have asked nothing in My name. He means you've never asked the Father anything in My name.

You have not entered into that type of prayer yet, where you speak directly to God in Jesus' name. And He says, Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. Then, in verse 26, John 16, 26, Jesus says, In that day you will ask in My name.

Again, you'll ask the Father in My name. And I do not say to you that I shall pray to the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from God. Now, Jesus said, You will ask Me nothing when you pray.

You will ask the Father. You will come to Him in My name, but you will come to Him. And I don't even say that I will ask Him for you.

You ask Him yourself, He says. The Father loves you. So, the teaching of Jesus is explicit throughout the Scripture, that prayer is to be offered to the Father and offered in Jesus' name.

There are actually two times, and only two times in the New Testament, after Jesus had ascended, that people prayed to Him. One is the case of Stephen, who in his dying moment said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And the other is the case of John in the book of Revelation, whose final prayer in that book is, Even so, come Lord Jesus.

Both of those statements were addressed to Jesus, but they hardly establish a norm of Christian prayer being directed to Jesus, since in both of those cases, both of them were extraordinary circumstances. First of all, both of those men actually were experiencing visions of Christ when they spoke to Him. Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God the Father, and John in Revelation saw a protracted vision of Christ, was looking right at Him, and he said, Even so, come Lord Jesus.

So, on two occasions in the New Testament, prayers were addressed to Jesus, but of course they were addressed to Him by men who were seeing visions of Christ at that time and who spoke to Him. But as far as ordinary prayer, there is no precedent in Scripture, nor any teaching of the Scripture that says that people ought to address their prayers to Jesus. Now, I don't say that in any way as to condemn those who do pray to Jesus.

Obviously, Jesus is God, at least Christians believe this. Jesus certainly hears us when we pray. He is aware of us.

He is very mindful of us. But the question is whether we pray to Jesus or to the Father in terms of obeying His commands about this. I mean, Jesus actually gave specific teaching on what to do when you pray.

And so, even though I don't think there's any sin in speaking to Jesus, Jesus did not come to replace God the Father, but to bring us to the Father. You'll remember that Jesus said in John 14, 6, No man comes to the Father except through Me. What He is saying is that when we come to Jesus, we come through Jesus to the Father.

And that's what He wants us to do. He becomes our mediator. He becomes the one who grants us admittance into the presence of the Father, where we can make our requests known to Him in Jesus' name.

Anyway, certainly more could be said about this, but we would soon run out of time for our stated subject, which is our consideration of this whole prayer. Jesus said, When you pray, say, Our Father in heaven. Of course, referring to God as Father is a very intimate term, a family term.

It was uncommon among the Jews to address God as Father. And therefore, Jesus was teaching that we have an approach to God that is much more intimate and familial than what the Jews of His day generally thought. They did not see God as being that approachable.

And yet Jesus said on another occasion, later in this sermon in chapter 7, that if a child asks his father for bread, he will not give him a stone. And if he asks for a fish, he won't give him a serpent. And He said, If you earthly fathers, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask Him? Once again, asking the Father is what Jesus taught.

But what He did teach is that God's concern for us and His attentiveness to us is like that of an earthly father, only better. He said, Even corrupt earthly fathers generally have a little bit of this compassion for their children, if not a great amount of it. And how much more is God that way toward us? This teaching about prayer being a petition offered to a father was a revolutionary new concept of prayer for the Jews, for His disciples who were Jewish, because they had not been taught by their Jewish leaders to think of God quite in that familiar a way, or in a way of being one who is quite so much like a family member.

And yet Jesus said to address God that way. Of course, all of Jesus' teaching throughout the Sermon on the Mount and the rest of His teaching encouraged us to think of God as a father, as opposed to just some kind of an impersonal force or an aloof sort of judge or some creator being who had set the clock running and then left and paid no attention to things. Jesus indicated that the Father, that God is a Father who is involved in our lives, concerned in our lives, even as a father is of His children.

So we come to God as our Father. Yet He is not an earthly father. He is our Father which art in heaven.

He is the Father on another plane. He is a lofty Father. He is a Father greatly superior to

any earthly person.

And therefore He is a better Father than any example of earthly fathers we could ever imagine. If you have had a good father, I mean earthly father, if your earthly father was a good example, was a good, caring, providing kind of father, then you have an idea of what Jesus was trying to communicate to you about God, that God is that kind of a father. Now, many of my listeners, I'm sure, did not have good fathers.

In fact, the word father may bring to your mind unpleasant images because you may have had an abusive father or simply an absentee father who was not there, either emotionally or physically for you. And therefore the word father may bring up bitter memories to you. Let me simply say this.

Even if your father was not a good father, yet if you are a Christian, you have a good father now. The Bible says that God is a father to the fatherless. That is to say, if you were abandoned or rejected or mistreated by your earthly father, God is a father to make up the difference for you.

David said in Psalm 27, When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up. Therefore, we are encouraged by Jesus to approach God the way we would approach a good father. If you've never had a good father to model God from, you certainly have an instinctive knowledge, I would hope, of what kind of father you should have had, what a father ought to be.

And you probably have seen somewhere a good father. And if your father was not good, you may have wished, Boy, I wish my father was like that. In any case, even if you've never seen a human father that is a good example, by simply recognizing what Jesus teaches us about God, you will find out what a good father is supposed to be like.

He's supposed to be like God, who is a good father. In fact, Paul says in Ephesians 5.1, Be imitators of God as obedient children. In other words, we relate to God as children relate to a father.

We imitate the father, just like good children would to a good father. And so we need to understand that God's relationship to us is that of a father, and that is how he wishes to be addressed. There are some out there who say that when we address God, we should use the formal title in the Old Testament, Yahweh or Jehovah.

They make a very good argument for this, it seems to them, but no amount of arguments really can outweigh the fact that Jesus said, When you pray, say, Our Father. Jesus didn't say, When you pray, say, Jehovah or Yahweh or Jesus or any of these other names. He simply said, When you pray, say, Our Father.

And while I would never wish to be legalistic about this, it certainly takes all the wind out of the sails of those who want to be legalistic about using some other formula in

addressing God. And what he's encouraging us to do is to approach God in the way that a child approaches a caring father. The next line is, Hallowed be your name.

Hallowed means revered or held in respect or treated as holy. There are certain things that we treat as common. Other things we treat as holy.

It may be, for example, my lawn. I like to keep my lawn mowed, but sometimes I neglect it. I don't consider it a sacred duty to mow my lawn.

The lawn is not a holy thing in particular, it's just a thing. It's a mundane thing. But, let me say, my Bible, it contains the Word of God.

I want to make sure that I treat the Word of God as something special. I treat it as a hallowed thing. I treat it differently than I treat something that is less sacred to me.

Now, I realize there's Christians out there that say there's no sacred and secular categories in the Christian life, and there's a sense in which that's true. To the Christian, everything, even the more mundane things, need to be managed with a mind of being stewards of God, and that sort of transports them into a sacred realm. But what I'm saying is there are certain things that we treat with a greater reverence than other things, and there's reason for that.

Now, the name of God is one of those things that we are to treat with greater reverence than other things, because God is holy, and we pray that His name will be revered, that His name will be treated as a holy thing. We would certainly not wish to use His name lightly or in a coarse manner, and we are essentially praying in this prayer that others will likewise recognize the holiness of God's name and treat Him and His name with greater respect. When we say, hallowed be Thy name, we are essentially expressing our loyalty to Him, to His name and His character and who He is, and recognizing that we take Him to be most revered and holy, and expressing a wish that all men would do so.

It may be a slight formality in the same sense that people used to say, long live the King, or in the Old Testament times they say, oh, King, live forever. We frequently find people saying that. Now, those are simply affirmations that the person who's speaking highly respects the King and is highly loyal, and if it were up to them, you know, the King would live forever and never die.

That's essentially what they're saying. Of course, they're not really anticipating that the King will live forever when they say that, or that their words would necessarily bring it to pass, but they are expressing a loyalty on the part of them to their King, which is appropriate, really, to their King. And when we say to God, hallowed be Your name, there's a sense in which we may be praying that this will someday be the case, that people would hallow His name more, or it may be just our expression of acknowledgement that God's name is hallowed, and our statement of faith, essentially,

that Your name is indeed hallowed.

Your name is indeed, as far as we're concerned, a reverend thing, a revered thing. And in any case, we can see that we come to God with a state of reverence. We come, in a sense, as those who are familiar with Him, acquainted with Him, even related to Him as children.

We come to Him as to a father, but we don't come to Him in an irreverent manner. Some people have learned patterns of relating to their fathers, their earthly fathers, that are very dishonorable. And if we would immediately, and without change, transfer those patterns of relationship to our relationship with God, it would be most irreverent.

When we come to God, we recognize that He is a caring Father. He will listen to us. He does care about what we want.

And He is able to provide all things that are good for us. And He knows what we have need of, even before we ask Him. But we, having said all of that, we also remember that He's not at our level.

He's not just a pal. He's not just a chum. He's not just a friend.

He's not just a daddy. He is a most revered Father, worthy of great honor and respect and reverence. And I think the lack of reverence for God in the modern Christian life, the average Christian's life, is a great scandal.

I believe throughout the Scripture, when we read of God, we read of one who is to be held as holy, one who is to be held as revered. And so, Jesus says, when you pray, approach God as, with this balance, He is a Father, on the one hand, and He's also most revered, most feared, really, in one sense. And with this attitude, we approach God.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Now, we didn't get very far into the prayer, did we? But we will do more next time, and we will take this prayer further. Certainly, there is very little in the Christian life that could be more important, or even as important, as prayer.

It is one of the chief privileges and duties of the Christian. And therefore, we can certainly not regret if we spend a great deal of time trying to understand how we are to pray according to Jesus. Therefore, we will continue this exploration next time, here on the Great Commission School of the Air.

I hope you'll be able to join us at that time.