



WEEK 2: WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE TALKING TO?

TEXT: MATTHEW 6:9-13

Introduction:

Jesus taught the disciples about praying to God as father to teach them about their posture in prayer. It reminds us every time we pray that we are in a father-child relationship, where we can experience trust and intimacy with God.

1 WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

The nature of our relationships determines how we behave within them. Our relationship with God is the same. If we position ourselves as God's peer, or in authority to him, we will treat him with irreverence. If we treat God as a distant deity, we will have no personal experience and no expectation of him. If we treat God as a judge without embracing his love, we will approach God with an unhealthy fear. Knowing that we would be prone to approaching God on our own terms, Jesus taught us how to come to God: as children to their father. This relationship is personal and without fear, and at the same time it comes with the full realisation that, as children, we are totally dependent on our father to provide for and protect us. It is a posture of surrender and trust. Coming to God as our father presupposes that we know him, and have placed our trust in him and the reconciling work Christ did for us on the cross. Without that, we would have no right to call him father (John 1:12).

- ❖ Q: Why are some of the barriers that prevent people from approaching God as their father?
- ❖ Q: In what ways has your own experience/lack of experience of your earthly father impacted your ability to come to God as his child?
- ❖ Q: How do you think we develop the right posture towards God, and come to God as our father, on whom we are totally dependent, surrendered and trusting?
- ❖ Q: Why can we not approach God as our father if we have not placed our trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ? What does this mean for people who believe that there are many ways to God, and that we are all his children regardless of what we believe?

2 WHAT BEING CHILDREN OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER MEANS

- Read Matthew 5:6-8

Within a world where so many fathers have done a poor job, and many children are considered fortunate if their fathers have merely been physically present for their entire childhood (regardless of their emotional and physical responsibilities), it is obviously difficult for some people to relate to God as their father, and for that image to be a positive and encouraging picture for invoking intimacy and trust. Instead of creating an alternative to God as father, as some are tempted to do, we need to redeem the idea of what a perfect father looks like. As God is our heavenly father, he is everything and he does everything that our earthly fathers could never do perfectly.

- He listens to us
 - We are known by him - he knows what we need before we even ask
 - He loves us (Matthew 7:9-11)
 - He is near us
- ❖ Q: Why is the solution to approaching God not to present a different picture of God, such as a mother-figure or a best friend (or anything else)?
 - ❖ Q: How can we begin to redeem the picture we have as God, so that we can boldly approach him as our father, in heaven?
 - ❖ Q: Which fact about God encourages you the most: that he listens to us, that he knows us and knows what we need or that he hears us?
 - ❖ Q: In which of those areas do you struggle the most to believe, and why?

3 HOW CHILDREN OF GOD SHOULD PRAY

Prayer is not a mechanical spiritual exercise; it's an opportunity to experience God's fathering of us. Through prayer we get to experience his love for us.

We should pray to grow in the following areas:

- In our relationship with the father
 - In faith with the father
 - In our identity as the father's child
- ❖ Q: In which of the 3 areas above do you need the most growth?
 - ❖ Q: What steps is God asking you to take personally, as a result of this message, regarding your posture towards him and the way in which you approach him?