

RED LETTER CHRISTIANS
PRAY EFFECTIVELY #2
Matt 6:9-13

(Video Clip)

Prayer is the normal response to crisis. It is featured over and over again in movies that deal with war, disaster and even alien invasions. Over and over again polls of the American population tell us that the vast majority of Americans daily or on a regular basis. The desire to pray is built into our DNA. People do it almost unconsciously.

There is a difference between prayer and effective prayer. There is often a difference between the prayers people pray and the prayers that Jesus prayed. Jesus' prayer changed things, they got results. When we pray like Jesus, our prayers will change things.

This series is entitled **RED LETTER CHRISTIANS PRAY EFFECTIVELY**

Red Letter Christians are those who are determined to be like Jesus. They listen to his Words – the red letters and watch his life and ask that their life be changed so that it will look like his life.

Each Sunday we will pray this prayer together. I hope you will memorize it, if you have not already done so. Let's pray this prayer together.

Matt 6:9-13 (King James Version)

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. (KJV)

From the New Living Translation

Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. May your Kingdom come soon.

May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven. Give us our food for today, and forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Today I want to look at the first sentence:

*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. or
Our Father who is in heaven, may your name be made holy.*

Our Father:

The first observation is a grammatical one; Our is plural possessive pronoun.

All the school kids say: "It's Sunday, we don't want to be in school." All the adults say, "We are out of school already." I'll try to make this painless; we have to get this.

Follow along with this personal illustration.

After church the Nichols family will get into "our Car" (photo) we will drive to "our house" (photo), we will be greeted by "our dog" (photo) we will eat "our dinner." (photo of an over the top table with grand settings and kingly food). We bow our heads and pray our prayer, Our Father in Heaven, thank you for our food.

All of these are plural possessive pronouns, but there is nothing similar between our car, our house, our dog and Our Father.

We paid the money for our car and drove it home, it is ours. We are paying money for our house, if we keep paying for it, it is ours. We went to a family's house in Bristolville six years ago and picked out our dog, paid them for him and brought him home; he is ours. We went to the grocery store and bought our food. It would be easy for us to begin to think of God in the same way, but he is nothing like our car or our dog.

If it isn't like our dog, what is it like?

Perhaps like this:

Travis and Trevor are in the same classes at school. I find myself with them in different settings and they say to their friends or teacher, "this is 'our father.'"

I am not in any way equating myself with God, I am suggesting that this relationship is more accurate than our house or our dog. No one in their right mind would think that Travis and Trevor were in charge of me, bought me or told me what to do!

Penny and I brought them into the world. We provided a place to live, we provide love, support, direction and correction and guidance. We tell them when to go to bed, when to get up, what action is appropriate and what is not.

“Our Father” is the same way. He is the creator, not us! He provides us a place to live, gives us love, direction, correction and guidance.

The trouble comes when we begin to see God in this personal possessive way. There are some prayer methods that suggest if you pray this way, God is obligated to do what you want. It turns God into our candy machine or our blessing machine. God will not be our candy machine, he will not be stuffed into our box, fit in our time schedule or comply with our directives. He is God our father we are his children.

Praying effectively is about his possessing us, not us possessing him. It is submitting our lives to him. It is aligning our selves properly; he is Lord we are followers, he is God, we are children. If we can get this, it will change everything.

Now that we understand the possession aspect. We need to look at one other part of praying “our father.”

“Our Father” means we never pray alone!

It is always plural. Do you realize that nowhere in this prayer is there a singular pronoun. What does that mean. Does it mean that I don’t consider God personal for me. Does that mean he isn’t “my father?” No. Paul says that God wants to be so personal to us that we can call him daddy. Romans 8

This our father teaches us a couple things

This is a disciples prayer. It means those praying this way have accepted Christ into their heart. We may be the only person physically present when we are praying, but we are not alone. I have said these words recently to several people. In the hospital talking with Chuck Palansky before he died. I said you will not be alone, even if no other person is here. Jesus is with us by His Spirit living in us.

- **Jesus prays with us!**

(show a picture on screen of two boys or girls with their arms around each other)

The picture of close friends is a powerful example.

When we pray Our Father, Jesus who is our brother is standing next to us with his arm around us.

(show a picture on screen of Jesus standing over us as we pray and then go back to the outline)

He is saying, Father this is my friend, this is my brother, this is my sister.

His Spirit is inside of us praying for us when we don't know what we should pray. We may physically be in the middle of Antarctica with no living person within 500 miles, but we are not praying alone.

When we pray as Jesus taught us to, we stand before God with Jesus. Our prayer is based upon the fact that Jesus died on a cross for our sins, he died and rose again, he lives at the right hand of the Father, he sent The Spirit of God, his Spirit to live inside of us.

“Our Father” means

- **Jesus prays with us! But also,**
- **Our brothers and sisters in Christ pray with us!**

We are talking about Red Letter Christians praying effectively. This isn't the prayer prayed by everyone and anyone in trouble. This isn't a fox hole prayer. This is praying a prayer because we have accepted Christ and his life. This is praying a prayer as a member of the body of Christ. Even if you are 500 miles from the nearest person, you are still surrounded by this great group of people called the body of Christ or The Church. Hebrews 12:1 says

Now I want you to understand that we always have a group of brothers and sisters in Christ surrounding us and cheering us on in our faith.

Literally it says “a cloud of witnesses.”

We don't come to Christ by walking in the woods or looking at the moon. We come to Christ because someone told us about Jesus, someone told us how he changed their life. We come to Christ reading God's word that came to us through many of the saints listening to God and recording what he said.

You are not alone.

What a wonderful thing it is for me to realize that as I live my life, people today are praying for me. People prayed for me in the past and people will pray for me tomorrow. Some of these I know and many I don't. People on the other side of the world will pray a prayer that God will help the preachers preach, that includes me.

This is why we are told to pray for each other over and over again. This is why corporate worship is so important, it reminds us that we are in this together. This is why we stress praying together.

The last part of this first sentence in The Lord's Prayer. *Our Father who art in heaven.*

When we pray like Jesus we understand that God is our father, that he is personal and interested in our lives, in fact he is beside us and in us through the Holy Spirit. But he is not an imaginary friend or a little comforting notion tucked away in our heart. This is God.

He is a big God. He lives in the heavens. He is everywhere! In fact he created them. He created the world and he is everywhere in the world while at the same time being right with us.

This is very important because we have big issues to pray about. If he is a little God, then we have no hope for our big problems.

He is not like an earthly father who loves his kids and does his best to protect them, but cannot be everywhere with them or fix all their problems. As a dad, I can put a band aid on a boo boo but I can't fix Peggy's asthma. As a dad, I can fix a flat tire on Travis or Trevor's bike, but I can't fix life so that it never hurts.

We go to our Heavenly Father with big stuff. We pray about Delphi, GM and our jobs, we pray about cancer, Alzheimer's, and back problems, and we pray about terrorists and foreign governments. If we have a small limited god then we are in big trouble. But we have a God who is everywhere as well as right here. We have a God who is active in Africa and so when I pray for Kandess in South Africa, God is already there. We have a God who is all powerful and so when I pray for protection for Christians in Iran, he is there.

He is not limited by time, space, gravity, governments, the UN or any other human or natural boundary. He created humanity, and so he understands when our bodies are broken and he knows how to fix them. I like praying to a big God.

And yet, while he is a big God who is everywhere he is always right here.

Life is lived under the watchful eye of God. He is everywhere watching, he is right here watching.

That is comforting and scary all at the same time.

CLOSING PRAYER TIME

Quiet music playing..

Prayer scriptures on the screen...

You can come and kneel at the altar and ask God to help you pray more effectively or you can sit quietly, read the scriptures and pray. I encourage husbands and wives to take each other's hands and pray together. I encourage parents to pray with their kids. I encourage friends to pray together.

Or you can just come by yourself, realizing you are not alone.