

CHAPTER THREE



Our Father in Heaven Hallowed be your name

The opening lines from this prayer are famous and familiar. They are given to us by Jesus in response to a question from his disciples. Their request was that Jesus would “teach us to pray”...which, when you stop to think about it is odd.

Why? Because they were raised as Jews in a highly religious culture. Their day was punctuated with multiple formal times of prayer. Each meal time brought a ritual ceremony, temple practices, religious holidays and healthcare habits were all dominated by praying. The disciples were not unfamiliar with prayer! What they had observed in Jesus and his prayer habit however was not that he somehow prayed harder, or better, but with more familiarity. “Teach us to pray” - the implication being - ‘to pray like that, the way *you* do it Jesus”.

God, up to this point in history had been clearly at work and observable in the lives of his people. God had led the Israelites through the wilderness as a burning fire, parted the sea, swallowed up mountains in clouds of holy thunder, commanded plagues etc etc...the questions was not about the *existence* of God, but rather...was God approachable? Was God knowable? If you talked with God, would he listen or would he smite you?

And so the disciples would have gasped as Jesus begins a model prayer with “Father” - a personal name which speaks of close relationship and extreme intimacy. In doing this, Jesus does direct battle with the tempting pull of evil, which from the first story of the Bible has been trying to get us to view God as a depersonalised and distant generic deity, rather than the named and close Father.

Calling God “Father” helps us to do three things;

- Remember who God is
- Remember who you are

“When Eve imagined God as something less than ‘Father’, she in turn imagined herself as something less than ‘daughter’”.

- Remember who we are to each other

Once we understand ourselves to be beloved by the good and gracious Father, we also see *others* as beloved in the same way by the same God.

“If I am not in touch with my own belatedness, then I cannot touch the sacredness of others”
Brennan Manning

This second phrase of the prayer helps us remember the nature and character of God. ‘Hallowed’ means ‘honoured’...we are choosing to give honour to God in this moment. A moment in which, wherever we pray, a myriad of other things (self, busyness, money, fame, effort, kids etc) will be receiving honour. The prayer is an act of rebellion and re-focussing.

‘To hallow’ is also to express love and adoration. This too is an act of rebellion. “Adoration is not always the overflow of our hearts. In fact, it rarely is. It is an act of rebellion against the empty promises of this world and of defiance in the face of circumstances”.

It is easy to believe ourselves to be blessed when all is going well, but the choice to adore and honour the Father in all places and all circumstances - despite depression, difficulty, disaster or distress...is to practice a defiant faith. It is this faith which leads to honest and open communication, through prayer, with a close and personal God who is pre-disposed to bless his children.