

# Sermon Discussion Guide

## The Prayer of Connection

### Connecting with God: The Lord's Prayer — Part 1

The seven phrases of the Lord's Prayer contain everything we need to make it through these troubled times as well as the antidote to the basic stresses in our life. How many times have we prayed this familiar prayer without really concentrating on the meaning of each phrase? This seven-part series looks at each phrase of the prayer and studies it as a cure to different areas of our stress and worry. This first part of the study will concentrate on making the connection between us and God.

The first phrase is: ***This is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."*** (Matthew 6:9 NIV)

We will focus this week on the fact that the prayer says we can refer to God as "Our Father." This radical idea explodes all the ancient stereotypes of God. Only seven times in the Old Testament is God referred to as "Father," but Jesus referred to God as "Father" 150 times in the New Testament.

What we must first understand is that **God is a person, not a power.** We can have deep relationships with a person. We can't have deep relationships with a power or force. When we relate to God as a loving father, our stress levels go down and our peace of mind increases. Some of us may be put off when we think of God as a father because of some failing of our earthly father. We unconsciously project the weaknesses of our parents onto God. This study will help us see that God has none of those failings as we look at four characteristics of God as Father.

**OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE—SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**

### WE CAN CONNECT WITH GOD BECAUSE . . .

#### 1. HE IS A CARING FATHER.

How would you describe God's caring for his children as written in Psalm 103:13?

- Why is this kind of caring important to us as his children?

Read 1 Peter 5:7 and explain what it says we should do with our cares and worries.

- How does giving troubles over to a caring father affect someone with many worries?

What does Matthew 6:31–32 state as the reason for us to not worry?

- How can worry be a roadblock to God's working in someone's life?

**Worship**—Being connected to other believers through Jesus Christ is one of the foundations of Christianity. We, together, are the church and without each other's support we won't be able to stand upright through the trials and triumphs of life. What can you do to support another member of your group or of the larger church of Christ?

#### 2. HE IS A CONSISTENT FATHER.

What endearing characteristic does God our Father have, according to James 1:17?

- How does knowing God is dependable affect our image of a heavenly Father?

Read 2 Timothy 2:13 and share what it says is the reason God remains faithful.

- How does depending on God's consistency differ from depending on people or things?

How often does God go back on his promises, according to Romans 11:29?

- Do guarantees make a difference to you when you buy something? Why?
- How does God being consistent affect your perception of him?

What kind of love does God have for you, according to Psalm 59:10?

- How does human love compare to God's love?

**Worship**—It's human nature to put expectations on others. Disappointment is never welcome. What area in your life needs a consistent Father? How can you worship God this next week in ways that show you trust him not to let you down

### 3. **HE IS A CLOSE FATHER.**

What are the words used in Acts 17:27 to describe God's nearness?

- Describe the difference between having loved ones close and far away.

**He is never too busy for me.**

Read Psalm 145:18. Where does it say the Lord is as we call on him?

- Think about the fact that God is close. How does that make you feel?

**He loves to meet my needs.**

What does Matthew 7:11 say about God's willingness to give us good gifts?

- What are some of the gifts God gives?

**He is sympathetic to my hurts.**

Where can we find God when we are brokenhearted and crushed in spirit, according to Psalm 34:18?

- God really understands our hurts. How does understanding a broken heart make the difference in giving comfort?

**Worship**—We try to stay close to our friends and family in many ways. The cell phone is one way to make the distance between seem less. God doesn't have to be near to hear our prayers. Why do you think he stays so close? Share a time when you experienced God's closeness as you worshiped him.

### 4. **HE IS A COMPETENT FATHER.**

What is impossible for God, according to Luke 1:37?

- How does knowing nothing is too difficult for God make us feel about our problems?

Read Ephesians 3:20. How much is God able to do compared to what we can ask or imagine?

- Think of some things people often ask of God. Discuss why these seem so big to us but are easy for God.

#### **GOD SENT JESUS TO MAKE THE CONNECTION:**

What was one purpose of Christ Jesus, according to 1 Timothy 2:5?

- How do people try to bridge the gap without Jesus? Why do their attempts fail?

Read Galatians 3:26. How do we become children of God?

- Name ways people try to become children of God. Why do people try to find ways other than through faith in Jesus?

**Worship**—When you were a child, did you think your parents could fix anything or make any problem go away? That childlike faith is what we need today in our heavenly Father. The difference is that our heavenly Father is fully capable of overcoming any problem, no matter how big we think it is. What is the biggest problem you face today? What is keeping you from trusting God for the answer? Give your problems to God today so you can rest in the peace of God that passes all understanding.