

"God Our Father"

When Jesus taught us to pray, He asked us to address the God of Heaven as "our Father." Hello, I'm Phil Sanders and welcome to our Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." God is our father who protects and provides for our needs, but He longs to draw close to us. Stay with us to learn more about your Father in Heaven.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. Our Father in Heaven loves us and gave us His Word to save us and to teach us how to live righteously. Every word in the Bible is true and God's gift to us. So we want to know more and more about God's way for us. Thanks for tuning in today. We want to be part of your life each week.

I lost my earthly father on June 12, 1985. I loved my dad, and losing him left an incredible emptiness in my heart. Dad loved me, provided for me, corrected me, and encouraged me all my life. I miss him to this day. But after losing my father, I became acutely aware of my heavenly Father who is still with me.

The Lord Jesus characteristically referred to the God of Heaven as His Father. He taught us to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven." The Heavenly Father knows what we need even before we ask. He feeds the birds of the air and clothes the grass of the field, and the Father in Heaven will also take care of us.

The Lord Jesus said, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The Father sees what we cannot see and knows what we do not know, so we must learn to trust Him. We must do the will of our Father in heaven if we're to enter into heaven. The Father wisely teaches us what we need to know to have eternal life and to be His children. Jesus promised to prepare a place for us in heaven in the Father's house. Our Father wants to bless us with His mercy and love forever. And how blessed we are to have a Father in heaven!

We offer the information on this program free. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study, we ask that you mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, if you like, call our toll-free telephone number. Now, we'll pay for the call. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at searchtv.org. We also stream this program on our website at searchtv.org.

Larry Owsley will now lead the Edmond church of Christ in song, and then we'll read from Philippians 4, verses 4 to 7. And encourages us to look to God.

Our reading today comes from Paul's epistle to the Philippians, it comes from chapter 4:4 to 7. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Oh what a wonderful promise that God would guard us and help us.

Let's pray together. "Father we rejoice in the love that You have shown to us and the grace that we have. We know that You are a great God and merciful. And Father we pray that You will help us to

focus our hearts and our minds on You. And we're thankful Father that You grant our prayers. In Jesus name, amen."

Psalms 103 verses 1 to 3 says, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases; Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle." We must never let anything cause us to forget our God, our Father and all that He has done for us.

God's care extends to all. God cares for those who don't know who He is and what He's done for them. God even cares for those who want nothing to do with Him as their God and Lord. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:43 to 45 that "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

By caring for everyone, God shows His goodness. And even though people forsake Him, He still provides for their needs, hoping one day they will turn their lives around. God our Father wishes the wicked would see their sins and turn to him in repentance. When people continue in sin, Paul asks, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2 verse 4)

Some become so busy, struggling to get what they want, that they forget everything that we have comes from God. The Bible says in James 1:17, that "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." Many grumble about all the things they don't have and forget what wonderful things our Father has done for us.

Our Father in heaven is not selfish, but opens His heart and His grace to all who turn to Him. The Father gave His Son Jesus for our sins, so that we could live an abundant life here and have eternal life in heaven. Romans 8:32 says, that "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" God indeed has blessed us richly in Christ Jesus.

And so Paul can confidently say in Philippians 4:19, "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." He certainly will supply our needs when we put ourselves into His service. God never puts us to work for His cause without giving us the means to do His will. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9 verse 8, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed. When we put God first in our lives, God provides what we need to work for His glory. God is able. In providing for us our heavenly Father not only gives us what we need at the proper time, he satisfies the desires of every living thing.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:25 to 34: "For this reason I say to you, don't be worried about your life, as to what you'll eat or what you'll drink; (or) nor for your body, as to what you'll put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more than they, worth more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?"

Why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they don't toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!

Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So don't worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Worry or anxiety disturbs our faith in the Father. Worry causes our hearts to be split between faith and fear of the worst. Your Father in heaven knows what you need and will provide for those needs if you seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. Many people play at their Christianity and never make it a priority; and then they wonder why they don't get much from it.

God has blessed us with an abundance of his blessings. And most of us have more than we actually need, but we're never satisfied. Sometimes people expect the wrong things of God. Our Father doesn't promise to give us everything we want; He promises to provide what we need. Some people want more and more and lose sight of what God has done for them already.

God blesses us by providing for our greatest needs. Now our greatest need is not a bigger house, a bigger pay check, or more worldly goods. Our greatest need is spiritual: we must have a close relationship with God. By our murmuring and complaining, we show really an ingratitude to God. God could rightfully withdraw His bountiful hand completely from us. God could rightfully destroy us for our sins and our ingratitude. But God is better to us than we deserve. God forgives us and continues to open his hand toward us.

Psalm 103:8 to 13 says, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He's not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him."

Now God is a wise father and knows how weak and immature we are, so He works with us and in us to help us grow spiritually. Sometimes God has to discipline us out of love, just as a father disciplines his child. The Bible says in Hebrews 12:5 to 9, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you're reprov'd by Him; For those whom He (the Lord) Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives. "It's for discipline that you endure; and God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father doesn't discipline? But if you're without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you're illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. Now all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who've been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

God, as a good father, disciplines us to shape our character and help us to endure. Discipline may hurt for the moment, but it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. God sometimes permits and

sometimes causes hard things to happen in our lives for our best interests. He doesn't do this to be mean to us but to build strength of character and to train us in righteousness. Now we've all seen undisciplined children who turned into spoiled brats. They got their way early and did what they wanted to do, but spoiled children don't develop the maturity to say no to temptation. Now this fault in their character will cause trouble for their whole lives.

As Christians we're children or sons of God. And God's greatest desire for us as His children is to be like Him. Again, the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:44 to 45, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." Now God our Father is a model of righteousness and He's kind. The Bible says in 1 Peter 1:14-16, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance (that is when you didn't know God), but as he who called you is holy (that is God who calls you as holy), you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

God wants us to love as He loves, to forgive as He forgives, to be righteous as He is righteous, and to stay away from sin as He stays away from sin. He wants us to love what is right and to despise what is wrong. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, "but test everything; hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." He doesn't want sin to keep us from coming home to Him in heaven.

Now God as a father is doing everything He can to bless us without violating our ability to choose. He sent Jesus to die on the cross for us. He gives us this marvelous book, the Bible, in order to educate us spiritually. And the Bible contains all that we need to live righteous lives. The apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:16 to 17, that "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

Now when you're born into the family of God, and that takes place in baptism, you get God as your Father and the church as your family in Christ. Now we're called through the gospel into fellowship with God's Son Jesus Christ. And being in Christ, we're kin to all our brothers and sisters in Christ. God gives us the church to keep us strong in faith and love and to help us get to heaven. Family in Christ is such a blessing. And I wouldn't want a single day to go by outside of the fellowship of my Father in heaven, my Lord Jesus Christ, and my spiritual family. And that's why I worship regularly with my brethren. I know they'll keep me close to my Father in Heaven. And I hope that you will worship regularly with a church near you. And if we can help you find one, we'll be happy to do so.

Let's pray together. "Father, we're thankful that we can come to You as our Father, knowing that You will hear our prayers and that our concerns matter to You. Father, we're thankful for all of our blessings, help us to count them regularly, and to devote ourselves to You in love. Be with us and help in every way. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen."

Jesus helps us understand the fatherly nature of God in the parable of the prodigal son, who wasted his estate on immorality. When a famine came and he was hungry, the Bible says in Luke 15 that he came to his senses and said, "I'll get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I've sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I'm no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" I can only imagine how guilt-ridden, humiliated, and lonely this foolish young man was. He was even a little afraid.

But when the ragged, hungry boy came home, the father saw him, felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. The son began his penitent confession to his father, but the father stopped him. He told his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." And they began to celebrate" (verses 22 to 24).

God will show His marvelous and undeserved love towards us too, if we come to our senses and humble our hearts before Him. He wants to forgive and to bless you; He's watching and waiting for you. And you know what, He'll run for you, if you will come to Him.

Now to enter into a relationship with the Father, you must believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Confessing Christ, you must turn from your sins in repentance. Luke 13:3 says, that "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Now you can't put sin first and still please God. Then you must also be baptized, that is, immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins. Romans 6 and verse 3 says that we're baptized into the death of Christ, where the blood was shed. God washes away our sins in the blood of Christ.

Now perhaps you're a member of the church of Christ but have wandered off like the prodigal son. Come to your senses about sin and come back to your Father in heaven. He's waiting for you.

We hope you've been blessed by today's study about God our Father. If you want a free printed copy of the lesson "God Our Father", mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area on our website at www.searchtv.org. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel on YouTube, it's "SearchTVMinistry," all one word. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry if you get a hold of us, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everybody needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. They love guests, and you'll be glad you visited. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be glad to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about the program. And as always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.