

Reaching Heaven in Two Minutes or Less

Luke 11:2

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Many Christians are asked the question, “What makes Christianity unique? What makes it different from any other religion?” The answer can be found in the first two words of the prayer Jesus teaches His disciples to pray in Luke 11: “Our Father.” No other religion can claim such an intimate, personal communion between God and the worshipper. No other religion calls God their father. As Jesus teaches them—and us—to pray, there are some perspective-changing, life-orienting truths to learn from these two words: “Our Father.”

On November 19, 1863, the country was reeling from the Civil War.

When the military cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania was dedicated, two men were invited to speak. Press agents from cities across America and around the world were on hand to record this unique event.

One of invited speakers was Edward Everett, a renowned statesman whose career had included serving as a senator, as Secretary of State, as Governor of Massachusetts and as the president of Harvard University. He was considered one of the most brilliant orators of his generation.

When he stood to speak there at the field of Gettysburg, he held the audience spellbound as he delivered a nearly two-

hour speech; it was interrupted periodically by cheering and applause.

When he finished, and the ovation died down, it was time for the second speaker—the President of the United States.

A gaunt, weary Abraham Lincoln walked to the podium, adjusted his steel framed glasses, and then delivered his speech, which lasted for 2 minutes. When he turned and sat down, a member of the Philadelphia Press Corp leaned over and whispered, “Is that all?” He replied, “That is all.”

The newspapers around the country and overseas printed Edward Everett’s entire speech and attacked Lincoln for his:

- The Harrisburg Patriot called Lincoln’s address “silly remarks.”
- The New York World accused Lincoln of “gross ignorance and willful misstatement.”
- The Chicago Times wrote “The cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads these dishwatery utterances.”
- The London Times wrote that “the ceremony at Gettysburg was rendered ludicrous by the words of that poor president—Abraham Lincoln.”

Today, centuries later, none of us can quote one word from Everett’s 2-hour speech. But most of us know something of Abraham Lincoln’s 2-minute speech, which became a national treasure.

I found it interesting, though little known to the public at the time, that Lincoln received a note from Everett soon after, which read, “I wish that I could flatter myself to have come as near to the central idea of the occasion—in two hours, as you did—in two minutes.”

“Gettysburg Address” Microsoft © Encarta (1994 Funk & Wagnall)

We have begun to uncover an inspired instruction manual on prayer; and the shocking news is that you can effectively reach Heaven in two minutes or less.

Now in the days of Christ, as we learned in our last study, the disciples had grown up in a world where just about everything they knew about prayer was wrong; whether they had picked it up from their

secular culture or from their own religious leaders.

They had been ingrained to believe several misconceptions about prayer that were prevalent in the first century:

- First, the more you repeated your prayer, the more likely God was to answer.
- Second, the longer you prayed, the more likely God would pay attention.
- Third, the more details you gave God, the more likely He’d know how to respond.

Jesus Christ clearly and unapologetically said to His disciples, “That’s how unbelievers think; that’s how the pagans pray. That’s how the circus of religion prays as they put on a show.”

When it came to knowing how to pray, the disciples were starting from scratch. No wonder they asked the Lord, here in Luke chapter 11, “Lord, teach us how to pray.”

The disciples make their request in what Greek students understand to be an aorist imperative. There’s a sense of urgency to their request: “Lord, teach us now how to pray.”

Darrell L. Bock, [Luke: Volume 2](#) (Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1050

Notice verse 1—the latter part:

One of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

Luke 11:1b

Evidently here in **verse 1**, the Lord's disciples were aware that the prophet John the Baptizer was praying authentic prayers—although the Bible doesn't record for us what they were. He was obviously leading his disciples into a practice of genuine prayer.

So now it's time for Jesus to pull over and teach His disciples—and us, and this *will* be recorded in Scripture—how to pray.

Now keep in mind beloved, this is not the Lord's prayer; this is the disciples' prayer.

In fact, the Lord would never pray some of this prayer. For one thing, He would never have to ask the Father to forgive Him for sinning.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Luke: Be Compassionate* (Victor Books, 1989), p. 122

This prayer is a pattern for you and me as His disciples.

This is genuine praying; this is a pattern for reaching heaven, for communicating with the heart of God in two minutes or less.

Now I've broken this prayer down into 7 principles of prayer. We're will only cover the first 2 principles in this sermon and will return to the others later.

The first principle could be stated like this:

Genuine Prayer Recognizes our Divine Audience.

Notice how the prayer begins now in verse 2:

"Father..."

Luke 11:2a

Stop! Not so fast; this opening address would be a shocking introduction to the disciples' pattern of prayer.

Father.

Pater in Greek; *Abba* in Aramaic; *Padre* in Spanish (my two years of Spanish are really coming through for me); *Baba*, in simplified Chinese; *Vata* in German; *Father* in English.

No matter what language you speak, this is really the simplest way to start off; and yet at the same time, it's profound, and surprising in many cultures.

This is new. God was referred to as Father only 7 times in the Old Testament and even then, it was a national reference and not a personal reference. The ministry of Jesus will give us access into Heaven on a personal level.



Can you think of any other religion where believers call God their father? Why is this relationship between God as Father and us as His children so significant to our beliefs and to our worship?

The world of Judaism and paganism knew nothing about this kind of intimate, confident, paternal communion.

In fact, during the days of Christ, the Greek and Roman gods were believed to be touchy and sensitive about how someone addressed them. A person had to be careful not to offend them by addressing them the wrong way.

David E. Garland, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 461

But here, we can begin to address the true and living God with a simple “Father.”

This is a stunning invitation to transparent communion with God; but it’s also a qualifier.

Everything in this prayer is hinged to the proposition that God is your Heavenly Father.

Which means you can’t begin to expect God’s attention until you’ve come to Him for His redemption.

In other words, you can’t call Him your Father until you call His Son your Savior.

Because if His Son isn’t your Redeemer, God isn’t your Father.

Suppose I got a letter this week in the mail. The envelope is addressed to Pastor Stephen Davey; on the upper left-hand corner of the envelope is a return address with a name I don’t recognize and an address I don’t recognize. But it doesn’t look like an advertisement, it looks personal and so I open it.

Inside is a handwritten letter that begins with the words, “Dear Dad.” That’s interesting; so, I look down at the bottom

of the letter and it’s signed, “Your son, Charlie.”

Now I’m immediately suspicious. But it’s addressed to me, and it begins with “Dear Dad,” so I read on:

“Dear Dad, my school bill for the fall semester is due in two weeks. I don’t have the money, so please send me \$5,000 dollars as soon as you can. Thanks so much; and by the way—you’re the greatest Dad ever.”

Now, I’d like to help him out! He thinks I’m a great dad, that should be worth at least \$20 dollars. The trouble is, I don’t have a son named Charlie. And he’s not my responsibility.

So, I toss the letter in the trashcan—why? Because I’m a grouchy old Dad? Yes. I mean, no! I will throw it away because the request is based on a relationship that does not exist.

Whoever Charlie is, he wrote to the wrong Dad; he’s not my son.

You need to understand that this entire prayer—in fact, the entire issue of prayer—is based on a personal relationship with God.

You have to be one of His children. He must *become* your Father! How does that happen? When His Son Jesus becomes your Savior.

Jesus said in ***John 14:6*** that ***“No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** That’s not just a reference to getting into Heaven, although that’s the primary application in that context.

But in a broader context, there is only one way you can get through to the Father, and that's through Jesus, whom the Bible calls, ***the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5).***

So let me put it this way: you can't get into Heaven without God the Son; and you can't get in touch with Heaven without God the Son.



If someone told you that they had a personal experience with God, but didn't believe in Jesus Christ, how would you engage them in a gospel conversation?

But when God the Son becomes your personal Savior, God the Father becomes your personal Father.

The Bible says in John 1:12:

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 1:12

1 John 3 and verse 1 says:

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God.

1 John 3:1a

Galatians 3:26 says:

For you are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26 (KJV)

So praying is effectively claiming the right as a family member to have an audience with God as your Father.

Now over in Matthew's account, Jesus added the addendum to *Father* by adding to our understanding of our divine audience, these words:

"Our Father in heaven..."

Matthew 6:9

Or as we might have memorized it: "Our Father who art in heaven"

I love the way the little boy got it wrong, but got it right, when he said, "Our Father who does art in the heavens." And God certainly does incredible art in the heavens.

The Lord is emphasizing the fact that His disciples need to get the right address.

And that address, by the way, is critically important because there happens to be a Father representing the family members of Heaven and there is a father representing the family members of hell.

And they both happen to be in the practice of answering their children's prayers.

Jesus stunned the Pharisees, who were leading the three-ring circus of religious practices all for the praise of mankind.

They were hypocrites who cared nothing for God but everything about themselves.

And Jesus pulled off their religious mask—their costumes made of religious fig leaves—and let me tell you, they weren't happy about being exposed.

At one point, they had a rather contentious conversation with Jesus, recorded in **John's Gospel, chapter 8:**

They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality."

John 8:41b

In other words, the religious leaders were attempting to discredit the testimony of Jesus by bringing up an ongoing accusation that since Mary was single when she conceived Jesus, He was the result of her sin. Of course, they denied any testimony of a virgin birth, so they threw this at the Lord—let's read on:

"We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. ... You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him."

John 8:41-44

Imagine telling the religious leaders of Jesus' day that while they thought their Father was God—they *thought* they belonged to the Father of Heaven—they belong to the father of Hell. Their true father was Satan.

Which means that many of the prayers they thought God answered, Satan was answering.

Does Satan really answer the prayers of his people? Would he answer their prayers to deceive them into believing they belong to God when they don't?

Absolutely, he's doing it to this day.

In fact, one of Satan's favorite deceptions is to give someone some kind of religious experience or religious epiphany or religious feeling and then use it to deceive them into thinking that it came from God and that they were now right with God, no matter what they thought about the Bible or Jesus or the gospel.



Did you know that Satan can deceive people by giving them power they think comes from God? How can we guard against these kinds of deceptions in our own lives?

I remember hearing a man talk who didn't believe in Christ, but he talked about being out at the lake one day where he

had been overwhelmed with a sense of joy and peace and warmth and he just knew it came from God; and so, he was obviously connected with God, even though he didn't believe what anybody tried to tell him about the gospel.

Let me show you a group of dynamic people who even represented Jesus, who mesmerized audiences and held people in the palm of their hand. Jesus takes us into the final courtroom scene where all the unbelieving world is being judged.

Jesus prophecies of that coming judgment in Matthew 7:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them ‘I never knew you.’”

Matthew 7:21-23

These individuals prophesied in the name of Jesus. **Prophecying** can refer not only to foretelling, but forth-telling, telling forth the word of God in a powerful manner; but their power had deceived them for it was from Satan, not God.

They **cast out demons**. Imagine, they had a reputation of being an authority over the demonic world, but the prince of

demons had allowed them this authority to deceive them.

They **performed works of power**—*dunamis*—which can be translated miracles. They succeeded in performing miracles of all kinds, they might have held sway over thousands of people, yet they were self-deceived children in Satan's family instead of God's family.

By the way, at this final judgment Jesus does not deny their prophetic ministry, their miracle working power. And more chilling is the fact that Jesus doesn't deny here that they did it all in His name—they did. But Jesus simply says, **“I never knew you.”**

In other words, “You weren't a member of my family. You were simply part of the three-ring circus, performing spiritual acts that brought applause and approval which you secretly longed for. It was never for God's glory but for your own.”

Jesus says, “Genuine prayer is directed toward your Father in Heaven, so make sure you are related to the Father of Heaven and here's how you can be sure.

A hypocrite will never really believe this kind of prayer; they're not going to be interested in praying this kind of prayer.

- They will not confess that they are a sinner and need forgiveness—which this prayer does.
- They will not be interested in the will of God being done on earth.

- They don't care about the agenda of God's kingdom, but only about their own kingdom.
- They certainly will not pray to avoid temptation to sin, because they live to sin.

They will not believe in this pattern of prayer.

So, when you pray, you're not going to reach heaven unless you get this opening phrase correct: ***Father in Heaven.***

That leads me to my second principle for today:

Genuine prayer not only recognizes our Divine audience but secondly:

Genuine prayer reverences God's Divine attributes.

Don't miss this: "Our Father who is in Heaven" isn't just about His address; it's about His attributes.

Matthew writes literally, "***Our Father in the heavens***"; this refers to God the Father's elevation above all creation.

Listen to the way the psalmist exalted God as sovereign above creation:

The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.

Psalm 33:13-15

This is a reference to His divine attributes, that He is above all things, He is sovereign and majestic, He is just and righteous and merciful.

We are coming into the presence of Almighty God. Our prayer is not to bend Him to our will, but to bend our will to His sovereign will.

He is on the throne, and we are at His feet.

One author writes:

"Visit a church on Sunday morning – almost any will do – and you will likely find a congregation comfortable relating to a deity who fits nicely with its spiritual experiences. You will not likely find much awe or sense of mystery. The only sweaty palms will be those of the preacher unsure whether the sermon will go over; the only shaking knees will be those of the soloist about to sing. Yet the New Testament warns us, 'Offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire.' Today, the consuming fire has been turned into a candle with no heat, no blinding light, no power for purification. And that's because we prefer the illusion of a safer God, so we have whittled God down to a manageable size. It may well be revealed that the worst sin of the church [in this generation] is the trivialization of God."

Jesus is making it clear: genuine prayer elevates God the Father; it sets the Father in His proper place.

When we do that, it becomes harder to pray to Him as if He were a doting grandfather who just can't say no, or to a genie who lives to make all our wishes come true.



If you believe God is your Father, how does that change your posture toward God? How does that intimate relationship give Him greater authority over your life?

No, God is on His throne. We don't ask for our will to be done in Heaven; we ask for His will to be done on earth.

You see, before we even finish the opening words of this model prayer, Jesus is teaching us to magnify and exalt the attributes of the Father.

Genuine prayer doesn't trivialize God, it pays tribute to God.

So as this prayer opens, it invites us into the living room of the Father's House to talk openly and personally with God our Father. But He's going to tell us to wipe our feet on the rug when we come in; this prayer will tell us how to stay clean.

So here at the outset of this prayer, we're not only promised a reception by our Father, we're given the implication of a responsibility.

We're His children; we're in His family; He's given us His family name: the name of His Son, our Redeemer. Christian is our name. We're Christians.

Many times as a young person, before I left the house for a date or some activity, heading to a ball game or some other event at school, just before I got out the door, my mother would holler out those familiar words; "Don't forget your last name."

She could warn me with just a word: "don't forget your last name."

It was a warning, *but* it also was a sense of belonging. I belonged to my father; he had given me the family name. Be careful with it.

Don't forget to whom you belong, Christian. He's your Father—He's given you the family name.

So, the pattern of prayer brings us to recognize our divine audience and it leads us to reverence His divine attributes.

And with these opening words, we're on our way to reaching into the very presence of God. It only takes a moment of time to begin, "Our Father in heaven."

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