

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" ---- Volume XI Number 10

Matthew 6:5-13 "Our Father"- What is God Really Like?

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the 10th of 2012 -- and the 130th email sermon overall.

"Ministers' Minute" is a free service of encouragement to preachers, chaplains, donors, and Christian workers around the world. This sermon is the second in our current series on the Lord's Prayer. Part 1 is archived at the address below. Use it as a devotional, edit it, share it, or use components of it!

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

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THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL by Boyce Mouton (57 pages)
THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW COVENANT by Boyce Mouton (7 pages)

Matthew 6:5-13 "Our Father"- What is God Really Like?

Ole, Lena and Sven were lost in the woods of Northern Minnesota and were becoming desperate, having run out of food several days ago. It was winter, the snow was deep, their situation was looking very bleak. When Ole dug down into the snow to look for nuts, he found an oil lamp and upon rubbing it to get the snow off, a genie came out. The genie says, "I am da great genie of Nordern Minnesoota and I can grant each of you vun vish." Ole says, "I vish I vas back on da farm." Poof, Ole was gone. Lena quickly says, "I vish I vas back on da farm wit Ole." Poof, Lena was gone. Sven was sitting there looking sad and the genie finally says, "Sven, vat is your vish?" and Sven says, "Gee, I'm really lonely. I vish Ole and Lena were here with me".

I wonder how you would respond if you were asked, "What would be 'your vun vish?' What do you need most these days?" More money, More time, More patience, A Husband, A wife?

This is the second message in the series on the Lord's Prayer. We are studying the Lord's Prayer with this being the question we seek to answer: "What are God's Answers to Your Needs?" We will look at our needs that God has promised to meet and how He does so.

Our text will be the Lord's prayer- Matt 6:5-13

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

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

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

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

13 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.

Notice two things:

1] This is a model prayer. "Pray this way..." It wasn't given to be repeated, though that isn't wrong or sinful, but isn't to be mimicked as much as to be used for guideline.

The sermon in one sentence: **God wants to meet our needs because He is our Father.**

God is personal -- not "May the FORCE be with you." God is not some apathetic creator who really doesn't care. Before Jesus came, God wasn't often thought of as our Father.

The Old Testament only refers to God as Father 7 times. Jesus calls God His Father over 200 times in the gospels.

Jesus first recorded words [Luke 2:49](#) "... know ye not that I had to be in my Father's house?"

Jesus last words before death: [Luke 23:46](#) "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

In fact, God is not only Father, He is DADDY! [Romans 8:15,16](#) "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

Abba was an endearing term, often compared to our expression "Daddy" or "Papa" or "Dad."

Can you dads imagine coming home from work and having your kids race around the corner to meet you and then hear them say: "Almighty procreator of our family, awesome ruler of our home, thou who dost supremely control our allowances!"

NO! They cry DADDY!

What kind of Father is our Heavenly Father? Four [characteristics](#) of the Father apparent here

I. GOD IS A CARING FATHER.

1. God wants you to know that you are loved and cared for. Get this- YOU MATTER TO GOD!

2. [Psalm 103:13](#) As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him When their little boat was going down in the storm the disciples woke him with a question: "Don't you care if we drown?" (Mark 4:38)

Ever felt like that? Does Jesus care? O, yes He cares! [1 Peter 5:7](#) Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Does He care about your health? House payment? Job? Relationships? [Matthew 6:31,32](#) "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

From Max Lucado's "Great House" pg. 12--- Imagine a painting from the Prodigal son story. A great house on a hill. Narrow path leads to the bottom of the house -- there the father and son embrace. You can see the Father's face of love. The son's face is buried in the Father's chest unseen. That face is yours. The Father's face of love!

Some think they just don't love God enough, but the real problem we face is that we don't understand how much God loves us. When you understand that, you are going to love Him.

II. GOD IS A CONSISTENT FATHER.

1. He is reliable. You can count on God. He is worthy of your trust.
2. James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.
3. Some dads are unpredictable. Kids say, "I never know what to expect, I don't know if he is going to hug me or slug me. If he'll be silent or violent."
4. One dad announced: "OK kids, be careful, be better than usual, I'm tired today!"
5. God is not moody! He never wakes up grumpy in the morning.

Inconsistent fathers produce insecure kids.

6. 2 Timothy 2:11-13 "Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; 13 if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." Vs. 13 doesn't fit the pattern of these verses.

7. Another Lucado quote, "You may be willing to stop being God's child, but God is not willing to stop being your Father."

8. Everything else changes, but you can count on God to be the same. Other religions try to appease angry gods, but our God is faithful; He always loves us.

9. God always keeps His promises.

Bumper sticker: God said it, I believe it, that settles it. Better is: God said it, that settles it whether I believe it or not. He is a consistent Father. Remember the "Footprints" story? Here is an update:

Now imagine you and the Lord Jesus are walking along the beach together. For much of the way the Lord's footprints go along steadily, consistently, rarely varying in the pace.

But your prints are in a disorganized stream of zig zags, starts, stops, turnarounds, circles, departures, and returns. For much of the way it seems to go like this. But gradually, your footprints come in line with the Lord's, soon paralleling His consistently. You and Jesus are walking as true friends.

This seems perfect, but then an interesting thing happens; your footprints that once etched the sand next to the Master's are now walking precisely in His steps. Inside His large footprints is the smaller "sandprint," safely enclosed. You and Jesus are becoming one; this goes on for many miles.

But gradually you notice another change. The footprints inside the larger footprints seem to grow larger. Eventually it disappears altogether. There is only one set of footprints. They have become one; again this goes on for a long time. But then something awful happens. The second set of footprints is back. This time it seems even worse than before. Zig zags all over the place. Stop...start. Deep gashes in the sand. A veritable mess of prints. You're amazed and shocked. But this is the end of your dream.

Now you speak: "Lord, I understand the first scene with the zig zags, fits, starts, and so on. I was a new Christian, just learning. But You walked on through the storm and helped me learn to walk with You."

"That is correct," replied the Lord."

"Then, when the smaller footprints were inside of Yours, I was actually learning to walk in Your steps. I followed You very closely."

"Very good. You have understood everything so far."

"Then the smaller footprints grew and eventually filled in with Yours. I suppose that I was actually growing so much that I was becoming more like You in every way."

"Precisely."

"But this is my question, Lord. Was there a regression of something? The footprints went back to two, and this time it was worse than the first."

The Lord smiles, then laughs. "You didn't know?" He says. "That was when we danced." FOR HE WILL TURN YOUR MOURNING INTO DANCING! Psalms 30.11

III. GOD IS A **CLOSE** FATHER.

Acts 17:27 "...not far from each of us..." God is nearby when you need Him. Available! You have access to Him

Do you remember the photo of little JFK Jr. under the President's desk! He had access!

If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, He'll listen. He can live anywhere in the universe, and He chose your heart. And the Christmas gift He sent you in Bethlehem? Face it, friend. He's crazy about you.

Absentee fathers are a problem today. Dad is busy! Dad is gone! Preoccupied. BUT NOT GOD!

The story of the Bible is the story of God wanting to be closer to people. Remember Eden? Walking in the cool of the evening? But that's not close enough. Then there was the tabernacle in the middle of the camp. But that's not close enough.

The Son came to be with us. But that's not close enough. The Holy Spirit is now in us and someday we will be with Him. In the meantime, what does it mean that HE IS CLOSE?

God is never too busy. Psalm 145:18 The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. There is never a busy signal, or a more important call on the other line; God doesn't need call waiting.

God is sympathetic to our hurts. Psalm 34:18 "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." He knows how you are feeling and He cares.

IV. GOD IS A **CAPABLE** FATHER.

No problem is too big for God to handle. Luke 1:37 "For nothing is impossible with God."

It is amazing how kids look up to their fathers.

One family moved from the desert to the Midwest. The three year old came downstairs to a 3 inch blanket of snow for the first time. He mouth dropped open, he looked at Dad and said, "Wow, Dad, how did you do that?"

One boy was talking to another and said, "My dad can beat up your dad! The other boy replied, "Big deal! So can my mom!"

How about the POWER of our Father? Ephesians 3:20 "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us!" Philippians 4:19 "And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

The pharmacist waited on his customers, then turned to a small woman in her thirties waiting quietly in the background. She stepped forward with a long list and a shy smile. Would the pharmacist be willing, she asked, "to do something beautiful for God?" A few minutes later, the woman walked out of the pharmacy with her arms full of donated medical supplies to care for the sick and dying. The woman, who had just begun her ministry to the poor in Calcutta, would later be known to the world as Mother Teresa.

In his book, "Great Souls," journalist David Aikman describes how Mother Teresa never relied on worldly power. Instead, she relied on the moral authority that came from God -- the authority she gained from living the Gospel as she ministered to the poor. And she was persistent.

On one occasion, the young Mother Teresa came across a dying woman whose body . . . had been eaten by rats and ants. When the staff of a nearby hospital balked at accepting the woman, Aikman writes, "Mother Teresa simply refused to move until they changed their minds."

How does one earn moral authority? Simply by being faithful -- by doing one's duty.

Vaclav Maly was a young Czech priest who led 800,000 people through the streets of Prague in 1989, driving out the Communists. When told he was a great hero to many in the West he replied: "Oh, no. I am no hero. A hero is someone who does something he doesn't have to. I was just doing my duty."

The great paradox of heroism is that we cannot achieve it if we set out to become heroes, only if we submerge our ambitions in obedience to God and do our duty as He calls us.

We've got to teach our young people the difference between power and moral authority. Politicians can gain political power. But as soon as they leave office, they lose power. But if the Christian is obedient to a transcendent calling, God confers an authority that will only grow over time -- and that person will be a witness, whether in his own neighborhood or, as with Mother Teresa, to the whole world.

Since God takes care of His children, the logical question is "Is everyone God's child?"

All of us are God's children by creation- [Malachi 2:10](#) "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us."

[Acts 17:28](#) "For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, `We are his offspring.'"

Some of us are God's children by relationship accomplished by faith and submission in confession and baptism.

[John 1:12](#) Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

[Acts 2:38](#) "Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

[Galatians 3:26,27](#) "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

God's children have every right to expect His care for them. Have you placed your faith in Christ?

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"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B
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