

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Read Matthew 6:7 and Matthew 26:44. Jesus cautioned his disciples against using repetitive words. In what ways are we guilty of doing exactly what the verse warns us against in the Lord's prayer?

In what ways are you prone to heap up empty words when praying? Why do you think we do this?

In the context of Jesus' words, how must we regard liturgies and catechesis? What is the context in which these elements have meaning?

In Matthew 26, the writer of the gospel points out that Jesus prayed again and again with the same words. What do you think the difference is? So, what is Matthew 6 really cautioning us about?

Read Galatians 4:4–7, Romans 5:10 and Ephesians 2:3 (ESV), 2 Corinthians 6:14–18. Contrast the term *children of wrath* and *enemies of God* with the term *heir*. What does each inherit?

How did Jesus change the inheritance due to us?

What does the phrase 'Our Father in Heaven' now mean to you?

Read Luke 15:11–32 and Isaiah 63:16. Even in the Old Testament, God had often spoken about Himself as a longing father figure who wanted to not just discipline His children but experience intimacy with them. Yet, this was not a concept that had been internalized by the Israelites. At a time when legalism was the order of the day, the parable of the prodigal son must have been controversial and shocked Jesus' listeners, as it laid bare the Father heart of God and His willingness to accept a profligate son.

In the light of our readings today, what aspect of this parable stands out the most to you?

How did his loss of identity impact the younger son? What was essential for restoration? How do you think that his father’s acceptance may have restored the son’s sense of self-worth and dignity?

What aspect of the father’s behavior towards his son encourages you today?

LAST WORD

We often tend to view God as an exacting taskmaster who has very high expectations of us and will condemn us when we stray. The Bible however gives us a very different view of God. In Romans 8:29, Paul says that we were predestined to be in the image of God’s firstborn son Jesus. That makes us part of God’s own family! By addressing God as our Father and meaning it, we enter into a relationship of deep dependence and intimacy with God.

LIVE IT OUT

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Worship: Listen to the song *Good, Good Father* by Chris Tomlin or another song that points you to God as our Father.

Memorize: Read **Psalm 103:13** and commit it to memory.

Pray: Admit in prayer the struggles you face when you pray. Ask God to fill you with the peace that comes with being in a right relationship with Him. If you’ve never experienced it before, ask Him to help you enjoy the deep love, compassion and intimacy of a father-child relationship.
