

PRAYER LESSON 133

Praying to God the Father

We often address God as our Father, yet in the Old Testament this image of God as Father is missing. We only find God referred to as Father in the sense of being the Father of Israel, but not as the Father of any individual. Jesus introduces us to the concept of God as Father when he goes to the temple at the age of twelve and sits among the elders having a theological discussion with them. When his parents find him they scold him for causing them worry and his excuse is: **"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"**

From then on, throughout the gospels, there are more than 150 references to God as Jesus' Father or as the Father of believers. So when we address God as Father in our prayers we are addressing him correctly as he is our Father by adoption.

Not everyone who prays is comfortable seeing God as Father. Some people have earthly fathers who are less than noble, and in some cases their fathers were down right nasty. So, to see God as Father is difficult for them, as they compare him to their earthly fathers. Yet, if we look at how the Bible, God's word, describes him, we get an accurate picture of our heavenly Father.

First of all, we see God as creator of everything. He created us perfect, but when we sinned, he provided a way back to him through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus. We see him as a just God who hates and punishes sin, but we also see him as a loving God who provided a way out for us. John in his gospel says, **God is love**. God is the essence of love, so he is our example of a loving father, not our earthly fathers.

So when you pray, think not of your earthly father, but of your heavenly father as he is described in scripture. He loves you, he died for you, he has arranged for you to spend eternity with him. No earthly father has ever done that.