



## O My Father Bible Study

[**Please provide:** musical accompaniment, Bibles, hymnals, and copies of the Bible study for attendees.]

**Sing:** “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” LSB 770, TLH 457, LW 516

**Let us pray:** Lord God Almighty, we offer ourselves to You today because You alone can make sense of what lies before us. We can never fully understand the many things that are happening around us, and we can never fully appreciate the implications of all we say and do. You alone are capable of knitting everything together in the integrated patchwork of Your perfect plan. Holy Spirit guide us, we pray. Open the Scriptures to us. Show us something, tell us something. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

What is the hardest thing for you right now as a Christian?

If God were to speak one word to you today, what would you like to hear?

Prayer is defined as: (1) making a request, or petition, for benefits or mercies; (2) any communion of a soul with God. Prayer is simply talking to God. We find that Jesus prayed regularly and naturally. He often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16), sometimes spending the night praying (Luke 6:12). Prayer was at the center of His life.

Do you go away by yourself just to be with God?

Is it hard for you to “*Be still, and know that I am God*” (Psalm 46:10)?

The phrase “be still” means “enough” or “stop.” The word “know” means “to acknowledge.” In the midst of our troubles and burdens we need to hear the Lord speak to us through His Word.

**Picture this:** A pastor once told how his three-year-old daughter ran into his study one day, jumped on his lap, wrapped her little arms around his neck, and just looked up at him. “What do you want now?” he asked her rather hurriedly. He was in the middle of preparing his Sunday sermon. “I just want to love you, Daddy,” she replied with a big smile on her face. What do you think went through that father’s mind?

How would you respond?

Unlike the busy pastor, our loving Lord is always available, always ready to listen. We, His children, are the ones who fail to take the time to tell Him of our love and adoration. We often hurry through our prayers routinely, without much thought, or without waiting to hear what God has to say to us.

Jesus knew that one of His prayers would not be answered as expected. We see Him coming to the Garden of Gethsemane as true man responding to crisis with prayer.

**Read** Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, and Luke 22:39-46. You might want to divide into three groups. Please answer these questions.

Describe the condition of Jesus' soul.

How does Jesus address God?

For what is Jesus praying?

How does Jesus respond to God?

What keeps the disciples from praying?

**Jesus becomes a curse for us:** In the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus begins His prayer: “*Abba, Pater.*” *Abba* is Hebrew for father; *Pater* is Greek for father. He is deeply distressed, to the point of death. Jesus pleads three times to have this cup taken from Him.

God does not always answer prayer in the way we might like. The answer to Jesus' petition is “No.” It came in the moment of silence between what Jesus says and what He knows. If God was to be glorified, man saved, and the ends of Jesus' undertaking be fulfilled without Him drinking of this bitter cup, He desires to be excused – otherwise not.

He must drink the “cup” of God's wrath against every sinner and every sin. *Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God* (Hebrews 12:2). Its sting – the present pain. Jesus endured the cross for the coming joy that was set before Him.

**Read** Romans 8:26-28. How does the Holy Spirit help us in our weakness? The word “*sunantilambano*” (Greek from which we get the word “help”) means: one who comes alongside to shoulder the burdens, to help in bearing. What do you think, *We do not know what we ought to pray*, means?

Martin Luther says the following on this topic:

**Crying, Abba, Father.** The fact that the Spirit of Christ in our hearts cries unto God and makes intercession for us with groanings should reassure us greatly. However, there are many factors that prevent such full reassurance on our part.

We are born in sin. To doubt the good will of God is an inborn suspicion of God with all of us. Besides, the devil, our adversary, goeth about seeking to devour us by roaring: "God is angry at you and is going to destroy you forever." In all these difficulties we have only one support, the Gospel of Christ. To hold on to it, that is the trick. Christ cannot be perceived with the senses. We cannot see Him. The heart does not feel His helpful presence. Especially in times of trials a Christian feels the power of sin, the infirmity of his flesh, the goading darts of the devil, the agues of death, the scowl and judgment of God. All these things cry out against us. The Law scolds us, sin screams at us, death thunders at us, the devil roars at us. **In the midst of the clamor the Spirit of Christ cries in our hearts: "Abba, Father [emphasis added]."** And this little cry of the Spirit transcends the hullabaloo of the Law, sin, death, and the devil, and finds a hearing with God. (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, Martin Luther, trans. Theodore Graebner. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968, 159).

So now we use that one little word, "Abba," as we go to our Father and ask for mercy. We come in Jesus' name because He cares and knows what is happening to us. The answer to the prayer is going to come for our own good because He is *a very present help in trouble* (Psalm 46:1b ESV).

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need* (Hebrews 4:15-16).

### THE PRAYER THAT NEVER FAILS

When you don't know where to turn,  
and you can't begin to pray,  
there is something you can count on;  
it's the one thing you can say.  
Say the prayer that never fails--  
the one you know will lead you home.  
When there is no other answer,  
simply pray, "Thy will be done."

God wants to heal our heartaches  
and He knows our every need.  
We don't ever walk without Him.  
We are never past His reach.  
When sorrow overcomes you  
and you feel all alone,  
there is a prayer that never fails.  
Only say, "Thy will be done."

The dark clouds may persist,  
and the waters may not still,  
but there is comfort just in knowing  
you are safe within His will.  
For the prayer that God will answer  
until the day He calls you home  
is the sincere heart gently saying,  
“Not mine, but Thy will be done.”

Written by Sharon Harris, May, 2003

**Stanza One:** Have you ever been, or are you now, in a situation where you don't know where to turn? What did or can you do?

**Stanza Two:** Have you ever been, or are you now, overcome with sorrow? What did, or can, you do?

**Stanza Three:** Are there dark clouds all around you? Have the waters risen above your knees? What do you think God is doing about your situation?

**Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.**

The Apostle Paul had a problem he wanted removed. What was it?

Did the problem go away?

How did God answer Paul's prayer?

What was Paul's response to the answer to his prayer?

What does "sufficient" mean?

How did Paul's perspective change?

Sometimes the Lord may ask us to do something for Him that may not be very easy. We may even have to decide whether we are going to do what is easy for us, or what God wants. God's way may not always be the easy way, but it certainly is the best way. If Jesus didn't suffer through the cross we would not have salvation today. We see that God didn't remove the "cup" that Jesus was about to take, but He did send an angel to minister to Him and give Him strength. God may not necessarily remove something that is hard in our lives, but He will help us through it. Let us remember that when we pray "not my will, but Yours' be done," we will always find the strength we need to do whatever it is God may want us to do.

*I can do everything through him who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13).* A few years ago my father had a heart attack. My sister and I stayed in a nearby hotel during the critical time. I was scheduled to give the closing session at a church retreat the next month. The retreat topic was on the Lord's Prayer, the session topic: "Our Father."

Each day my sister and I went to the hospital to be with our dad. We brought our Bibles and would search the Scriptures and read books and commentaries to help me prepare. The night before dad was transferred to a rehab facility, I was reading the book *My Father's Names*, by Elmer L. Towns. I asked dad a question based on Chapter 12, "The Father: Pater, the Intimate Name of God." Dad replied, "How can I explain in simple terms that through Christ we are invited not to cower before God in fear but to enter into an intimate family relationship with Him?"

There was a small lap quilt folded in two, lying on the bed. Dad placed his large hand on the quilt, opened the quilt, looked at my sister and I with a childlike grin on his face, and said; "come on in."

Jesus says; "***Come to Me***, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ***Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me***, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and ***you will find rest for your souls***. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30, emphases added).

**Let us close with prayer:** My Father, I am in great trouble and You seem so far away. But I know I am Your child, and I come to You for Christ's sake. I thank You that I am loved by You because of what Christ has done for me on the cross. Forgive me for not trusting You. Help me to seek to know Your will and commit my needs to Your care through prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture references are from the NIV.

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Published by Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2014