

THE LORD'S PRAYER: WEEK TWO

THE FOUNDATION OF ALL PRAYER...Jesus starts by giving the most stunning opening line in the history of prayer, stunning on many different levels.

Our Father WHO IS in heaven.

The foundation upon which prayer is built, is found in a little verb: IS. The God who IS, not the GOD WAS/COULD BE but the GOD IS. The God we see revealed in Jesus, is God of the present tense. Before we utter a word, before our thoughts or prayers focus on God, know this: GOD IS. He is more ready to be with us than we are with him, more present in prayer than we are. When you pray, Jesus says, start here...

THE GOD WHO IS...ALWAYS IS, ETERNAL BUT PRESENT, HOLY BUT AVAILABLE, WISE BUT NOT ALOOF, LOVING BUT NOT A PUSHOVER

OUR IMAGE OF GOD...if we start prayer with a SKEWED/FALSE IMAGE OF GOD, we either get frustrated and stop praying, or we pray for the wrong reasons. If we view God as being MEAN/ANGRY/DISAPPOINTED, what will your prayers be like? What is God like? Of all the ways to start his prayer, he reminds us who God is, not only HOLY, ALL-POWERFUL but also LOVING/INTIMATE. God is LOVING like a PARENT, as Jesus put it, OUR FATHER HOW DOES JESUS CALLING GOD "FATHER" STRIKE YOU?

A TENDER BUT VOLATILE TERM...the Aramaic word Jesus used "Father" is a tender, personal term. It meant DADDY/PAPA but referring to God in this manner was unprecedented in Judaism who were forbidden to address God personally. Using his revered name was taboo. Jesus was messing with time-honored tradition. He could be stoned for even suggesting it. He was putting the Disciples at risk if they repeated it. How dare this Rabbi from Nazareth talk to God as if he could be easily known.

WHAT IT SAID ABOUT JESUS...calling God ABBA, we are speaking first and foremost about Jesus' relationship with God, not ours. It had nothing to do with GENDER but INTIMACY, the PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP Jesus had with God. He was ABBA'S CHILD and the message he'd come to deliver was that the holy God the Jews revered was also accessible. Only because Jesus is THE SON do we know God as OUR FATHER. God has been REVEALED TO US by Jesus. God has a FACE/NAME, a WAY OF ACTON, and we call "THE TRINITY" God can be known by all of his people and we can come before God AS WE ARE- in trust and with INTIMACY. And so we are reminded of WHO WE ARE and WHOSE WE ARE.