**The Lord’s Prayer: Our Father in Heaven**

*“These are tough times to be a father. The media are full of stories about abusive fathers, fatherless children and deadbeat dads…This is an age when fathers get little respect, and you don’t have to look farther than the biggest father figure of them all, God… God the Father is out, unless coupled with God the Mother…Few theologians these days seem to want a God who takes charge, assumes responsibility, fights for his children, makes demands, risks rebuffs, punishes as well as forgives. In a word, a Father.”* (Newsweek, June 17th 1996)[[1]](#footnote-1)

*“When we call God our Father we address him in Christ’s name, since we cannot call him Father – and to claim to be his children would be arrogant and rash – if we had not been made children of his grace through our Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ, being God’s true, natural and very own Son, has been given by him to us as a brother, so that what by nature is his may be ours by gift and adoption, if with assured faith we accept so great a favor.”* (Calvin, Institutes, 542)

1. **What’s so important about this introduction?[[2]](#footnote-2)**
   1. Jesus is breaking totally new ground in teaching that we are to call God, Father.

Kent Hughes: "God is only referred to as Father 14 times in the huge corpus of the Old Testament's 39 books - and then rather impersonally. In those 14 occurrences of "Father," the term was always used with reference to the nation, and not to individuals. God was spoken of as Israel's Father, but Abraham did not speak of God as "my Father". You can search from Genesis to Malachi, and you will find no such occurrence."[[3]](#footnote-3)

* 1. Thoughts on “Abba”:
  2. By what right may we call God, “Father”?

1. **What are the implications of God's gracious fatherhood?**
   1. As God's adopted children we are loved no less that the "beloved Son” (Matt 3:17; 17:5).
   2. We are God's heirs. In the ancient world adoption was for the purpose of securing an heir. (Romans 8:17; 1 John 3:2)
   3. We have God's Spirit. This is the new birth (John 1:12ff, 3:6; Gal 4:6)
   4. We must honor our father by serving his interests. Sonship has particular obligations.
   5. We must love our brothers/sisters.

1. Ryken, *When You Pray*, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Much of the following material is owed to the following: Ryken, *When You Pray*; Packer, *Praying the Lord’s Prayer*; Watson, *Lord’s Prayer*; Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ryken, *When You Pray*, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)