

The Parchment

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Rev. Howard Chang
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The Priority in Prayer

Our Father in Heaven (Matthew 5:8)

What is your priority when you pray? While we may start our prayer addressing “Father” or “Lord,” more often than not our priority is ourselves. We naturally go to God when we have a need or a burden. But we encounter a difficulty when we pray about ourselves first: *we may not have a correct view of God when we share our burden with Him.* We can go to the right person, God, with the wrong attitude and view of Him. For instance, we know God is not a Santa Claus or an Aladdin's Genie granting wishes. Yet, when we go to Him with a list of needs and desires, we can essentially see Him that way. *The Lord's Prayer*, on the other hand, leads us to pray in a way that frames our requests and concerns with God's nature and love.

The Lord's Prayer both tells us about Him and focuses us back on Him. What we need to know first and foremost is that He is our Heavenly Father. It's what I needed to see when I started school a few weeks ago. I have looked forward to going back to school for a few years now. But that first week I felt overwhelmed for a number of reasons: it is my first online course; I figured out just how much work the class entails; I still needed to prepare for preaching and different church meetings; I scheduled to watch a soccer game and a cross country meet; and so on. When I look at the last sentence I see a repeated word that gives away my mindset—*I*. I found that same word repeated in my prayers early that week. I could not see God clearly in the midst of all the activity and responsibility because I focused mostly on me. Thankfully, I started praying the Lord's Prayer. Those first words “Our Father in Heaven” brought my focus where it needed to be all along.

Prayer is more about God than it is about us. As we will see later in the prayer, God *does* want to hear about our needs, relationships, struggles—everything! But first we must focus on Him first. Next time you pray first give thanks to God for all the ways He is your Heavenly Father until that truth settles your heart.