

## “The Prayer of Connection”

Text: **Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 6:9**

May 25, 2008

Park Boulevard Presbyterian Church ([www.pbpc.org](http://www.pbpc.org))

Oakland, California

Rev. Chris Gelini

### PRAY!

This week we’re going to begin a new series that’s going to take us into the summer on the Lord’s Prayer. For the next eight weeks I’m calling it “The Path to Inner Peace.”

The summer months are a great time to de-stress your life. And it’s a great season to work on gaining inner peace, something everybody would like to have. In fact all of us would like to feel at peace with ourselves on the inside. We often go to great lengths to try to find what will calm us down, what will de-stress us, what will give us that inner peace.

If you surf the internet you will find all kinds of products and services that offer us inner peace. Among them are: aroma therapy, organic potato chips (I don’t know how those work), funeral services, candles, a plumbing warranty, bank overdraft protection, yoga, herbs, cancer insurance, car alarms, even mood rings – all promising inner peace.

If it were only that easy!? The truth is, very few people ever experience inner peace. We spend all of our time regretting the past and worrying about the future - so we mess up today, and we don’t have inner peace.

The Bible is very clear about inner peace. Philippians 4 says, *“Don’t worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. If you do this, you will experience God’s peace (Circle “you will experience God’s peace.”) which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”*

- It says in this verse that whatever I do in Christ will bring me peace. And what is it I need to do? Pray about everything. That’s it. The Bible says the key to inner peace is **prayer**. As I go through life I can either worry, or I can pray. Those are my options. If you pray you’ll have a lot less to worry about. God says, if you pray, you will experience inner peace.

That brings up the logical questions like: “What do I pray?” “How do I pray?” “What words do I use?” “How do I say the kind of prayer that will bring me inner peace?”

- Fortunately, the disciples asked that question over 2000 years ago. They came to the Lord and said, “Lord, teach us how to pray.” And Jesus gave

them a model, he gave them a pattern. Today we call it The Lord's Prayer. You may have memorized it many years ago, but I bet you've never seen it the way you're going to see it in the next eight weeks as we examine the path to peace. I hope you'll not only learn to pray the Lord's Prayer, but you'll learn to *live it*.

Today, we want to look at just the very first phrase – Matthew 6:9, “*Jesus said, ‘This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven.’*” This simple phrase is one of the most radical ideas ever said by Jesus, or anybody. It doesn't seem too radical to you because we talk about God as our Father all the time. But realize this, for thousands of years, nobody called God “Father.”

- In fact, in the Old Testament, God is called Father only seven times. Jesus exploded all the stereotypes about God when He said, Here's how you talk to God: Father, Daddy, Papa. Father. He used an intimate term.
- And Jesus exploded this stereotype further by saying that God is not an angry tyrant; God is not an apathetic creator who just winds up the world and lets it go. God is not some impersonal power. In fact, Jesus said God is a **Father**...*your Father*.

That's good news because I can relate to a father. He is a person that I can get to know, and can connect with easily. This is why I'm calling this first of the eight prayers found in The Lord's Prayer, it is “The Prayer of Connection.” It is the example for how you connect to God. If you don't get this truth, you'll never have inner peace. But if you get this one you're on the way to inner peace.

- **Our Father. That is the prayer of connection.**

Whenever you're connected to God as your Father you're going to have inner peace. On the other hand every time you get disconnected from God, which can be thousands or hundreds of times a day, you're going to start experiencing stress.

So, today we're going to look at how to connect to God as your Father. What is God really like? What kind of Father is God? Let's start with what the Bible says:

### **God is a caring Father.**

- A.** God loves you more than you will ever know or realize. In fact, God loves you more than you will ever understand. You don't have a brain big enough to understand how much God loves you. It's like an ant trying to understand a human. No matter how hard it tries, it's not going to figure you out.

You can say, “Yes, I know God loves me.” But you *really* don't know the full measure of this statement. You don't have the capacity to understand how wide and long and high and deep God's love for you really is.

God's compassion is His most outstanding quality. The Bible says this in Psalm 103, *"As a father has compassion on his children so the Lord has compassion on those who honor Him."*

**God loves you.**

**B.** One day the disciples were out in a boat on the Sea of Galilee and a storm came up. Water started lapping over in the boat and the boat began to sink. The disciples got a little uptight, a little fearful, a little worried that Jesus was at the other end of the boat asleep. He wasn't worried. *He* was in the boat.

1. Here's principle of life – if you've got Jesus in your boat, you're not going to sink. Count on it. No matter how big the storm seems. That is a spiritual principle for life.

In your marriage, in your career, job, schooling, and dating life – if Jesus is in your boat, if you're involved with Him, you're not going to sink. You may take on water. You may have some scary times, but you're not going to sink.

**C.** The disciples forgot this truth, so they were scared to death. What happens next is this: They run over and wake up Jesus at the other end of the boat; they shake Him, and say what I consider to be one of the most profound questions in life:

"Lord, don't you care? We're perishing. We're dying here. We're going to sink. Don't you care?"

1. Have you ever asked that question of God? I've asked it thousands of times. Something goes wrong in my life and I go, Hey God! Don't you care? Can't you see what's going on here with me – my health, my wife, my child? Can't you see what's going on here with my friends? They just got a bad doctor's report. Don't You care?

It's one of the most profound questions of life. Does God really care about what goes on in my life?

2. Fortunately, God has given us the answer to that question over and over and over again in the Bible. The answer is a resounding: "Absolutely, I care! I am a caring Father. I care about everything in your life."

He has the ability to care about every detail of your life plus the details of everybody else's life. That's hard to understand, but He's God and you're not.

- D. The Bible says this in 1 Peter 5:7, “*Cast all of your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.*” It says cast **all** your anxieties.

What are you still holding on to? The ones you’re still worrying about right now. If you’re worrying about it, guess who’s holding on to it - You. You’re holding on to those anxieties. God says unload every single anxiety you have onto Me. Why? Because I care for you.

- Does God care about your job? Yes.
- Does God care about your bills? Yes.
- Your house payment? Yes.
- Does God care about your dating life? Yes.
- Your grades? Yes.
- Does God care about whether you get pregnant or not? Yes.
- Does God care about your success or your failure in your career? Absolutely.
- Is there anything that God doesn’t care about in your life? No. Not one thing.
- God cares about every single area of your life. He knows every detail and He cares. He’s aware and he cares so you don’t have to be scared.

- F. Every time you worry, you doubt that you have a heavenly Father who cares. Whenever you worry, you’re acting like an atheist. You say you believe in God, but you’re going to worry as if there isn’t.
1. A guy came to a pastor once and said, “Pastor, I’m so stressed out!” And he really was by his work, by his family, by his kids. He had a laundry list of things. Then he says, “I guess what my real problem is I just don’t love God enough. That’s why I worry so much.” The pastor said, “Buddy! That’s not your problem. Your problem is you don’t realize how much God loves you.”

- G. The source of all our worries is that we forget about how much God cares for us. When you truly don’t understand how much God loves you, you start to worry. You get upset. You act as if it all depends on you.

- ◆ If you’re going to learn to have inner peace you’ve got to start with this one. What kind of God is God? What kind of Father is He? When you understand that He’s a loving, caring Father the stress will go down.

How do I get connected to God as Father? Through Jesus. Jesus came to earth to make the connection possible.

*Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really knew Me you would know My Father as well."*

There's only one way to get to know the Father and His love – through Jesus Christ who makes the connection. We know God our Father when we know Jesus. You wouldn't even know God was your Father if Jesus Christ hadn't come to earth.

*"We are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ."* How do you become a child of God? There is only one way: faith in God the Son, Jesus Christ. God wants you to know Him as Father and you know the Father through the Son. Turning over your life and trusting Jesus is the key.

What's amazing about God is that He knows the good, the bad and the ugly about you, and He still loves you. And He wants you as His child. And He wants you connected to Him as Your Father.

Are you willing to turn to God this morning and say, "Father, I'm coming home to you."

**Pray this prayer:**

**Dear Father - I want You to be my heavenly Father and I want to be your child. I want to be connected to you, not just created by You. So I ask you to accept me into Your family. By faith I put my trust in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank You for sending Jesus to teach me about You. Thank You for being a caring, loving Father. I want to relax and I want to start trusting you today. Would You give me the inner peace that comes from Knowing You? In Your name I pray. Amen.**