



# Prayer & Faithfulness

January 21, 2007

I call on you, O God, for you will answer me; give ear to me and hear my prayer. - Psalm 17:6

*What do you expect of God when you pray?*

- That He will hear
- That He will respond

Last week we talked about the knowledge, presence, and power of God. These make little difference if God is not faithful. We expect that God will hear our prayer and answer. That is, we expect Him to be faithful. Faithfulness is an extremely important part of our relationship with God. In the Bible you will find a number of pictures of God that show how faithful He is to us. Some of these will be more challenging than others because God puts it in terms of human relationships. If you have not had a good relationship with your earthly father, thinking of God as “Father” may be a challenge for you. While people have let us down, God never will.

“Father”

## God as Faithful “Father”

**Deuteronomy 1:29-31** Moses reminds the Israelites how God was faithful to them in the wilderness. *What three things did God do for the Israelites as they traveled through the wilderness?*

- He went before them
- He fought for them
- He carried them as a father carries his son.

*Moses says God carried them as a father carries his son. How is this type of carrying different than someone might carry a grocery bag or a suitcase?*

- When you carry your child, you carry them carefully and with love.
- Protection—No harm will come to a child who is in his father’s arms.

The people saw all that God had done. *How does seeing God act on our behalf build our faith in Him?*

- We see how much He loves us and that He is willing to be there for us.
- We know that if He did it in the past He can still do it today.

*What have you seen God do in your life that helped build your faith in Him?*

*How could someone’s background make it difficult to accept God as their “Father”?*

- If they didn’t have a relationship with their father or if that relationship was a difficult one.

*How does seeing God as the faithful Father give us a healthy view of God (see esp. Psalm 68:5)?*

- God is better than any earthly father.
- Fathers here mess up but God doesn't.
- God loves us more than any person ever could because He made us and even died for us.

*In the Lord's prayer, Jesus starts by calling God "our Father." How can our prayers better appreciate God as our Father?*

- We thank him for the privilege of being his children.
- We pray that we will be more fully submissive to His will.
- We ask for His guidance.

## "Shepherd"

### God as Faithful "Shepherd"

In **Psalm 23** God is our shepherd. When we read **Psalm 23:1-4** we take on the perspective of a sheep that is being guided through dangerous places by a seasoned and powerful shepherd.

*What are some things from this psalm that show how well the shepherd provides for the sheep?*

- Lacking nothing
- Green pastures
- Quiet waters
- Guides me
- He is present and able to protect the sheep from danger

That is how God is. God is willing to nurture us, provide for us, and even protect us in difficult and dangerous times.

*How can our prayers reflect on our relationship with God as our Shepherd?*

- We declare our confidence in Him
- We thank Him for His provision.
- We appreciate his presence and leadership

## "Spouse"

### God as Faithful "Spouse"

This picture is painted most vividly in Hosea. Hosea was told by God to marry an unfaithful woman to show him how much anguish God has over His unfaithful people. This metaphor shouldn't be taken too far but God uses it to show us that He has always remained faithful to us. On the other hand sin is considered spiritual adultery—cheating on God and being unfaithful. We need to be just as serious about our faithfulness to God as we are about our faithfulness to our spouse.

*In what 6 ways does God say he will betroth himself to his people?*

- Forever, in Righteousness, in Justice, Love, Compassion, Faithfulness.

*What does it mean to betroth yourself to someone?*

- It means you marry them/enter a covenant relationship with them.
- Promise to be faithful to them—there can be no one besides them.

God has committed himself to us. When we are baptized we make that promise back to God. We spend the rest of our lives living faithfully to God.

*How hard would it be to go one month without talking to your spouse?*

- Hopefully—VERY hard!

*How can recognizing our covenant relationship in spiritual betrothal to God improve the regularity of our prayer lives?*

- You can't help but talk to God. We should want to talk to God.

*How can our prayers reflect our steadfast decision to be faithfully committed to God no matter what?*

- We renounce all other options
- We praise and adore Him for His commitment to us
- We declare our allegiance to Him as our Lord
- We pray on a regular basis because that is what you do with someone you love.

*Why does faithfulness require confession?*

- Close relationships require honesty. Confession is being honest with God.
- Confession and repentance are an attempt to repair our relationship with God.

*Which of these pictures of God is the most challenging for you? Why?*

*What barriers to being faithful have you faced in your prayer life?*

*How should our prayer life reflect the faithfulness of God?*

Faithfulness starts with God and we respond. Our prayers should reflect thanks for God's faithfulness and a declaration that we will respond to him with faithfulness. Next week, more on our response

### Put it into Practice

Make sure to end in prayer. You can include each of these three metaphors in the prayer—**thankfulness to our father, submission to our shepherd, and love and faithfulness for our bridegroom.** Thank God each day this week for His unending faithfulness and pray that we can be more faithful to Him in our walk and our prayer life.