

March 11, 2018 – Soli Deo Gloria
By Wayne J. Schneider

Who is God? St. Matthew 6:9-13

A woman was very unhappy in her marriage and went to court in order to get a divorce. At the hearing, the judge asked: *“Do you have any grounds?”* *“Yes, we have two acres,”* she said. *“That’s not what I was asking,”* the judge said with an edge to his voice. *“I mean do you have a grudge?”* The woman responded, *“No, we couldn’t afford a garage; we have to park the car in front of the house.”* Now the judge was really getting upset. *“Does your husband beat you up?”* he asked. She replied. *“No, I always get up before he does.”* At this point the judge was totally exasperated. Finally, he said, *“Just tell me why you want a divorce.”* *“Because,”* she whined, *“we just don’t seem to be able to communicate.”*

Prayer is a two-way conversation with God. Today and the following two Sundays, we are going to examine the Lord’s Prayer together.

How do you describe God? How do you tell someone what God is like? Where do you begin?

At the start of the Gospel according to St. Luke, we are introduced to parents. With the pressure of political correctness, this might not be the best place to begin our description of God. Everyone cannot claim to have had the best of parents as models. Yet, this is the place for us to begin.

Of course, God’s likeness is not a perfect match to our parents. Some have had horrible, abusive relationships with one or both parents. Some have had wonderful parental support, and most of us have had various kinds of relationships with our parents.

The finest place to begin is with Jesus’ understanding. If we want to know the nature and character of God, we examine the life and ministry of Jesus. For Jesus, God’s name was more than an identifier. It was the nature and moral fiber

of God's being. This is critical as we examine our need for for prayer, this two-way conversation with God.

The Lord's Prayer is an ideal model for investigating who Jesus believed God is. In Jesus' life and statements, God is revealed. The word 'reveal' means to make previously unknown information, known to others; or, to make something known to humans by divine means.

My dad was proficient in many of the trades. Carpentry, plumbing, electrical and auto mechanics, to name a few. In vain did he attempt to teach Wayne. It was not that my dad was a poor teacher . . . both of my brothers can and do utilize these skills Dad taught them.

I recall applying for a job at the Ma Bell telephone company, immediately following my discharge from the US Army. After completing the application testing, my interviewer said to me. *"Wayne, you did well in the general education section. But, you did so poorly in the mechanical section, we cannot hire you because we are fearful you will hurt yourself!"*

What my father taught me that stayed with me, was his kindness with people; his humility, and work ethic. His faith and dedication to God and his church. His willingness to help anyone who was needy. And, his love for his family. Jesus teaches us about God through his prayer.

"Father, reveal who you are" ("The Message") is the beginning of the conversation between Jesus and God. God as parent, unlike the Greek and Roman gods of the day, who were impersonal and far away. Jesus knows God as a father. He acknowledges divine authority as a loving, caring parent.

The Aramaic word for father in St. Luke's gospel is "daddy." Jesus wants us to understand the relationship between God and humanity, is like that of a loving, caring, and compassionate daddy with his children.

Jesus, Son of God and son of mortals, is truly human. Born into a lower middle-class family, he grew into young adulthood learning about life from two loving parents, Mary and Joseph. With Joseph's tutelage, Jesus learns how to be a carpenter. In his teaching Jesus used carpentry metaphors to describe how God builds relationships.

As Eugene Peterson's paraphrase puts it, *"It's who you are, not what you say and do that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds."* (St. Luke 6:45)

Jesus continues this emphasis: *"If you work the words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who dug deep and laid the foundation of his house on bedrock. When the river burst its banks and crashed against the house, nothing could shake it; it was built to last."*

From Joseph, Jesus discovered a larger understanding of the nature and character of God. *"Father, reveal who you are,"* Jesus asks in his prayer. In the analogy of home construction, God desires that we learn how to build strong and sound lives. As much as we are interested in who God is, God is more fascinated about who we are.

We continue to be God's children. If we are perceptive, the nature of God can be revealed to us in the loving, caring relationships we have in this life. Alleluia. Amen.