

Lord's Prayer # 2
Our Father who is in heaven.

A recent sociological study from Duke University and the University of Arizona reported that most Americans have only two close confidantes.

Average American has only two individuals, could be wife or friend or family member that they feel comfortable enough with to share what is going on in their lives.

The study indicated that in 1985, the average American had three people in whom to confide matters that were important to them.

In 2004, that number dropped to two.

Even more alarming is that and one in four Americans have no close confidants at all.

Close relationships are important.

They are a safety net.

- That confidant is the person you trust to pick up a child from school in case of emergency,
- The confidant is your trusting friend that you can turn to when your spouse suddenly becomes sick or injured
- the person you are more likely to call or talk with after receiving bad news from the doctor's office.

A confidant is that person, spouse or friend that you feel safe and secure in sharing your dreams, goals and frustrations.

The report listed numerous reasons why people have fewer confidants.

- the rise of the Internet,
- an increase in work hours and long commutes,
- technology such as computers, iPods, etc.

All of these factors, as good as they are in their own right, can and often do discourage face-to-face interaction.

However, one of the major reasons why people have fewer confidants is also due to the fact that people in general don't want to be bothered listening to the problems of others.

I have my own problems to deal with -- I don't want to listen to your problems.

We are a lonely society and there doesn't seem to be any indication that this trend will soon change.

How many close confidants do you have?

This morning I want to talk with you about one very important confidant you have - one that I encourage you to make use of on a constant basis.

Our Father who is in heaven.

Hebrew / Aramaic word for Father *Abba* or *Avva*, depending upon the proper pronunciation which we are no longer certain of.

Abba Father was the first word a child would learn after being weaned.

It was seen as a term of endearment as well as a title of respect or honor.

Sometimes said that *Abba* is close to child like word Daddy.

Yes/No.

Daddy is almost too casual a word.

Abba did indicate a very close relationship/commitment between a child and his/her biological Father.

Abba was also the word an adult would use as a way of indicating respect to his/her father.

Interesting that throughout the OT very seldom was the word Father ascribed to God.

There are passages in the Old Testament that talk of God as an Abba Father relating to us, His children.

But there are no passages where the author mentions God Yahweh as Father, Abba.

For the Jews, it would have been considered irreverent and unthinkable to call God by this familiar word - Abba/Father.

And yet Jesus used this childlike address to describe his relationship with the Father.

170 times in the Gospels Jesus refers to God as Father.

That is why the disciples must have been shocked when Jesus told said, when you pray, say, Abba/Father!

By using this word, Jesus is showing the unique relationship the close intimacy that existed between the Father and Himself.

This relationship was not just a private matter between Jesus and the Father.

This is how they and us are to approach the Creator - our Father/Abba.

Early in my ministry I led a Bible study on the Lord's Prayer.

After class, one of the participants told me she couldn't pray Our Father.

She struggled with the image of God as Father.

While growing up, her father had abused her in verbally and physically.

She couldn't separate her earthly Father from her heavenly Father.

How do you see God as Father?

Is your image of God/Father colored good or bad to the type of relationship you had with your earthly father?

No matter what relationship you had with your earthly father, some Christians are brought up to fear God.

They are taught to see or view God as some Stern Father or distant / aloof God who rewards or punishes us according to every action we do.

God is eternal Scorekeeper.

Easy to see how this view would lead to feeling of resentment towards God who stands over us as some strict disciplinarian.

Some Christians spend their life time trying to earn love, respect, recognition of their earthly fathers as well as their heavenly Father.

That is frustrating because you will never reach that goal.

None of these images is what our Father/Abba wants.

Our Father has gone to great lengths to distant himself from the bad examples we might have or images of poor parenting that plague us. When Jesus says, pray in this way: Our Father, in heaven - he is inviting us to pull up a chair, to sit down with our Father.

He wants us to feel comfortable enough to be able to sit down and discuss the most intimate of concerns and fears and worries as well as just sitting there and sharing all the good things that are going on in our lives.

We can do that because of what Jesus did.

Jesus made it possible for us to sit down.

He, Jesus, dealt with our sins, by dying on a cross.

He took our place and accepted the punishment we deserved because of our disobedience.

On the cross, Jesus showed us how much God loved us by giving up his only son, Jesus, so that he, Father/Abba could have a relationship with us today.

Jesus made it possible for us to see and know God as Father.

That is why he invited us to use the words he used when praying - Abba Father.

Unlike our earthly fathers/mothers who might not always listen to us or forget to do what we ask them to do, Jesus, as our heavenly Father/Confidant will respond.

That is His promise.

Ask, Jesus said, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks receives and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Matthew 7:7,8

**I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you
John 16:23**

Listen too to the promise God made through his prophet Isaiah 65:24

Before they pray, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will respond.

That is why Jesus invites us to use the intimate word, Father/Abba when we pray.

We have something better than a confidant - we have a Father who will listen.

We don't have to gain his attention; he is already waiting for us.

We don't have to be embarrassed - he already knows what's on our hearts

We don't have to worry if he will have the time to listen to us.

Don't forget, though, that prayer is not a blank check where you come with a shopping list and walk out the store with all your requests answered.

No loving and caring parent would act that way; neither will our heavenly Father.

He knows what ultimately is best and right for us.

Some of you remember the comment Pastor Art Simon made when he was with us.

He said that we are like the condemned prisoners who asks for a steak dinner thinking he has one last meal while God, our Father is the warden, ready to pardon and give us freedom, not just a steak dinner!

That is our Father in heaven.

That is why we come to him.

It doesn't matter how many trusted friends you have.

Whether one or handful

What matters is the one true confidant you have your Father in heaven.
Amen.