

For three years the disciples of Jesus followed him; they watched him perform miracles, and they listened as he taught the crowds with parables and sermons.

Interestingly, not once did they specifically ask Jesus to teach them how to preach or how to perform miracles or how to win debates with Jewish authorities. The only time they ever asked him to teach them anything was when they asked him to teach them how to pray.

Time and time again they watched Jesus pray and they came to understand that these conversations with his Father were important to his life and ministry. The writer Luke tells us that Jesus took considerable amounts of time in prayer before every major moment of his ministry. The disciples may not have always caught on to the meaning of Jesus' words and actions but they certainly saw his need for prayer which led to their request, "Lord, teach us to pray."

So Jesus gave them simple words to memorize; words that could seep into their very souls and live in their minds and their hearts and not only theirs but literally millions of believers throughout history.

According to a study conducted five years ago there are approximately 40,000 Christian denominations in the world. Members of these communities make up close to a third of the world's population. Virtually all of these believers have one thing in common: they are all familiar with the Lord's Prayer. There is something about these simple words that has touched the followers of Christ for over two thousand years.

By calling God "father" we are being invited to bring ourselves into a personal relationship with God. To draw our Creator close in times of need, in time of despair

and in times of joy and blessing. Jesus wants all of us believers to understand that just as earthly parents will care for their offspring, God can also be trusted to do what is best for his creation.

The words of the Our Father reassure us of God's overwhelming gift of love that is beyond all telling. In the words of this prayer there is a call to live in mercy, there is a call to demonstrate compassion and there is a call to imitate the saving heart of Jesus.