

The phrase "Father in Heaven" occurs 11 times in the Bible - all but 3 of them in Matthew's Gospel, all quoting the words of Jesus. Why was Matthew so focused on including this phrase from Jesus' teaching? Because Matthew's Gospel is the most Jewish of the 4 Gospels, and the notion of God as a Father to Israel occurred often in the Old Testament. (see Deuteronomy 14:1; 32:6; Psalm 103:13; Jeremiah 3:4; 31:9; Hosea 11:1)

Jesus' use of "Father" to describe God revealed a deeper sense of intimacy than in the Old Testament. Jesus, when speaking Aramaic, would have used *Abba* for "Father", the same word that Hebrew children of His day used to refer to their Earthly fathers. *Abba* suggested a familial and familiar relationship between parent and child. Jesus even referred to God as His own Father, and His followers as His familial relations. (Matthew 12:50) So it is no surprise that Jesus taught His disciples to begin their prayers with "Our Father in Heaven". (Matthew 6:9)

If you are following Jesus, He is your Brother, and God is your Heavenly Father. Let us therefore approach Him as a child does a loving father.

Matthew 12:50 "For whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother."