

Matthew 6:9-15 is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer. It's ironic that in a context that forbids meaningless repetition we find this prayer, for no prayer has been repeated without understanding more often than this one.

6:9 "Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

6:10 'Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

6:11 'Give us this day our daily bread.

6:12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

6:13 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

["For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" is present in some manuscripts, but is probably not original and is missing in the better NT manuscripts]

6:14 For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

6:15 But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

There is nothing wrong with praying the Lord's Prayer as it is; in fact, in Luke it is presented as a prayer to use ("*when you pray, say. . .*"). However, here it is given as a model for prayer; Jesus wasn't saying "This is *what* you should pray" but "This is *how* you should pray" ("*pray in this way*"). What is essential to remember is that this prayer is contrasted to the hypocritical prayers of the pagans in the verses above. Their prayers were thoughtless and repetitive; true prayer is far from mechanical, but is a heart-felt response to God.

In reading this prayer it becomes immediately apparent that Jesus places God at the center of life.

It moves

from	God's glory: "Hallowed be Your name" God's purposes: "Your kingdom come" God's will: "Your will be done"
to	God's provision: "Give us this day our daily bread" God's pardon: "Forgive us our debts" God's protection: "Lead us not into temptation"

The first three sentences call our attention to God's greatness; the last three call attention to our needs. The two halves have a very different feel. The first half feels majestic and lofty. The last half feels mundane and lowly. But this corresponds to real life which is a combination of that which is eternally glorious and that which is commonplace.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end” (NLT). In other words, there is something in our nature that causes us to want more than we have in the temporal world. We have a desire to know the meaning of life and discern our destiny. We want to know how the earthly relates to the spiritual realm. We want to know how working, eating and enjoying life can relate to our desire to serve, worship and love the living God. This desire has been placed within us by God. God has put a longing for eternity in man’s heart. Unfortunately, God’s plan is too vast for us to know, so understanding the whole will remain an enigma and frustration. We will remain restrained by time and never have the ability to fully grasp what is in the mind of God.

To state it differently, the eternal plan of God is being accomplished in the time frame of history, so we can see the eternal plan of God and temporal world we live in crossing paths. However, we are not able to see it perfectly, nor are we able to enjoy it completely. Laying hold of eternity is impossible for us because of our finitude. Therefore, we must live in tension and limit our focus to the isolated matters in the time we live upon the earth.

This mixed perspective of the world is also spoken of by Paul. He tells us that we have “the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ”, but “we have this treasure in jars of clay” (2 Co. 4:7). We “have been raised with Christ and seated with Him in heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6), yet “we groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons” (Ro. 8:23). Everywhere in Scripture we find the glories of God overlapping the ordinary affairs of men.

Jesus is mindful that the iridescence of eternity is woven into the nitty-gritty struggle of ordinary life; we pray to our heavenly Father about His eternal purposes, but we still need food and forgiveness and protection from evil. Nevertheless, the main purpose of the opening words of this prayer is to establish the right frame of mind when approaching God; Jesus wants us to consider who we are talking to. The prayer is not as concerned with the proper etiquette in approaching deity as it is with truth (that we come to Him with the right frame of mind) (Stott, 146).

It is also important to notice that the prayer includes the needs of others as well as our own. That is, Jesus tells us to pray to “**our** Father” (not “my Father. . .”) and ask that God “give **us** this day **our** daily bread,” “forgive **us our** debts,” and “not lead **us** into temptation but deliver **us** from evil.” In other words, the Lord’s Prayer is an invitation to corporate prayer. Of course, you can say, “**Our** Father . . . ” when you are praying alone. But if you do, you have to at least bring to your mind the truth that you are praying as part of a family of other believers.

1) Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Your Name

First, God is addressed as our heavenly Father.

Throughout the Bible we find God portrayed as a Father. This portrayal, however, is surprisingly rare in the Old Testament. There God is specifically called the Father of the nation of Israel (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; [twice] 64:8; Jer. 3:4; 3:19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; 2:10) or the Father of certain individuals (2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Psa. 68:5; 89:26) only fifteen times. (At

times the father imagery is present although the term "Father" is not used (Exo. 4:22-23; Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; Psa. 103:13; Jer. 3:22; 31:20; Hos. 11:1-4; Mal 3:17) . . . The teaching of the Fatherhood of God takes a decided turn with Jesus, for "Father" was His favorite term for addressing God. It appears on His lips some sixty-five times in the Synoptic Gospels and over one hundred times in John. . . This was not just *a way* Jesus taught His disciples to address God; it was *the way*. (Stein, Fatherhood of God, Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology).

“**Father**” implies that God is personal. In one sense all people are God's children since God made and sustains them all (Acts 17:28, 29). However, the term “Father” is almost exclusively used to describe God’s relationship to believers (Jn.1:12; Gal. 3:26; Heb. 2:11-15). We are sons brought into God's family by adoption (Eph. 1:5) and by birth (Jn. 3:5).

The thought of sonship is basic to the obedience detailed in the Sermon on the Mount (see notes on Matt. 5:44-48), but it is also the source of joy and peace we have as believers. In Matthew 6:31–32 Jesus said, “Do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek all these things; and *your heavenly Father* knows that you need them all.” Because our Father knows our needs, we don't have to be anxious about them. Pagan deities were believed to be indifferent, capricious, unrighteous, and unloving; in contrast, our sonship includes forgiveness, acceptance, inheritance, family, discipline, and relationship. We have a Father who loves to be with us (His children) and meet our needs. So, when Jesus teaches us to begin our prayers with "Our Father," He is teaching us to remember that we have a Father and we belong to a family.

The Jews viewed God as utterly transcendent. They preferred more exalted titles such as “Sovereign Lord,” “King of the universe”, etc., but in doing so the personal aspects of His nature were often lost. One can hardly imagine what went through their minds as they heard Jesus call God “Father” and tell them to do the same; it was no doubt with great timidity that they first uttered these words. John says, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are” (1 Jn. 3:1). Modern Christians tend to stray in the opposite direction – we view God as personal, but at times His transcendence is lost; as a result, we cannot sense the sheer privilege of addressing Him as Father. Jesus finds the perfect balance between the transcendence and imminence of God. God is not just our Father – He is our Father who is IN HEAVEN whose name is hallowed.

To “**hallow**” means to sanctify, to make holy, or to consider holy.

God’s **name** is a recurrent OT term for God Himself as He is perceived and honored by people. It is frequently described as “holy” (Psa. 30:4; 97:12; 103:1; 111:9, etc.) since holiness is a prime characteristic of God himself. The present clause is not then a request that it be made holy, as the traditional translation “hallowed” properly means - it is holy already. Rather, it is that people may recognize and acknowledge its holiness by giving God the reverence which is His due. . . (France, 246).

We need to remember that this is a prayer. When we pray “hallowed be your name” we are not just acknowledging that God is holy; rather, we are expressing “an aspiration that He who is holy will be seen to be holy and treated throughout His creation as holy” (Morris, 145). We are asking that God set

Himself apart in our lives and in the lives of others, so that He is revered, glorified, and seen to be the infinitely great and beautiful God that He is.

Before we pray, it is always wise to remember who God is. Only then can we come to Him with the proper humility, confidence, and devotion.

2) Your kingdom come

The word “kingdom” has primarily a dynamic force referring to a king’s active rule more than a reference to a realm or territory over which he rules. As France says, this dynamic sense is better conveyed by the word “kingship” (France, 102). This prayer is asking that God’s rule (His kingship) spread and that His saving reign be consummated.

The kingdom has come with the coming of the king, but it won’t be completed and perfected until Christ comes again. At that time the world will experience blessings it has never known before. Men will be saved by the multitudes (Isa. 12). The world will be full of joy (Isa. 61:1-3; 51:11; Jer.31:12-14). Evil will be punished and righteousness abound (Isa.2:11; Ps.72:4, 7). Military warfare will be abolished (Ps.46:9; Hos. 2:18; Mic. 4:3, 4). There will be beneficial climatic changes (Isa. 30:23-26; 35:6, 7). There will be peace within nature (Hos. 2:18; Isa. 11:6-9). Disease and deformity will disappear (Isa. 35:5, 6; 33:24). But the greatest blessing of all is that Christ will rule as King of kings. Surely God's glorious plans should move our hearts to pray.

3) Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

In heaven everything takes place as God desires. Everything is pleasing to Him. When God’s will is fully realized, all evil, rebellion, and lawlessness will end. Our prayer should be that the day will hasten. In essence, Jesus wants our prayers to focus on more than ourselves. He wants our desires to be the same as God's desires. He wants us to pray for God's glory, His reign, and His will.

Because we are constantly under the influence of society, many of us are more concerned with our “glory”, our will, and our own empire than God's. But the greatest desire of anyone who is born again is not to live for our name but for His. Whether we can pray these petitions from our hearts or not, is a searching test of the reality and depth of our faith.

If we pray that God's will be done on earth, we are committing ourselves to learning as much about God's will as possible. In the least, this means studying the scriptures. If my heart’s desire is that God’s will be done, then I am also praying that by the grace of God I will do it.

Do we really hunger for the kingdom of God to come in all its surpassing righteousness? Do we desire His name to be glorified among all the inhabitants of the earth? Do we desire that His will be done, or do we spend most of our time praying that our will comes to pass?