

Praying for God's Glory

Matthew 6:9-10

The Lord's Prayer is certainly one of the most often-quoted parts of the Bible. But has its importance been *overemphasized*? The very shape of the Sermon on the Mount strongly says otherwise. It stands in the middle of the section on the three areas of religious practices (6:2-18), which is in the middle of Jesus' central argument (5:21-7:12), which stands between the introduction (5:3-16) and conclusion (7:13-27). Therefore, as one author notes, the structure "puts the Lord's prayer at the center of the center of the center of the Sermon, something that is certainly not an accident."¹

The Architecture of the Lord's Prayer²

We have already learned the overall architecture of the Lord's Prayer, which reveals the following three-fold structure:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Approach | Our Father in heaven, |
| 2. God's Priorities
(Note the repeated pronoun <i>your</i> .) | hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven. |
| 3. Our Needs
(Note the pronouns <i>our</i> , <i>we</i> ,
and <i>us</i> .) | Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. |

It remains for us to examine each section, beginning with "God's Priorities."

Praying for God's Glory

Just as a newborn baby gives its first cry, so it is with the newborn Christian. He or she begins life, from one perspective, with the cry for salvation. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13). Why, then, is prayer so difficult? Why must we be taught how to pray?

The first three petitions in the Lord's Prayer suggest the answer: although we *naturally* pray for our needs (or, what we *feel* are our needs), we are taught to give priority to God's glory. In fact, our prayers will collapse completely unless we learn to put God's priorities first—and these priorities are defined by (1) the hallowing of God's name, (2) the coming of his kingdom, and (3) the doing of his will—on earth as in heaven. We must learn to pray for God's glory.

Hallowed Be Your Name

God's name, simply put, is everything that is true about him (see Proverbs 18:10; Psalm 52:11; Psalm 20:8; 75:2; 103:1; 116:4). His name is "hallowed" (treated as holy) when he receives the

¹ Jonathan T. Pennington, *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2017), 115.

² Jesus must have taught on prayer on multiple occasions, for we have a similar teaching recorded in a different context in Luke 11. In Luke's context, Jesus was answering his disciples request, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1).

honor he deserves. Moreover, because he deserves *all* honor, by *all* people for *all* time (see Psalm 103:1-2), God's name will be fully "hallowed" only when "every knee" will bow and "every tongue confess" that Christ is Lord.

To pray that God's name would be hallowed, then, is to (1) admit that it is not being treated as holy, and (2) sincerely desire that it would be. But no one desires God's name to be hallowed until they realize that everything God is, is all that they need; that is, until they call upon the name of the Lord to be saved (see Matthew 1:21). Therefore, to pray that God's name would be hallowed also requires that a person (3) be trusting in the name of Christ for salvation.

Your Kingdom Come

The kingdom of God, in general terms, is *wherever God reigns as King* (Psalm 97:1). There are two basic aspects of the kingdom of God. First, it has already arrived in the person of Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:17) and those who follow him (Luke 17:21). Second, it is yet to come, for not all the saving promises of God have been accomplished, and will not be until Jesus reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 11:15).

To pray that God's kingdom would come means to utterly relinquish fantasies of my own kingdom, to sincerely wish for no other king to reign than God himself, and to work to see his reign extend to every heart beginning with my own.

Your Will Be Done

There are, generally speaking, two aspects of God's will: God's "secret" or "sovereign will" (for example, Daniel 4:35), and God's "revealed" or "moral" will. The "will" referred to in the Lord's Prayer is *God's moral will*—that is, what God wants to take place. The counterpart to God's moral will is our voluntary obedience.

To pray that God's will would be done, means first to see that God's will is utterly good (Romans 12:1-3), and as such to want nothing more than to see it done. It involves a surrender of my own will—the kind of surrender that Jesus modeled in the Garden of Gethsemane when he prayed, "Nevertheless not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 2:42).

Questions for Discussion and Application

1. What human tendencies often stand in the way of our praying the Lord's Prayer?
2. Is there anything *wrong* with beginning a prayer with needs I feel that I have?
3. How does Psalm 103:1-5 shed light on what it means to pray that God's name would be hallowed? How does Job 1:21 shed light on what it means to pray that God's name would be hallowed?
4. What evidence do we have in our homes, workplaces, schools, and areas of recreation that there are multiple "kingdom clashes?"
5. What must one truly believe about God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will in order to truly pray that his name would be hallowed, his kingdom would come, and his will be done?