

## THE BEST PRAYER EVER BEGINS WITH GOD.

First of all I want to take a moment to speak to the children who are watching. I want you to know how much we miss seeing you here in person. We are hoping to begin reopening our children's ministry before long. I know a sermon isn't the same as a Sunday School class but I am thinking about and praying for you when I prepare my messages. And at least some times I want to speak directly to you especially at the beginning. That isn't hard to do this morning because we're looking at *The Lord's Prayer*. The Lord's Prayer is a prayer you can learn to pray as a child, continue to pray as you grow up and keep praying for the rest of your life. It is pretty easy to learn and well worth the effort. Jesus is the world's greatest spiritual leader ever, and in this prayer, in **verse 9**, he says, *pray then, like this*. So, The Lord's Prayer is *the* prayer he gave to teach us how to pray.

You *can* pray the very words of the Lord's Prayer, and that's good. But that is not the only way Jesus teaches us to pray in the Lord's Prayer. When I was a child, we use to write letters to family members like aunts and uncles. Do kids still do that, or do they just FaceTime or Skype? Maybe they write emails. Well, we wrote letters. So my mother might tell me to write a thank you note to uncle Melvin for a gift. I wouldn't know what to say. So I would ask her to help me. There were two ways she could help me. One would be just to give me the exact words so I could copy them down. My mother probably wouldn't do that. She would help me by giving guidance. She might say, start out with a greeting. Then, ask him how he is doing. Thank him for his gift and tell him what you like about and how you are using it. Tell him a little bit about what you have been doing. And then thank him again and sign it with love. In the Lord's Prayer, even though Jesus *is* giving us words that we can use, he is also giving us guidance and ideas for adding our own words and offering him our *own* prayers.

There is a pattern in the Lord's Prayer. Have any of you ever heard of the idea of the five finger way to pray. There are several versions but you can use the five-finger prayer idea with the Lord's Prayer. There are five parts to the Lord's Prayer. They each begin with the letter "P."

1<sup>st</sup>.) *Praise* The thumb is closest to your heart and points up when you fold your hand to pray. You begin your prayer with praise to God. *Our father in heaven, Hallowed be your name.*

2<sup>nd</sup>.) *Purpose.* The pointer finger points forward towards God's purposes for your life. *Your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

3<sup>rd</sup>.) *Provision.* When we say, *give us this day our bread* we are asking God to provide for all our needs. The middle finger stands out. Often in our needs are what stand out the most to us. But that's not all we pray for. This comes in the middle.

4<sup>th</sup>.) *Pardon.* The ring finger is the weakest of all. It reminds us we need forgiveness, and we need to forgive others. So we pray, *forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.*

5<sup>th</sup>.) *Protection.* We are weak, so we need forgiveness, and we are small, so we need protection. So we pray, *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

*So, you children who are watching, I hope you can learn this prayer and make it part of your life. Parents and other adults, I hope you will embrace this prayer also. As we look at the first part of it this week, I want to focus on the way, the Lord's Prayer, begins with God.*

## **I. IT IS BEAUTIFUL TO BEGIN YOUR PRAYERS WITH PRAISE.**

In **verse 9**, Jesus says, *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.*

### **A. God's name is not *just* a name. God's name describes him.**

***The most common name of God in the Bible is El or Elohim.*** That is the name most often translated by the word "God" in Scripture. This name identifies God as the creator, who has absolute power. **Genesis 17:1** says, the LORD appeared to Abraham and said, *"I am God Almighty; (El Shaddai) walk before me and be blameless."*

***Later God revealed Himself in the name: Yahweh.*** Yahweh can be translated as "I am," Yahweh means *"I am eternally self-existent and sufficient."* *Elohim*, or "God" is sort of like a title, but *Yahweh* is more like a personal name. In Hebrews culture for God to reveal this name to us means God is offering us Himself and all that he is. The eminent Old Testament Scholar, Dr. Bruce Waltke, says the meaning can best be captured by the phrase *"I am who I am for you."*<sup>1</sup> Throughout the Bible, descriptions of God are added to *Yahweh* to form compound names that deepen our understanding of God: *Yahweh-Jireh*; The Lord will provide. *Yahweh-Rapha*, The Lord, who heals. *Yahweh-shalom*,

The Lord our peace. *Yahweh-Shammah*, The Lord, who is present with us. In revealing all these names, God is revealing who he is.

**So what does it mean to say, “Hallowed be your name”?** To "hallow," something means to treat it as holy. To pray for God's name to be hallowed is to pray for God himself to be treasured, loved and honored. To begin your prayers with “*hallowed be your name*” is to ask that God be praised *and* to offer God your praise.

## **B. Why is it important to begin to pray this way?**

**Psalm 147:1** says: *Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.* It is good and pleasant and fitting to praise God! The word "fitting" can be translated, "beautiful." It is used in the Song of Solomon, where on at least three occasions, the woman is described by her lover as being beautiful. At one point, he says, "your lips are beautiful," at another point, he says, "your face is beautiful" at another point, he says "your figure is beautiful." He uses this word to describe this woman when, he, through the lover's eye, sees nothing but her beauty.<sup>2</sup> God is telling us that Praise is beautiful to Him, and it can be beautiful to us!

Praise magnifies our view of God. Praise enlarges your faith. Praise eclipses your fears. Praise changes your perspective. Praise refreshes your Spirit. Praise rearranges your priorities. Praise releases God's power. **Psalm 67:5-6** *May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. 6 Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us.* Praise that blesses God blesses us.

**Application:** Often, when we pray, we do so because we have cares, wants and needs of all kinds. Some may be selfish or shortsighted. Others are serious and good. We get anxious or angry. We are fighting temptation and facing challenges. All these concerns trouble us even upset us. But when you remember that Jesus teaches you to pray like this, “*Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name*” you can pause to praise God, and treasure him, and that gives you firm footing. That gives you a place to stand. It's like you exhale your fears and breathe deeply the atmosphere of hope and faith. **Psalm 46:10** says, *Be still and know that I am God.* There is a peace that comes as you realign your heart with its true purpose. The needs are still there, and you'll ask God for help, but first, you ask that His name be hallowed, praised, and honored. When you pray before you go on with your wants and needs, just start a sentence with these words, *Father in heaven I*

*praise you because.....* Take some time to think about all the powerful ways to complete that simple sentence.

**Illustration:** Praise centers us. Your life is like a wheel. The rim moves about in all the different areas and relationships of your life; work, home, children, friends, church. The hub is the center. At the hub of your life, you have a choice: you can be God-centered or off-center. Imagine a factory. All over it are wheels, big wheels, little wheels; they are all turning. The factory is running smoothly, because the wheels are centered. Now, imagine another factory where every wheel is a little off-center. What is the result? There'll be all kinds of clatter and the smell and sound of burning bearings. That's what many people are like. There's a wheel over here thinking, "The important thing is money, or approval of people, or a relationship with romance, or my pride, or my political views." There are some things that are good in themselves, but if these things become central, those people become lopsided, eccentric. Too often, our prayers, like our lives, are off-center. God wants the center! So He says, when you pray begin with "*Hallowed be thy Name.*" That prayer pulls us off of our lopsided preoccupation with the circumference of life back on to the true center, God Himself.

After we begin with God's praise we pray for God's purposes. **Verse 10**, *Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*  
**II. IT IS CRUCIAL TO PRAY FOR GOD'S KINGDOM TO COME AND GOD'S WILL TO BE DONE.**

*Let's look at three things. This is not everything, but it's a start. First*  
**A. We pray that that Christ will return as King of Kings and establish his perfect rule to heal our broken planet.**

The hope we are given in the Bible is not just that we who believe in Jesus will be caught up off this world that is going to hell in a handbasket and whisked off to a galaxy far away where we will live on planet heaven or some heavenly plane. What is promised is that Christ will return as King of Kings. The rule of heaven will bring healing to this planet. Then God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. In our prayers, we remind ourselves this is what the world needs. Things will never be as whole, as right, as beautiful and righteous, there will never be true shalom, peace and harmony, and healing until God's kingdom comes. So in prayer we remember that. We stir up our longing for the kingdom of God. We ask God to bring it to pass.

*But then with that, until the Kingdom fully comes.*

## **B. We pray that people will enter God's kingdom through faith in Christ.**

In **Matthew 18:2**, Jesus says: *"Unless you are converted and become as children you can not enter the kingdom of God."* Christ is saying to enter his kingdom you need a spiritual conversion. You have realize you need to be right with God. You realize that in Jesus Christ, God himself came into the world to redeem you. He died and rose again to pay for our sins so that through faith in him, we can enter his kingdom and know his love. The new birth is experienced when you come to see that, and you say: *"Lord, I want you to be my Savior, I place my trust in you. Come into my life as my Savior and my king."*

*When we pray "your kingdom come, we are praying for people to enter God's kingdom through faith in Christ and third,*

## **C. We pray that those who have trusted in Christ will fully experience His Kingship in their lives.**

In His Book *Christian Perfection*, Francois Fenelon wrote,

There is only one way to love God: to take not a single, step without Him, and to follow with a brave heart where ever he leads.

God has little patience with those weak souls who say to themselves, "I shall go this far and no farther." What would a king say of a subject, or a master of a servant, who only served him in his own way, who feared to care too, much for his interests, and who was embarrassed in public because of belonging to him?

It is for this absolute surrender that we pray in the Lord's Prayer. *What is the result when you live like that? Romans 14:17* says; *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,....*

**Application:** What does this mean for your praying? When you see a place, a person, a situation, where there is little righteousness, peace, or joy in the Holy Spirit, that is a place for you to pray; *"Lord, into this situation, Your kingdom come."* *"Lord, in this heart of mine, your kingdom come. In this marriage, your kingdom come. You are praying for God to so rule over all the factors and people in that situation that the result is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.* We so deeply need this in our hearts, and in our church and in our nation. This is a time of great division and short tempers and mutual suspicion and unfounded accusations and anger and frustration. We need this

righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. So we pray for God's kingdom to come that we might be one. Will you pray this with me?

## Conclusion

We are confident God's kingdom is what we want and need because this king is not only the true king but also our gracious Savior. He gave himself to redeem us. Make him your Savior. And if he is your Savior and King, let him rule every bit of your life. And praise him.

A while ago, I read a story about a little boy in who wandered into a field near his house and was lost. A massive search began. They searched for him Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Night came on that Saturday. The boy's parents stood on their back porch and thanked the people who had worked so hard. But little Justin, only two-and-a-half, had not been found. The parents thanked the people for their prayers, then they prayed again, entrusting their child to God's care and told the people not to return the next day. The search was off. But one farmer kept on looking after all the others had stopped. Forty-five minutes after the search had been canceled, he found Justin. The boy was frightened dehydrated and covered with mosquito bites. He was taken to the hospital and he was fine. The next morning a film crew from the local television station filmed the worship service where the family gave praise to God in their local church. As you can easily imagine, those people really gave praise to God that morning. Their joy was heart deep and God-centered, and they were expressing their praise in song, and they were just saying the words. What the Bible tells us is that what we see and feel so easily at times like that is, in fact, the truth about God at all times. He is always absolutely worthy.

He will bring about, the ultimate happy ending for human history. We don't have to wait to see how our prayers will be answered before we praise him. If we could just see things as they really are and as they will be we would feel, at all times, about God, what those parents felt when their prayers were answered! We would praise God with tears in our eyes and joy in our hearts. Because he is worthy and his Kingdom will come, and his perfect will shall be done in the end. When the Bible tells us to praise God and to begin our prayers saying "*hallowed be your name, your kingdom come*" it is telling us to learn to live and pray in faith and to praise God now for who He is. In **Revelation 5:9-10** it says, *they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people*

*and nation,<sup>10</sup> and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” Come Lord Jesus!*

**Amen.**

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<sup>1</sup> *Waltke, Bruce, Old Testament Theology, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2007, Pages 365-366*

<sup>2</sup> *Song of Songs, 2:14, 4:3, 6:4*