

# Our Deepest Prayer: Hallowed Be Your Name

by John Piper

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*The Lord's Prayer is a model for prayer that emphasizes the importance of seeking God's greatness, kingdom, and will in our lives, while also acknowledging our daily needs and seeking God's provision and forgiveness.*

**Duration:** 45:08

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 3:11, Matthew 6:9-13, Acts 8:1, Ephesians 1:16-21, Ephesians 3:14-19, Philippians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-11

**Topics:** "Prayer Life", "Gods Glory"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of hallowing God's name and seeking His kingdom and will above all else. It delves into the significance of the Lord's Prayer, highlighting the balance between addressing personal needs and focusing on God's glory. The speaker shares personal reflections on battling sins, seeking forgiveness, and the transformative power of prayer in daily life.

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## Transcript

Let's pray. Gracious Father, you are a kind and patient, persevering, preserving, delivering God. I thank you that I have been granted the grace to stand again here.

What an awesome privilege. I thank you that you deliver from death and that you deliver through death. And so I pray that you would deliver Congressman Gifford from death and that you would deliver Marge Anderson through death.

And now I pray for help in this moment that I would deliver your word faithfully, that it would accord with the intention of Jesus in these words, that it would be anointed by the Holy Spirit, that it would bring about salvation for those who are outside, and that it would strengthen the saints for the glory of Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.

What an unspeakable and undeserved privilege and gift to be able to stand again before you. Thank you so much for your gift of those eight months. We don't, Noelle and I, Talitha, we don't take them for granted.

God has been very good to us and manifestly good to you. The report of the finances takes my breath away, and so do many other reports, so I'm filled with gratitude to God. I don't know how long I will be granted life.

Ten o'clock this morning, Congressman Gifford's 40 years old, full of life, and now she hangs in the balance with a bullet in her head. So we don't know, do we? This is what I do know, though, that as long as I live, those eight months will bear fruit in my soul, in my family, in my marriage, and I pray in this church. I pray that the spillover will last as long as I do, and that you will bear witness to the fact that you've been helped by it.

As I was leaving back in April, perhaps you remember, I said that it was a time for a spiritual reality check for soul, for marriage, for family, for ministry. So I wrote a report about that, which will be my annual report that gets published in January each year with all the other pastoral reports, and it was published at the Desiring God blog on the first of January, so you can go there and read that extended report about God's working in those four areas. I shouldn't rehearse all that here, but it seems appropriate to say something before I turn to the Word of God, so let me do that for a moment.

The work that God has been doing, for example, in my own soul is indistinguishable, I think, from the work He does in our marriage because all soul sins sooner or later become relational problems, don't they? And there aren't any really private sins. And so to talk about what God does in your heart and what God does in your marriage are the same. They always interlock.

So I said when I left that I wanted to set my gun sights on besetting or troubling sins, and that's what I did and tried to go deeper with Romans 8, 13, put to death by the Spirit, the deeds of the body, and all sin, I call them species of pride. Remember that phrase I said these things are species of pride, and you may have wondered about that phrase. All sins are species of pride, so I didn't help you very much as far as specifics with that because my understanding of sin is that all of them flow from a heart that's gotten God out of place and self in the wrong place.

So let me name a few. I would say that my most besetting, and I pray now earnestly, weakening sins are selfishness, self-pity, anger, quickness to blame, and sullenness. My how I could or Noel could unpack those with specific meaning and experience.

All of them are most manifest at home. Isn't that sad about the way life is that I don't think most of you think of me as a sullen person, probably not many of those others either, maybe angry. I mean Noel points out, I got angry in that sermon.

I did. So for those eight months I tried to go deeper and go hard toward the roots of those things, and God has revealed himself to me in some significant ways, and he has retaught me, and that's an important word, some very basic strategies for putting to death the uprisings of sin in my heart, and time will tell, and Noel will tell, sitting here, and you will tell how deep and how durable any of that work of God has been in those areas. There's no point in, you know, huffing and puffing that they're licked, and I'm on top of everything.

Just you'll know. She'll know. So we'll just let the proof be in the pudding.

I pray that what God has been doing will now for the, I want to say probably the rest of my ministry, be woven into messages. In other words, I'm not going to try to dump 263 single-spaced journal pages on you in one night of reflections and wrestlings, but I do want to just give leash sort of to let God weave it in to whatever else I'm doing, and so this is my first message back. I chose to speak on prayer because we always speak on prayer on this Sunday, word and then prayer, so that's the main reason for focusing on prayer, but the other reason for focusing on prayer is because I have been doing it a lot and thinking about

it a lot.

I read two books on prayer, and my assumption is from Scripture that there aren't any victories in the Christian life without prayer, so that's what we're going to talk about, and I will try to do this in a way that takes you with me into some lessons from the leave. So I'm trying to do exposition and leave report through the sermon, so I will go to my journal two or three times and read you some things besides opening what I think Jesus is saying here in the Sermon on the Mount. I love the prayers of the Bible, don't you? What more informs our praying than what we just did here? That is exactly the way to pray.

Read the Bible, pray. Read, pray. Read, pray.

That's the way to spend time in prayer. You close your Bible, you won't last more than three minutes in prayer, probably. So I love the prayers of the Bible.

I love Paul's prayers, Philippians 1, 9 to 11, Ephesians 1, 16 to 21, Ephesians 3, 14 to 19, Colossians 1, 9 to 11. I love the prayers of Jesus, John 17, longest prayer of Jesus. And probably with you, most of all, the book of prayer in the Bible is called the Psalms.

It is the church's inspired prayer book, and the Psalms are so varied in their expression of prayer that there's no experience you can have in life from the most horrible to the most happy that you can't find words in the Psalm to give expression to God. So I love the prayers of the Bible. But the Lord's Prayer, so here we are, Matthew 6. If you have a Bible, you should open it again.

The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6, 9 to 13, is where on this leave I spent most of my time praying it, unfolding it like we've been doing, and thinking about its structure and why Jesus taught us this way to pray. And probably the reason for that, if I don't think it's hard to explain, is I was with you in memorizing the Sermon on the Mount all year long, right? We memorized the Sermon on the Mount. I wonder if you could say it.

I won't have you stand, but I learned the Sermon on the Mount. Maybe someday this year I'll just stand up here and say it to you. Take about 15 minutes and the effect it has when you say the whole thing together.

One of the effects it has is to inform every part with the other parts, right? So you're thinking about the Sermon on the Mount, reviewing every week, only now you're dumping into it chapter 7 and chapter 5, and all the pieces are going in there, and you're saying, oh, oh, oh. That's the way the Bible works. So that's the reason why most of my prayer reflection was around this prayer and why I chose it as a text for this sermon.

The Lord's Prayer is very true to life. Here's what I mean. Life has pieces to it, parts to it that are big and magnificent and wonderful and exciting, and life has pieces in it that are mundane and boring and small and seemingly insignificant.

That's the way life is, and that's the way this prayer is, isn't it? Life has its spectacular and simple things. Almost every one of you experiences something from time to time breathtaking and boring, fantastic, familiar, extraordinary, ordinary, awesome, average, exotic every day. That's just the way life is.

We wish it was kind of all exotic, big, exciting. It isn't, and never was, never was. You can't get your feet off this ground here.

You can't fly away. You can't be an angel. We live right here, and we change diapers, used to anyway, about 4,000 of them, I figure.

Looked at one way, the Lord's Prayer is just like that, and everybody notices it. You noticed it. You just maybe not have said it this way.

It has six petitions, three and three, right? Verses 9 and 10, first part, are three petitions, and the second part, verses 11 to 13, are three petitions, and the first three are, Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So, we're asking God to bring about three things, cause your name to be hallowed, and cause your kingdom to come, and cause your will to be done the way the angels do it in heaven. And then the second three petitions are, Give us this day our daily bread, verse 11, verse 12, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and then verse 13, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

And you all feel the difference between those three, those two sets of three. The first three petitions are about God's name, and God's kingdom, and God's will, and the last three are about our food, and our forgiveness, and our holiness. And the first three call attention to God's greatness, and the last three call attention to my needs.

I'm a needy person. I need food, and I need forgiveness, and I need help in fighting sin. I'm needy.

God has no needs. There's a fetal difference here, right? This is loud, and this is soft. This is big, and this is small, and daily, and nitty-gritty.

That's the way life is, and that's the way this prayer is. Big, and little, glorious, and common, majestic, and mundane, lofty, name, kingdom, will, and lonely, food, and forgiveness, and struggling sin. Ecclesiastes.

Is this a familiar verse to many of you? Amazing verse. Chapter three, verse eleven in Ecclesiastes says, God has put eternity in man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. What is that? I take that to mean that the human soul--God has put--the human soul and the world is iridescent with wonders linked with eternity.

Now and then, taste them, see them, feel them, then they go away. And the humdrum, and the ordinary, and the mundane experiences of life keep us from seeing them, and soaring the way we'd like to dream sometimes. And even we believers, right, who have the--just take a deep breath--have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us, even we say, we have this treasure in clay pots.

So we live this tension, right? We live this mystery. There's a bigness and awesomeness about a believer, and something so utterly non-awesome. You don't look awesome.

I'm not awesome, but you are awesome. One day the children of God will be revealed, Acts 8 says. Right now you look like everybody else, and you're not.

Our spirit is alive with God's Spirit, and our bodies are dead because of sin. That's the way life is, and that's the way this prayer is--iridescent with eternity, and then woven into the ordinary thing of life. So let me rehearse them again.

Verse 3. Verse 9. Father, cause your great holy name to be honored, and revered, and esteemed, and treasured, and loved, and valued above all things. This is the feel. My voice is intending to communicate

how big, and strong, and deep, and wonderful are these three petitions.

Father, verse 10. Cause your glorious, sovereign, kingly rule to hold sway without obstruction everywhere in the universe, and right here especially. Verse 10b.

Cause your all-wise, all-good, all-just, all-holy will to be done all over the world the way the angels do it in heaven, and they do it perfectly and joyfully. We want to see a planet like that. Bring it! And end of the big part of the prayer.

That's the breathtaking part of the prayer, and when we pray it, we're caught up into great things, and glorious things, and global things, and eternal things, and God wants that to happen. You may feel just so absolutely ordinary, like I understand the second half of this prayer. I'm there, I live there, and I am in this message saying, come on up, come on up into the first half of the prayer.

As well, never take your feet off the ground. Never think you can go without food. Never think you can go without being forgiven and forgiving.

Never think that you don't need help in wrestling with sin. Keep your feet on planet earth, but come on up into the first thing, because they're not there in vain. God means you to taste this, to be engaged in this, to have your heart taken with his name, his kingdom, his will.

He really does. No matter how ordinary you feel right now, how sinful you feel, he knows all that. He gave you the second half.

He's just saying, come on up into this first half, and then let's pray the second half. Father, this is verse 11. Father, I'm not asking for the bounty of riches.

I just need some bread, just enough to give me life. I want to live. I want to be healthy.

I want to have a body and a mind that work. Would you give me enough for my body and my mind, so that my mind will work and my body will hold up, Father? He knows what aging is like, or disability. Verse 12.

Father, I'm a sinner, and I need to be forgiven every day. I can't live and flourish with this guilt. I cannot.

I cannot survive guilt, oh God. I will die if I have to bear my guilt every day. I have no desire, Father, to hold any grudge.

I don't deserve to be forgiven, and therefore I cannot withhold it from anyone. God, may God do that for you tonight. I just know situations where people can't let go, and they're killing themselves.

You kill yourself when you hold a grudge. Please, Father, have mercy upon me, and forgive me, and let me live in the freedom of your love. That's what he's telling us to pray every day.

Every day, do pray like that. Letting it go, covering a multitude of sins with the love he gives you, and then just pleading your own forgiveness. Now, right here, before I go on to the last petition, right here in the Lord's Prayer, we know something that Jesus knew, but not everybody listening knew.

We know that Jesus would say a little while later these words, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins does not make its way to you straight from the fatherhood of God. It makes its way to you from the fatherhood of God through the death

of his Son.

So let Jesus be honored in the Lord's Prayer, not just speaking it, but founding it, holding it up. There would be no forgiveness in answer to this prayer had he not finished his course. So be honored, the Lord Jesus.

We're not just treating you as a teacher here. Oh, when I was in seminary, I was taught about the old liberalism, and I'm glad I was so that I didn't go there. The old liberalism took the Sermon on the Mount and said, Fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man, love of neighbor is Christianity.

It's not. The cross is Christianity. There is no Christianity if Christ had not gone beyond this prayer to die under it and hold it up so that when we pray it, forgive me.

We're not just saying, I hope you're nice. I hope you're pitying. I hope you're fatherlike.

We're saying, for showing me what you were willing to do. Now, verse 13, Father, I don't want to go on sinning. I know forgiveness is available, but I hate sinning, and I'm thankful for the forgiveness that you give me.

But Father, I don't want to sin, so please don't lead me into the places where I'm all entangled with temptation and overpowered. Deliver me from evil, O God. Guard me from Satan and from his works and all his ways.

I hate my sinning, so grant me to walk in holiness. This is a very, very rich prayer, and that's just so earthy. That's the earthy part.

He knows where we live. We need bread. We need forgiveness.

We need help to fight besetting sins. Now, I think these two halves of the prayer correspond to the way Jesus taught us to address God in verse 9. We skipped over that, so let's go back to it. Verse 9, Our Father in Heaven.

Our Father in Heaven. I think those two words, phrases, terms, correspond to second half, first half. I think the word Father in the Sermon on the Mount is intended to carry very tender connotations.

There are reasons. I'll give you one. For example, Matthew 6.32, he tells them not to be anxious about food and drink, clothing, and then he says, because your Heavenly Father knows.

You need them all. The implicit point there is, you don't need to fret about the most nitty-gritty things because your Dad in Heaven is totally there. He knows every financial stress, and he's on your side.

He knows, so don't be anxious. On the other hand, look at verse 34 of chapter 5. Do not take an oath by heaven, for it is the throne of God. Don't swear by heaven.

You don't have any control here. That's the feel I get when I hear the word in heaven. Father, tender, warm, close, caring, attentive, intimate, in heaven.

Watch out. Don't treat him lightly. His kingdom really matters.

His name really matters. His will really matters. And he's a Father, and he gives you breath, and he gives you forgiveness, and he helps you fight the fight.

So, I don't think that phrase, Father in Heaven, is an accident. He is majestic and merciful. He dwells in a high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite spirit.

He's a king, and he's a daddy. He's holy, and he humbles himself. He's above, and he's ready to come close anywhere, anytime you call on him.

He has plans for the whole universe, and he has a plan, a really perfect, tailor-made plan for your life and every little piece of it. So, journal entry, October 5, last year. I wrote, my heart's desire is to be used by God for the hallowing of his name, and the coming of his kingdom, and the doing of his will, and to that end, I pray for health.

Give me daily breath, for hope, forgive my sins, for holiness, deliver me from evil. In other words, it seems to me that the first three petitions are intended to be served by the last three. The reason your bread, your forgiveness, your battles with sin matter to God is because if you have those, if you're alive, if you're forgiven, if you're growing in holiness, you can do the first three.

You can join him. You can join him in kingdom battles, and getting his will done, and magnifying his name around the world. So, the first three are not trying to do the last.

The last are serving and undergirding the first three. So, that's why I prayed it that way. Now, I have one more exegetical insight that I got while I was thinking about this Lord's Prayer during the leave.

There's something unique about petition number one, unique. It's one of a kind in these six petitions. Hallowed be your name.

In this petition, we get the one specific named subjective response of the human heart that God wants everybody to give. Hallowing. Hallowing.

That's something you do in here. You hallow. That is, you reverence, you sanctify, you treasure, you esteem, you respect, you stand in awe.

This is something that goes on in here. It's the one request that names what's supposed to go on in here toward God. If you combine that fact with the fact that it's the first one, just why did they name it first? And if you combine it with the fact that the term name, as opposed to say kingdom and will, the term name in the Bible gets a lot closer to the being, the personhood, the character of God than those other two.

Name is who He is. So when you say, hallowed be your name, you mean hallowed be you. I'm hallowing, treasuring, esteeming, reverencing, honoring Yahweh, and He's in and signified by His name.

So I think we not only have a structure of three and three, but one and five. So here's another journal entry. October 9. My one great passion.

Nothing. I remember writing this sentence. And sometimes, I mean, I read it now, and it just didn't have the same clout it did then.

God just says things to you, and you feel like a moment of clarity has happened, and all the clouds have been blown away, and you know something with such crystal clarity. You wish it would always be that way. Nothing is more clear and unmistakable to me than that the purpose of the universe is for the hallowing of God's name.

His kingdom comes for that. His will is done for that. Humans have bread-sustained life for that.

Sins are forgiven for that. Temptation is escaped for that. So you see why one and five? All five serve that.

If you press up as far as you can go into the mind and the intention and the purpose of God for all things, Petition 1 nails it. You can't go any higher. You don't hallow God's name because something else better, higher, more important should happen.

The hallowing of God's name is the termination of everything. So he starts with the biggest request of all. Pray that that happens in everything.

So one last journal entry, October 10. You can see the sequence going here as day after day. I'm thinking about this.

I just wrote this prayer. Lord, grant that I would, in all my weaknesses and limitations, remain close to the one clear grand theme of my life, your magnificence. Sooner or later in your life, young people, heads up, old people know this.

Sooner or later in your life, pressures and problems become almost overwhelming. Physical problems, give me bread. Relational and mental problems, please forgive me.

Moral problems, don't let me go into that temptation again. And what I want you to see is this. You have a father.

He's a thousand times better than any earthly good father or bad father. You have a father, and this father cares about every one of those. You can't pray about a problem he doesn't know and care about.

None, no matter how small they are. And he beckons you to come to him and to talk to him in prayer about them because he knows what you need, and he's not surprised by anything. Now, that's the usual way we attack our problems directly.

God, help me! Got a problem, and all the attention begins to focus on the problem. And yes, God, you're saying come, but your life is starting to shrink up around the problem or the set of problems. You wake up thinking about it.

You go to bed thinking about it, and your life is shrinking little by little down around this cluster of pain and problems, marriage problems or kid problems or health problems or work problems. Your life's just shrinking down, and all the while you're calling on the last three petitions. God, help me! I need some bread.

I need some money. I need some forgiveness. I need some help morally.

And you're crying out, and your life is just shrinking down. Now, when I say it that way, I don't mean stop doing that, okay? I do not mean stop crying out to God. I don't mean stop knowing your problems are there and saying, I need help.

Here's where I'm closing and where I'm going in my conclusion. I want you to see that God offers you another strategy of victory. It's not different.

That is, it's not contradictory. It doesn't replace what I just described, but it is indirect. It's indirect.

There's a direct way of, I've got a problem, going after it, and then there's something indirect. And here I'm thinking about the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer. God made you to be a part of something big.

He made you to be a part of something spectacular and magnificent, and you're allowing, perhaps, you're allowing your life to just shrink down around these problems. And God's in it, and He's patient, He's loving, and He provides help. But I'm just saying there's another strategy.

There's another way to add. It's a supplemental remedy for life, namely, to be drawn up. Let yourself be drawn up into the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

God made you to be a part of hallowing His name and extending His kingdom and seeing His will be done. He made you for something magnificent, something mundane as well. Oh yes, He made that, cares about that, wants you to live there.

But what we fail to see, I speak from experience, what we fail to see often is that when we lose our grip on the greatness of God and His name and His kingdom and His global will, we lose a divine equilibrium in life, and we become increasingly vulnerable to those problems overwhelming us. That was a complicated sentence, probably. We can go right back again.

When we lose our grip on His name, His kingdom, His will, the big, universal, global, glorious, awesome, magnificent purposes into which we have been caught up, when we lose our grip on that, and life begins to shrink down around even a God-pursued problem-solving, we lose an equilibrium, a divine equilibrium. I've called it ballast before in life. In your boat, you get this little boat in the waves, and you're ballast, heavy, deep.

I'm just shifting images here to go up into those first three petitions. I'm pleading with you as I close that you not lose your grip on the supremacy and centrality of hallowing the name of God in your life. I'm urging you from the Lord's prayer and from experience that you do go to God for bread, and you do go to God for forgiveness, and you do go to God for overcoming besetting sins, and you do go to God to advance His will and to seek His kingdom, and you do all of it for the hallowing of His name.

The great value in your life, in your marriage, in your parenting, in your single life, in your friendships, in your studies, the great value is I will live so that both my heart and other hearts hallow, esteem, reverence, lift up, honor, value, treasure the name of God over all things. Keep your feet on the ground. We live there.

We will never not live on the ground with its mundane aspects, but you may not see it clearly now, but I testify. This is my last sentence. You may not see it clearly now, but I testify, and I say from scripture, there is more deliverance, more healing, more joy in that, in the hallowing of God's name as your supreme goal and priority than you ever dreamed.

It's so indirect. It just feels often irrelevant. I've got this massive problem, and you're telling me, hallow the name of God.

Yeah, I am. Plead. It is a request.

Hallowed be thy name means let your name be hallowed, and who needs to do it more? I do. It's a global prayer, but it starts right here. When I wake up in the morning, I'm not hallowing the name of God most mornings.

I'm thinking about my problems, and they seem to be bigger than God, so I pray this. This is a prayer. Isn't that encouraging that Jesus would tell us, ask the Father to help you hallow him? So I invite you, beckon you, 2011.

Go deep and go high in the Lord's prayer. Let him be a sweet, close, tender, warm, need-meeting, caring Father to you, and on that, rise up and join him through prayer and life in the seeking of his kingdom and the doing of his will, all to the end of his name be hallowed. Father in heaven, I know that the answer to this sermon would be a gift of the Holy Spirit, not just a persuasion with words, and so I ask you to come on the friends who have heard me here.

Come and open their eyes to the power of the indirect remedy for a thousand problems that comes from being swept up into the glory of hallowing your name. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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