

## Paradise Lost and Restored: What is Prayer? (Part 4)

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### I. Introduction

Did you ever hear anyone pray the Lord's Prayer? Why do people pray it? What does it mean? And why when Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them how to pray, why did He teach them this prayer? What was Jesus revealing in the Lord's Prayer about God, us, and our state of dependence?

### II. What Does Jesus Want Us to Learn from the Lord's Prayer?

**Why did Jesus' disciples ask Him to teach them to pray?** Because they wanted something different other than the memorized prayers they parroted. They wanted what Jesus had, an actual real-time relationship with God the Father. They saw how Jesus found comfort, strength, and peace in His conversations with God (Luke 11:1). Having asked, Jesus proceeds to teach them how to pray by giving them a template on prayer. We know it's a template and not a prayer to be repeated because: (1) Jesus just told them not to pray empty repetitive prayers (Matthew 6:7), (2) Jesus says, "In this *manner*, therefore pray" (Matthew 6:9), and (3) His disciples wanted to learn *how* to pray the way Jesus did not to repeat what He said, Luke 11:1. We also note that although the New Testament records many prayers, the Lord's Prayer is never prayed by anyone else. Now, it's not that you can't repeat the Lord's Prayer verbatim. But what does it mean to you when you recite it? Unless you understand and live out the rich meaning behind every phrase, the Lord's Prayer can become meaningless repetition.

**The Lord's Prayer has six parts to it, Matthew 6:9-13**, all of them are related to God as our Father: His Character (6:9), His Kingdom (6:10), His Provision (6:11), His Forgiveness (6:12), His Guidance (6:13a), and His Protection (6:13b). The entire Prayer is about the daily and intimate relationship with God the Father essential for successful Kingdom living. It is Jesus showing us how to walk daily with God the Father, especially in our conversations with Him. So what does the Lord's Prayer mean, what's behind each phrase?

*"Our Father in heaven"* "Our" shows us that God is over a family. He is "our" Father, which means that we shouldn't just pray individually. We should also pray together as a community, the community of the church. Some are afraid to utter or write God's name for fear of breaking the third commandment. But notice what Jesus says we get to call God. Not only can we say "God," but we actually get to call Him "Father"! This is God saying to us, "I'm not just your God, I'm your Loving Father." In fact, this is the reason God sent His Son, to make us His sons and daughters, Galatians 4:4-5. So the entire Lord's Prayer hangs on this one fact: we are in a special relationship with the God of the universe. The One who made the heavens and the earth, who controls everything, who gives life and takes it away, that being is our Father! That's not all, what does "in heaven" tell us? God is up there and we're down here, which means that amidst all our struggles, we're not alone; our Father is watching over us. Additionally, from Genesis 1—when God made everything—we see that God is outside of creation. So "in heaven" doesn't just mean up in the clouds somewhere, but beyond the farthest cloud or galaxy we can imagine. This means that our Heavenly Father is all powerful....there's nothing our Father can't do.

*“Hallowed be Your name”* why does God want you to sanctify His name? Is He an egotist? He’s in essence telling us to say, “Father, may your name be sanctified, may it be treated as holy!” Is He like a self-absorbed rock star who loves to be worshipped by millions and loves to hear his name chanted over and over? God does want His name to be sanctified, to be treated holy. But how is God’s name sanctified? Whose Father is He? The children are supposed to be a reflection of the father. The only way God’s name can be glorified here on earth is if His glory is revealed in His children. Our Heavenly Father wants us to sanctify His name by behaving the way He does, which is why He says things like, “Be holy for I am holy,” 1 Peter 1:16. So “hallowed be Your name” is God telling us that He wants us to honor His name by allowing His Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, to lead our lives, Galatians 5:25.

*“Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* the next thing Jesus reveals is that our Father is a King with a Kingdom. This means that you are a son/daughter of the King of kings. And like any good father, God wants us to want what He wants. What was the most important thing to Jesus? To want what His Father wanted, to do His Father’s will, John 5:19, 30. And what is the Father’s will? For His Kingdom to come down to earth. But what does this mean? It means that God wants to see every human being on earth live in His Kingdom of love and forgiveness instead of the darkness that currently surrounds our world. He hates the warring, the poverty, the hatred, the illnesses, etc. Every terrible thing we see going on in this world, God wants to eradicate. He wants to see us living the life we were truly meant to live. This is why He transferred us from Satan’s kingdom of darkness into His Kingdom of love, Colossians 1:13. And it is why after He transfers us into His Kingdom that He urges us to seek, think, and live as the version of ourselves that is with Christ in heaven, Colossians 3:1-5, that is, He wants His will to *be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Therefore, God wants us to pray for this to come to fruition, i.e., for His Kingdom, His will, His salvation to come upon the whole earth.

*“Give us this day our daily bread”* is Jesus saying that we’re limited in the requests we get to ask our Father? Is He saying that we can only ask for our daily food? No, He’s not and this is evident from other places where Jesus says that whatever we ask the Father in His name, God will grant us, John 16:23. Recall that this is a template on prayer. So what does God mean by this? Our Father wants us to know that we can come to Him and ask for any and every need we have. Do you need money to pay your bills? Ask the Father. Do you need someone to share your life with? Ask the Father. Do you need peace in your life from all the turmoil? Ask the Father.

And what does this phrase reveal about us when we utter it? That we not only see God as our Loving Father, but that we trust Him to provide our every need. What does this phrase reveal about God when He asks us to utter it? That He wants to be and is our Loving Father who is ready to provide whatever we need.

### III. Conclusion

*In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread...*