

THE LORD'S PRAYER – MATTHEW 6:9-13

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME.

Did you know, there is only one recorded instance where the disciples specifically asked Jesus to teach them something? It's found in Luke 11:1:

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

Jesus goes on to give them a prayer, the Lord's Prayer as it's commonly known today. It's a shorter version than the one we see in Matthew 6, which we will consider in more detail over the coming weeks.

Think about that verse for a moment. The disciples had just seen Jesus praying. We don't know what he was praying about, who he was praying for, or if it was simply him chatting with the Father – all this account says is that one day, Jesus was praying in a certain place. It makes me think that the place and the topic weren't all that important. What was important was that the disciples saw Jesus in prayer, and they wanted some of what he had.

The disciples saw that everything Jesus did flowed out of his prayer life with the Father. His character, the fruits of the Spirit overflowing in him, it all started with prayer, and the disciples said, 'we want a piece of that. Please Jesus, teach us to pray as well.'

And so he did. In hundreds, thousands of churches around the world this prayer is recited, groups of people reading it out loud together, and while it is a powerful prayer on its own, I also think that through it, Jesus was giving us some great guidelines for how to pray. Over the next five weeks we're going to look at this prayer, one phrase at a time, and see what God has to say to us through it, and what we can apply to our own prayer lives as well.

Today we will consider that first line – Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. But first, let's think about prayer.



What do you find challenging about prayer? What stops you praying?

How do you normally address God when you pray? How does Jesus teach us to address God?

Why do you think Jesus says to start the prayer with 'Our Father' and not 'My Father'?

Read Galatians 4:4-7

Why is it significant to address God as Father?

Can you sense the wonder of the privilege of addressing almighty God as 'Father'? How can this move us to worship and inspire us to pray?

The first line in the prayer talks about our Father in heaven. What is the significance of our Father being in heaven? What does that mean for us here on earth?

Moving on to the 'hallowed be your name' part of the prayer.

Does your name have any specific meaning or importance to you?

In Bible times, the meaning of names was incredibly important. The identity of a person was absolutely linked with what their name was, and several times we see God changing the name of a person to line up better with what he had in mind for them. The name Abram, for example, meant a high or exalted father, whereas Abraham meant the father of multitudes, or even the father of multitudes of nations. The name represented who Abraham was going to be.

God's name also has incredibly special significance, because it tells us about his character, his identity. It's almost like a guarantee of his goodness. What an honour it is that he shared that name above every other name with humanity.

This week's handout shows the meaning of some of those incredible names of God. Take it away this week and consider what it tells us about God. Think about those different facets of God's name as you come to pray.



'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,' the prayer says. What does 'hallowed' mean?

The New Living Translation puts this verse in this way - *Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.*

How can we do that? How can we properly honour the name of God and keep it holy?

Why is this the first instruction in this prayer, to honour the name of God?

Is that how you normally start your prayers? How long do you spend magnifying God in this way before moving on to something else?

Do we remember this principle throughout the day? Do our lives reflect giving glory to God in all that we do?

What are some simple things we can do to honour God in our everyday lives and conversations this week? How can we remind ourselves to open our prayers by giving all the glory to God?

This week, each time you come to pray, remember those simple words. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Pause for a moment and think about what those words really mean, and then let that inspire you to pray.

Before next week, have a good look at the next line in the Lord's Prayer, *your kingdom come, your will be done*, and start to think about how that can be applied to our prayer lives as well.

