

When the Reputation of God is at Stake

Luke 11:2

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The most important question the disciples ever asked Jesus was the question, “Lord, will you teach us to pray?” As Jesus set out to teach them how, He demonstrated that praying well starts with properly understanding God and our relationship to Him. The very first phrase of The Lord’s Prayer is the key to unlocking a successful prayer life in ourselves as well.

We have just begun our study of the Lord’s Prayer, which we’re calling The Disciple’s Prayer. One of the things I did this summer was purchase 6 or 7 books on this passage to further develop my own understanding of this passage.

One of the books I purchased was a newly published commentary on Luke’s Gospel by R.C. Sproul—I believe this was the last commentary he wrote before he died.

He opened the chapter in his commentary on this passage of Scripture by writing this: his name was Peter. He had a barbershop in a small town. One afternoon when he was trimming the hair of one of his regular customers, the front door opened, and an outlaw entered his shop. It was a man wanted by the authorities, dead or alive. A large sum

had been offered as a reward for this man’s capture.

The outlaw asked the barber for his usual haircut and a shave. Peter lathered the man’s face and neck. He sharpened his razor and moved the blade to the man’s neck. Peter knew that all he had to do was exert extra force and he could kill this man and claim the reward.

But the last thing in Peter’s mind was killing this outlaw. Although the man was wanted by ecclesiastical and civil leaders, he happened to be Peter’s friend and hero; and not only his hero but his spiritual mentor.

This outlaw in the chair was the reformer, Martin Luther. While Peter was shaving the great Reformer, he took the opportunity to ask him a spiritual question. He knew that Luther was not

only a brilliant theologian and courageous reformer, but a man of prayer.

So, as they talked that afternoon, he said, “Dr. Luther, can you please teach me how to pray?” Luther responded to Master Peter, the barber of Wittenburg, Germany, “Certainly, I will teach you of this matter of prayer.”

After his shave and haircut, Luther went to his study and wrote out a lesson, not for the world, although it would eventually be published; it was for Peter, his barber. He titled the booklet, “A Simple Way to Pray.”

Adapted from R.C. Sproul, [Luke: An Expository Commentary](#) (Ligonier Ministries, 2020), p. 29

And all Luther did was explain each phrase of the Lord’s Prayer.

Peter, the barber, had something in common with Peter, the disciple, and the other disciples as well; the only thing the disciples ever asked Jesus to teach them was that moment when they said, “Lord, would you teach us how to pray?”

The truth is, we often have the same question.

- How do we pray?
- What kind of prayer reaches the throne of God?
- What kind of praying truly matters?
- Why do we pray?
- How do we even begin?

Let’s go back to the answer Jesus gave to them—and to us—recorded in the Gospel by Luke, chapter 11.

In our previous study, we learned that you begin praying very simply, yet profoundly, by addressing God as “**Father**,” here in verse 2.

This opening designation literally opens the door. If He’s your Father, you can come into His presence anytime you want.



Why is understanding God’s relationship to us as Father the key to prayer? How does that personal relationship with Him change the way you approach Him in your prayers?

And you can call Him your Father because you have claimed His Son, the Lord Jesus, as your Savior. And because of Jesus, you have access to **boldly enter the very presence of God the Father (Hebrews 4:16)**.

Jesus made it crystal clear when He said, “**No one comes to the Father except through me**” (John 14:6).

The Son of God is the Mediator between mankind and the throne of God (1 Timothy 2:5).

I remember attending an event downtown where pastors were gathered to pray, and I had been invited to pray at the

microphone. I got there late and walked up as pastors were huddled on stage and heard them debating as to whether we should pray in Jesus' name for fear of offending people.

And that was 30 years ago. I haven't joined them since because they don't know who they're praying to. When it was my turn at the microphone, I prayed to the name of Jesus, through the name of Jesus and for the name of Jesus—just in case anyone missed the point.

No one comes to the Father except through me, Jesus said.

But for disciples, here's the point. You're calling Him Father; prayer is for family members only, or those who call out to Christ to become a member of His family.

And when you have Christ, you are given the master key to enter in.

And the good news is, as a Christian, prayer isn't a reward for family members who have it all together.

Whether you're on the mountain top in your Christian experience or going through a valley of despair, prayer isn't something reserved for successful Christians, it's open to struggling Christians.

And that's because prayer isn't based on a reward, it's based on a relationship.

When you pray, you're talking to a family member and that doesn't change; He's your Father and you're His child. To those who have received Jesus, John 1:12

says, ***“to them He gave the right to become children of God.”***

So, we didn't want to miss this opening word. In fact, everything that follows in this prayer is hinged to the fact that He's your Father.

Now let me mention that this prayer was not something Jesus intended us to rattle off mindlessly. The church has been praying this prayer now for 2,000 years—corporately and privately—and there's nothing wrong with that.

There's nothing wrong with quoting it; it happens to be Scripture, directly from the teaching ministry of Jesus.

Jesus is effectively teaching them, “When you pray, say something like this; use this as a pattern.”

And I love the fact that this prayer is simple enough for a new believer; it's simple enough for a child to follow along.

Children need to be taught how to pray, and if you want them to memorize one to use as a pattern one day, this one is inspired. It's certainly a lot better than, “Lord, bless this bunch who munch their lunch.” That's one we'd pray sarcastically as kids at lunchtime, it's a wonder the Lord let us live.

Just keep in mind here that Jesus isn't so much giving His disciples something to memorize as He is giving them something to model.

The Lord taught the multitudes this model prayer in Matthew chapter 6; He's now

teaching a shorter version just to His disciples here in Luke chapter 11.

If you combine the prayer accounts, which we're going to do for our study, you end up with the same pattern.

*“Father, (in Heaven—
Matthew adds) hallowed be
Your name.”*

Luke 11:2

Now the word **hallowed** isn't a common word today. “Hallowed” usually doesn't come up in our vocabulary.

One little boy I read about got it turned around and said, “Our Father who art in heaven, Harold is your name.” Some kid thinks God's name is Harold!

Another little boy just gave up on it and inserted his own phrase: “Our Father who art in heaven, I know you know my name.”

That's pretty good theology; He does know our name. The question is, how well do we know His?

For that reason, right here at the outset, the Lord is going to teach us how to get it right.

The word **hallowed** comes from the Greek verb, *hagiozw*, which means “to set apart; to treat as special and sacred.”

Hagios, the noun form, is translated “holy.”

This is what the seraphim—a group of angels—are repeating as they circle the throne of God: “Holy, Holy, Holy.”

What the Lord is doing is teaching us to say the same thing on earth that the angels can't stop talking about in Heaven.

“Holy, Holy, Holy,” they are encircling His throne with constant praise and reverence for who He is. Hallowed, holy is Your name. But this is about more than just His name.

You see, to the Hebrew mind, someone's name was more than just a name. We might name our children something that goes well with our last name, it rhymes with their sibling's names, or pays tribute to a family member.

But in the Jewish world, the name was a reference to character and reputation they hoped that child would embody. Who they were and the name they were called were to become one and the same thing.

So, a “name” was a reference to a “reputation.”



The phrase “Hallowed be Your name” isn't a statement, it is a request. What are we requesting of God when we pray this phrase?

We actually use the same idea to this day when we say that somebody has a good name. “He has a good name in the community.” We're not saying that Sam or John or Susan or Cindy are good names, what we mean is that their

reputation, their character, their work ethic, their morals, their standing is good.

Bound up in these opening four words in verse 2 is a world of respect and reverence and awe and appreciation for the Person of God the Father.

W. Phillip Keller, [A Layman Looks at the Lord's Prayer](#) (Moody Press, 1976), p. 45

God's name is to be hallowed—considered sacred—because His name represents everything about His nature; He is altogether sacred; He is eternally, stunningly, gloriously holy.

You see prayer that gets past the living room ceiling, or the dome of a cathedral, is prayer that recognizes how great God is.

You're not even past the opening line here before you break out and start singing "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!"

This is why praying can be so encouraging, it reunites you with the glory of God.

This is the Creator God who took Job on a tour of His creation. Job will be reminded in the closing chapters of his private journal that God alone:

- Commanded the morning and made the dawn to know it's place.
- Laid the foundations of the earth and created its measurements.
- Designed the animal kingdom with their instincts and beauty.

- Entered the currents of the sea and controls the boundaries of the ocean.
- Knows where the light lives and the way of the east wind and the clouds turn around by His guidance
- Spread out the heavens like mirror.
- Is surrounded by majesty and dignity and splendor and glory.

No wonder the only word that can come from the angels' mouths who are in the closest proximity to His throne, and they never stop saying it is, "Holy, holy, holy."

You're praying to *that* One.

You see, we're being taught that prayer begins with an understanding that the God who saved us and loves us and guides us; who calls us His children and allows us—even invites us—to call Him our Father, well, just don't forget How great He is. He's on His everlasting throne and we are at His feet.

J.I. Packer writes that this kind of praying has "grasped the greatness of God."

J.I. Packer, [A Passion For Faithfulness](#) (Crossway, 2000), p. 39

Father, hallowed be your name.

Now I want to point out that while this phrase sounds like a declaration: "Hallowed be your name," it's actually the first prayer request recorded in this prayer. Matthew includes six requests, Luke has five.

In the original language, this verb “hallowed be” is a passive imperative. And I’m sure that’s the most exciting thing you’ve heard all day.

What that implies is two action points. It can be a divine passive, which means you are asking God to make Himself known in the world for who He is. It’s not something you do, it’s something that God does. So, you’re asking God to carry out the action of the verb: “Father, consecrate Your name; make Your name known as holy and sacred in the world today.”

Charles R. Swindoll, [Insights on Luke](#) (Zondervan, 2012), p. 289

Don’t we want that?

- Our world denigrates the character of God and the gospel of God.
- Our world denies the creative power of God and refuses to give Him thanks.
- Our world defies His moral authority and scoffs at His word.

Don’t we ask at times that God do something to reveal the sacredness of His name above all others?

Don’t we pray for our unbelieving friends and family members and business associates: “Oh God, reveal to them the reality of who You are. Open their eyes to the glory of your character and the beauty of Your holiness.”

Yes, we can pray, “God let your name be hallowed out there in the world.”

But that isn’t all that’s implied here. In fact, the unbelieving world isn’t mentioned in this prayer; the disciples are praying that God’s name will be revealed to them, revered in them, reflected through them.



When we pray “Hallowed be Your name” to God, how does God use us to be part of answering that very same prayer?

This opening statement can also be understood to effectively say, “Father, I want my life to protect the reputation of your name!”

As one author put it: I want to go public with your glory.

Adapted from R. Albert Mohler, Jr. [The Prayer that Turns the World Upside Down](#) (Nelson Books, 2018), p. 66

In other words, “The degree to which God’s glory is manifested on earth depends on how we conduct ourselves as His children.”

ibid

It’s actually a lot easier to pray, “Lord, reveal the kind of God You are to all those unbelievers out there” than to pray, “Lord use my life to reveal the kind of God you are to all those unbelievers out there.”

“Father, hallowed/holy is your name” is another way of praying, “Father, make my

life holy in private so that I can demonstrate your holiness in public.”

“I’m your child; help me to live in such a way that nobody out there would be surprised to find out you’re my Father.”

You see, the disciples were to live with the sense that the reputation of God was at stake in them today.

Keller, p. 56

That’s true today, beloved; God’s reputation is not one ounce better than your reputation; in fact, your reputation defines His reputation:

- If you’re vulgar, He must not care about purity.
- If you’re immoral, He must not care about morality.
- If you’re lazy, He must be undependable.
- If you’re unkind, He must be vindictive.
- If you’re a liar, He must not care about honesty.
- If you’re worried about the world, He must not be all-powerful.
- If you’re anxious about the future, well, He must not be in control after all.

His reputation is at stake!

Praying: **“Father, hallowed be your name”** is a prayer request that is to be answered by the believer.

And it’ll be answered by believers who accept the responsibility for the reputation of God.

Since 1905, Hebrew National has been producing hot dogs and other sausage products under the watchful care of Rabbi’s and kosher guidelines. It was founded by a Russian Jewish immigrant, who made quite a mark for the quality of his sausages and hot dogs because he held to higher standards in food production than the law demanded.

I remember years ago when Marsha brought a package home from the grocery store for the first time.

That night, as we were eating, she said, “Listen to this,” and she read this statement on the hotdog package that had become their motto. It said, “We answer to a higher authority.” I said, “You know, that would make a great sermon illustration, let me keep the package.” She’s used to this kind of strange behavior, so she gave it to me.

Now since that time, in the 1980s, the company has been sold; the packaging has changed somewhat. But I wrote down what it said on the back of the package, listen to this: *“The word KOSHER literally means ‘fit to eat.’ Hebrew National will follow strict Biblical dietary laws, use only certain cuts of kosher beef, and meet the highest standards ... kosher stands for quality and goodness ... [we] answer to a higher authority.”*

Imagine a company so convinced that they answer to a higher authority, it completely governs the way they make a hot dog.

What if Christians lived as if stamped upon their lives were those words, “We answer to a higher authority; we follow a biblical standard; our lives will be marked by quality and goodness.”

That’s exactly the commitment you are making if you dare pray these opening five words: **“Father, hallowed be your name. Make your name holy and revered through me today.”**

“Father, I will accept the responsibility of protecting your reputation today. Let my

life be seen as one who answers to a higher authority, marked by quality and goodness.”



What is God’s reputation as it is reflected in your life? In what ways do you want to give God a better reputation from your life to those around you?

Why? So that I might answer this prayer request. So that the world might see our good works and glorify our Father, who is in heaven.

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