

"Our Father... first petition"

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The Our Father Prayer, in Matthew 6, begins with: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name" (Matthew 6:9). The prayer begins by telling us about the nature of God. On this beginning we address God with praise and adoration. Starting with praise and proclaiming the truth of who God is before anything else highlights the importance of who God is. To sanctify something is to make it holy, separate it, or sanctify it. Jesus taught his disciples to pray that God the Father would "hallow" his name. It should be noted that this petition comes first. It is of paramount importance that God hallow his name.

In what way do we want God to hallow his name? In what way should his name be set apart or hallowed? In this first petition we let God act in such a way that he visibly demonstrates his holiness and glory. God demonstrates his holiness in the world by creating a holy people who call on his name, proclaim the gospel, and perform good works.

The request "hallowed be your name" being the first in the Our Father; Jesus immediately takes the spotlight off us and directs our attention to God. Everything revolves around him, his holiness, and his work in the world. Jesus taught us that we should begin our prayers by acknowledging the God to whom we pray. Biblically, it is often true that what comes first is most important. Before we talk about ourselves and our needs, we praise God, and we do it with reverence.

1 Peter 3:15 tells us to "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" and one of the ways we hallow God's name is by acknowledging Jesus as Lord and living our lives to honor God. We incline our hearts to him, we put our hope in him, we obey him, and we share about him with others. Following the prayer model of Jesus and using the expression

"hallowed be your name" we are asking God to manifest himself with all his Glory in our existence.

The way we name and honor God in the Our Father tells us more important things about God.

Our. The first word of the Our Father reminds us that we are not individuals who pray alone, as if they pretended that God is unique for us. We are part of a larger community, the body of Christ, which turns to the God who first reached us, to the God who made us his people.

Father. We name God as Father because we also know Jesus Christ as Son. By naming God as his father, Jesus reveals the family relationship and intimacy that is part of God's own life (Father, Son, Spirit), which is trinitarian and relational. As Christians we believe that God is bigger than anyone. God the Father is God the Creator, who gave birth to the world.

God the Father is God the Creator, who knows the number of hairs on your head. God is not only expansive beyond comprehension, but also personal and in close relationship with each one of us. God the Father knows us intimately; in fact, God knows us better than we know ourselves.

In heaven. Where is God? The Our Father places God in heaven, a kingdom that is beyond the earth and its borders, beyond our countries and our sanctuaries. We properly name that God is not of this earth, because the world cannot contain God. God cannot be made small, nor tamed, nor domesticated. We also recognize that although God is the Creator, he is not the creation itself. God is above and beyond the created world and cannot be contained by it.

Jesus begins his prayer by acknowledging that God is a loving Father who invites us into his presence, but then Jesus quickly draws attention to God's holiness, asking him

to increase his renown. He shifts the focus of prayer away from us and squarely on God, asking him to help the world see the extent of his glory. Asking God to "hallow" his name is another way of asking God to draw people to Himself by displaying his glory and power in the world.

The prayer begins and ends with a focus on the glory of God and each request in between can be understood as another way that God can be glorified here on earth. So the next time you recite the phrase "hallowed be your name," know that you are declaring that God is holy and praiseworthy and asking Him to increase His glory here on earth with more people who will recognize His immeasurable worth.