

WEEK TWO | PETITION ONE

Hallowed be your name... on earth, as it is in heaven.

The first petition that Jesus tells his disciples to pray for is to “**hallow**” or to “**make holy**” God’s name. In many branches of Judaism: Pages containing the word “Yahweh”, the covenantal name of the Lord, are never thoughtlessly discarded, but rather buried or ritually burned. When we pray this first petition, we’re invited to cultivate reverence for God’s name—especially since we are living in a world prone to profane it.

But as important as it is to use God’s name with care, if we live inside this first petition for long we’ll begin to see that Jesus is inviting us not only to cultivate reverence, but to pray for revelation.

Names are a big deal in the Bible. From Abraham (“*Father of Many*”) to Jacob (“*Heel-grasper*”) to Peter (“*Rock*”), names don’t merely identify—they reveal. Moses understood this. So he asked God (whom he knew by the generic deity designation Elohim) for his personal name. “*Yahweh*,” God told him, offering Moses the kind of intimacy that only comes on a first-name basis—and revealing his covenant with his people in the process.

As we learned from the invocation, every name we have for God is a revelation of his character. So when Jesus teaches us to pray for the hallowing of God’s name, he’s really teaching us to pray that God’s character will be revealed here on earth, just the way it is in heaven.

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus is constantly encountering people who have distorted pictures of his Father. If we pay attention to his teaching in the Gospel accounts, we’ll notice that more than anything he wants us to be able to see God for who God really is.

Jesus tells us that the coming of God’s kingdom hinges on the hallowing of God’s name—the revealing of God’s character. He knows that we become like the God we worship, and if our God-picture is distorted, then the more religious we become, the worse off we will be. So the first, foundational thing Jesus teaches us to pray for is a clear revelation of God’s character. Someone has put it this way: to pray “hallowed is your name”, “helps us draw healing pictures of God.”

ONLY GOD CAN DO IT

None of the petitions that Jesus teaches us to pray are things we can obtain on our own. In fact, the verbs in two of the first three petitions are imperative, but passive [that’s your Greek grammar lesson for today]. This means that this first request is not so much “Let us hallow your name” as it is “Father, do what we can’t—make your name holy throughout the earth.”

Only God can reveal himself to the world. But if we pray as he taught us, our reverence and care for his name will grow, right alongside our capacity to see God’s goodness and beauty. The more we see the glory of God’s love, the more we’ll begin to exchange our self-interest and power for the cross of Christ.

LIVING INSIDE THE FIRST PETITION

Darrell Johnson in his little book on the Lord’s Prayer¹, suggests that one of the ways we can enter into the prayer “**Hallowed be your name**” is to “pray back” the names of God. To describe the character of God. So, Johnson suggests that we might “pray back” the name **El Shaddai** like this: “*Father God, you are El Shaddai, the Mighty One. Make yourself real as the Mighty One in my life as it is in heaven.*”

¹ Darrell W. Johnson, *Fifty-Seven Words That Change the World* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 2005),

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Or we might “pray back” the name **Good Shepherd** like this: *“Father God, my neighbors are having a hard time. Make yourself real to them as the Shepherd who carries his sheep; enhance your reputation as the Good Shepherd in my neighbourhood.”*

Read over the following names for God. If one or two of the names particularly catch your attention, meditate on the related Scriptures and then “pray them back.” Consider writing out your prayers, as you invite God to hallow his name the way only he can.

Abba – Rom. 8:15	Lord of Lords – Rev. 19:16
Advocate – 1 John 2:1	Love – 1 John 4:8
Almighty – Rev. 1:8	Mediator – 1 Tim. 2:5
Alpha & Omega – Rev. 21:6	Messiah – John 4:25–26
Author & Perfecter of our Faith – Heb. 12:2	Morning Star – Rev. 22:16
Bread of Life – John 6:35, 48	Peace – Eph. 2:13–15
Comforter – 2 Cor. 1:3–5	Physician – Matt. 9:12
Cornerstone – 1 Peter 2:7–8	Ransom – 1 Tim. 2:6
Creator – Isa. 40:28	Redeemer – Isa. 41:14
Deliverer – Rom. 11:26	Refiner – Mal. 3:2
El Roi (The God Who Sees) – Gen. 16:13	Refuge – Isa. 25:4
Emmanuel – Matt. 1:23	Resurrection – John 11:25
Everlasting Father – Isa. 9:6	Righteousness – Jer. 23:6
Friend of Sinners – Matt. 11:19	Rock – Deut. 32:4
Gate for the Sheep – John 10:7	Ruler of God’s Creation – Rev. 3:14
Good Shepherd – John 10:11	Sacrifice – Eph. 5:2
High Priest – Heb. 3:1	Savior – 2 Sam. 22:47; Luke 1:47
King of Kings – 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16	Servant – Isa. 42:1
Lamb of God – John 1:29	Truth – John 14:6
Life – John 11:25	Way – John 14:6
Light of the World – John 8:12; 9:5	Wonderful Counselor – Isa. 9:6
Lion – Rev. 5:5	Word – John 1:1
Living Water – John 7:37–38	Vine – John 15:5