

## **Week 1: Hallowed Be Thy Name (Matthew 6:5-18; Ezekiel 20:8-9)**

**How does your prayer life look at this point in your life? Do you have specific times of the day that you pray? What do you typically say to God - are you requesting things, showing thankfulness, or seeking wisdom? How often do you pray?**

Personal Reflection.

**What does the word “hallow” mean? What are we asking God to do when we pray for God’s name to be hallowed?**

The word hallow is synonymous with sanctified, or to make or treat as holy. So when we declare something to be hallowed, we are either acknowledging its holiness, or saying it has been made holy.

The first thing we should acknowledge about Jesus’ lesson through the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:5-15 is that this is a petition to God - not a declaration. Jesus is not simply stating a fact, but requesting that the Father glorifies his own name. Our first priority in the Lord’s prayer is for us to plead to God that His name be hallowed through His actions. Above all else that we seek in our prayers, we seek for the Lord to make His name holy and great to the nations! We’re practically saying, “Lord, I’m coming to you with these requests, but whether you grant them or not, before anything else, make your name holy! Do your will in and through my petitions, for your name is above anything else. Your holiness is the greatest thing I seek.”

**Do you see God’s name hallowed in your prayers? How, or why not?**

Personal Reflection.

**As we hallow the name of the Father, we are making his top priority our top priority - to glorify and sanctify His name in all the earth. How can you be on mission to hallow His name this week?**

Personal Reflection.

**In what ways do you expect for your prayer life to be changed by this sermon? Ask someone in your Grace Community to help hold you accountable to this goal.**

Personal Reflection.

## **Week 2: How to Argue With God. (Job 23:1-13)**

**Has your prayer life been one where you fill your mouth with arguments? Why or why not?**

Personal Reflection.

**How should we respond to friends who feel that they can't approach God because of sin in their life? Perhaps they feel unworthy to stand before God when they haven't been blameless in life.**

By the grace of God, we do not approach him in prayer on our own merit, but through the righteousness of Christ. You see, our friends in this question are actually being pretty perceptive of our condition. We are sinners, unclean by our nature and choices, and therefore we have no right to stand before a holy and just God. They're actually right here. We are completely unable to stand on our own righteousness before God.

But this is the beauty of the gospel. We have a great high priest who has gone before us. Christ has taken the wrath for our transgressions and freely given to us his righteousness. When we stand before God in prayer, we do not do it on our own merit, but through Christ's shed blood. So we should not feel like we're unable to approach God because of sin in our life. God knows we're sinners, but He sent his Son so we could have such conversations with him.

God is not waiting for the prayers of perfect people; He is waiting for sinners to come to Him in prayer. We can look to Christ's example in the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:5-18) for more evidence on this point. Jesus is telling us to pray for God to "forgive us our sins." Jesus is practically saying - don't come to God because you've got it all together. Come to Him because you don't.

**What should be our posture toward God when we come to him with arguments?**

We have a tendency to think of arguments as always being a negative thing. Perhaps it comes from a history where your parents yelled at each other often, your siblings slammed doors, or your friends stopped talking to you. Let's separate that out from arguments in our minds. Those things are responses to an argument - they're displays of anger. That's not what we're talking about here.

Arguing with God isn't rebelling against Him in anger. We're not approaching his throne with the desire to accuse Him - we're coming to Him with a desire to understand or know. That doesn't mean we should be afraid to question Him - he's big enough for our questions. He can handle them. But we also need to remember that His will is perfect, and our viewpoint is limited. We need to be in a posture that's willing to hear from God no matter His answer. By standing in this posture before him, trusting His goodness and power in our lives, arguing with God can ultimately lead you to a place of obedience. God shapes your heart through these prayers.

**Have you ever walked away from an argument with a friend or family member feeling deeper connection to the person because of the fight? Why do you think that happens, and how does it compare to our relationship with God?**

Personal Reflection.

Some of the deepest relationships we have in this world are ones where we feel that we can open up about our desires, our emotions, and our issues. While those conversations can get messy, you walk away from those arguments knowing the

other person more fully. It's a deeper love that grows out of these conversations because even through the disagreements, you're choosing to remain in relationship to them. A shallow love says, "I'll stick around as long as you continue to perform well. As long as you meet my needs or desires."

That's what we're getting with God when we come to him with our arguments. We're pouring out our desires, emotions, and issues before a God who already knows them, and in the process, we're better able to understand who He is. We can take our difficulties to Him, and He can use them to better show us His character. When we love God for His character instead of how "well" He performs for us, we have a more real love in our hearts.

**A healthy Christian surrounds him/herself with fellow believers. As we grapple with God and bring our arguments to Him, who can you turn to with questions or struggles?**

Personal Reflection.

It is our heart, at Grace, that you never feel like you are taking your next step towards Christ alone. If you don't feel like you have a network of believers you can turn to, please let us help you find a Grace Community. You can do so by emailing Ryan at [\*\*rwilliams@discovergrace.com\*\*](mailto:rwilliams@discovergrace.com)

## **Week 3: What Powers our Prayers? (1 John 3:19-24; 1 Peter 3:12)**

**Have you ever received something that can only be explained as God answering your prayer? Share a brief story.**

Personal Reflection.

**Have you ever prayed for something that never came to be? Share a brief story.**

Personal Reflection.

**What do we define as an effective prayer?**

It's easy for us to see a prayer answered in the affirmative as effective. When God gives you a raise at work, or keeps your kids safe at school, it's pretty easy to think - "well, that worked." But God granting your prayers aren't the only effective prayers. Prayer is simply how we communicate with our Father in heaven, and there are going to be times where the loving Father says no for our own good. We must always remember that God gives us exactly what we would have asked for if we knew everything He knows. God's "no" always ends with a "because this is better." In these times, a changed heart is just as effective a prayer, too.

**How would the prayers of the righteous and evil differ?**

When we live in disobedience to God, we are actively going against His character and will. We're claiming to know better, and turning our back from Him. In righteous prayers, we would be pursuing God's character and will. The righteous desire the things of the Lord, because God gives us the desires of our hearts.

**Have you ever gone through a time of rebellion against God? How did it affect your prayer life?**

Personal Reflection.

**Does greater obedience always produce greater effectiveness in our prayers?**

This is almost a trick question, and it all depends on how you read it. Sorry for making things more difficult than they seem on the surface.

If we read the question as though it's a magic formula to get what you want, the answer is no. Simply by following God's laws more strictly, we are not more likely to receive the things for which we ask. Our prayers are not answered on the basis of our works.

But there is also a way in which we could see some truth in this question. If our obedience is saturated with the gospel and a love for God, the answer could be yes - greater obedience produces greater effectiveness in your prayers. Remember, a gospel centered approach to obedience is one in which we understand the greatness of God's love for us and respond by obeying out of love for Him. As we obey through this gospel-centered approach, as we continue to behold God's glory and obey his word, Paul tells us that we will be made in the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). And as we are made in His image, our prayers will greater reflect God's will. Thus, greater obedience would always produce greater effectiveness.

## **Week 4: Pray without Ceasing (Philippians 4:4-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)**

### **What does it look like to always be in prayer?**

A continuous prayer life is one where you are always taking everything to God in prayer. There is nothing too big or small for you to bring before your loving father. The mode of prayer may differ between individuals; some people structure their prayers formally while others are more casual; some bow their heads while others pray without you noticing any body movements. The outcome is always the same, though - close communication to our Father in heaven at all times over all things.

### **What are the outcomes of a continuous prayer life?**

Just like any relationships we have in life, when we stay in closer communication, we are able to know the other person more fully. Also, as we continue to stand before God in prayer, we are regularly reminded of how greatly we rely on Him for everything in this world. No matter how large or small our requests to God may be, we are acknowledging his kingship and dominion over everything, including our lives. This brings God glory and can help produce peace in our hectic and stressful lives.

### **Are you holding back in your prayer life in any way? What aren't you taking to God in prayer?**

Personal Reflection.

### **What prevents you from rejoicing and being thankful at all times?**

Personal Reflection.

### **What are some practical steps you can take this week to pray more constantly?**

### **Who in your Grace Community can hold you accountable?**

Personal Reflection.

### **How has your prayer life been changed through this series?**

Personal Reflection.