

July 7, 2002 by Steve Brandon



## How to Pray (Part 1)

### Matthew 6:9-10

#### The Address

**Request #1: God's Reputation**

**Request #2: God's Reign**

**Request #3: God's Righteousness**

Don't open your Bibles this morning. If your Bibles are open, please shut them. I want to try an experiment. The words we have come to in our exposition of the gospel of Matthew are some of the most familiar portions in all of the Bible. In fact, these words are so familiar that they have a name. Some people call these words, the "Our Father," which is taken from the first two words of the prayer. (This is like the Jews, who call Deut. 6:4-9, the "Shema," which is the first word in that portion of the Bible they choose to repeat often). Some people call these words, "The Lord's Prayer." Some others object to calling it "The Lord's Prayer," because it wasn't the prayer that Jesus prayed. It is the prayer He gave to us for us to pray. So, these people like to call this prayer, "The Disciple's Prayer." I trust that you know now the prayer I am talking about.

In the church where I grew up, we recited the words of our text every week. From a young age, this prayer was firmly etched upon my mind. Indeed, in many, many, many churches across the world today, these words of Jesus are repeated with the entire congregation. At Rock Valley Bible Church, we don't repeat this prayer every week as a congregation, yet, these words are certainly familiar to us. Here is my experiment I was talking about earlier: I would like for us to say this prayer together, as a congregation. I know that we will probably stumble on a few wordings that are slightly different. But let's try, ...

"Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed by Thy name.  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For This is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

Now, you may open your Bibles to Matthew 6. These words we just spoke together are found in verses 9-13. In our study of the book of Matthew, we find ourselves in the context of Jesus addressing this whole matter of prayer. Rather than moving on to address his third area of danger (i.e. fasting, which will come up in verses 16-18), Jesus first gives His disciples positive instruction on how to pray. Last week, as we looked at prayer, it was predominately from a negative perspective.

Verse 5, "you are **not** to be as the hypocrites...."  
Verse 7, "do **not** use meaningless repetition ..."  
Verse 8, "Therefore do **not** be like them ..."

I arrived at home last week, and my most adored and loving critic (my wife) turned to me and said, "Steve, you seemed really harsh this morning. Strong and condemning." As I reflected upon it, I think that she was right. (My wife isn't infallible, but she always speaks the truth). Perhaps some of that came from the overall, negative thrust of Jesus' words in the previous section as I just noted. Jesus has been pushing us to examine our hearts and our motives behind what we do in our religious practice. Perhaps that explains some of my harshness last week. This is exposition. It is my desire to represent the text. The text this morning is more positive. In fact, in my message I am going to seek to put on display the majesty of God in heaven.

In verses 9-13, Jesus will teach us what to say when we pray. In many ways, these verses are a contrast to what Jesus had said in verses 7-8, where He told us not to use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do. Jesus gives us an example of how to pray without meaningless repetition, in which he uses less than 70 words to pray a complete, thorough prayer.

On another occasion, when Jesus had finished prayer, His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). Jesus responded by saying, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation'" (Luke 11:2-4). On this occasion, Jesus' words were very close to what we find here in Matthew, but not exact. The differences between Luke 11 and Matthew 6 ought to teach us that Jesus isn't prescribing verbatim repetition of these words. Often, they are used this way. I don't at all object to this practice. On the contrary, repeating these words exactly is a very good prayer to pray. However, if we feel bound to pray, as if we need to pray it these exact words, I believe that Jesus would reprove us, "do not use exact repetition, for you suppose that you will be

heard for your exact use of words." **Rather than a formula for prayer, Jesus gives us a pattern for prayer.** This is the key to understanding this prayer Jesus gave to us.

Once again, we need to make sure that we don't catch the letter of Jesus' instruction, and miss the spirit of His instruction. He gave us a pattern, not a formula. As a result, I cannot spoon feed you in your prayers. I cannot tell you exactly what to say. Christianity is not about saying the right things at the right time and doing the right things at the right time. Rather, a follower of Christ will love God and trust God. Out of a response to Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice, will thus say the things he says and do the things he does. Your prayers follow along after this. They are expressions of love and trust. No formula of prayer will ever capture this heart of prayer. In fact, you may say this prayer exactly right, and yet have a heart that is far from God. I have read many books on prayer. The good ones never focus upon what to say. Rather, they focus upon why we pray and the importance of our heart's focus upon God. We need to catch the spirit of Jesus' words here.

Before we dig into this marvelous prayer, let's first make some observations about the prayer in general, before we get into the details.

In terms of the structure of the prayer, it begins with an address and follows with six requests:

**The Address:** "Our Father, who art in heaven"

**The Requests:**

- Request #1. "Hallowed be Thy name" (verse 9)
- Request #2. "Thy kingdom come" (verse 10)
- Request #3. "Thy will be done ..." (verse 10)
- Request #4. "Give us this day our daily bread" (verse 11)
- Request #5. "Forgive us our debts ..." (verse 12)
- Request #6. "Do not lead us into temptation ..." (verse 13)

If you prefer alliterations (with each point beginning with the same letter), then you will like how Thomas Watson, a pastor in the 1600's, outlined the structure of this prayer. He wrote a book in which he devoted a chapter to each point. First was "The Preface to the Lord's Prayer." The remaining six chapters were entitled, "The First Petition," "The Second Petition," "The Third Petition." ...

In terms of the content of these requests, you will notice that the first three have to do with God and the last three have to do with us. With respect to God, the prayers are for His glory and His purposes to be accomplished (verses 9-10). With respect to us, the prayers focus on our needs (physically and spiritually) and God's help for us to fulfill these needs (verses 11-13).

Jesus begins with a focus upon heaven, "Our Father who art in heaven" (verse 9). He continues by praying heaven to earth, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (10). He finishes by a focus upon our needs upon the earth, "lead us not into temptation" (verse 13).

The entire prayer places us in subjection to God. He is our Father, and we are the submissive child ("Our Father"). He is the Holy One, and we are the one who needs forgiveness ("Hallowed be Thy name ... forgive us our debts"). He is the Reigning King, and we are His servants ("Thy kingdom come ... Thy will be done"). He is our Provider, and we have needs ("Give us this day our daily bread"). He is our Guide, and we follow Him ("do not lead us into temptation"). He is our Deliverer, and we need deliverance ("but deliver us from evil").

Let's dig in by first looking at ...

The Address

Jesus taught us to address our prayers to our heavenly Father. Verse 9, "Our Father, who art in heaven." I have entitled this, "The Address," because it acts like an address you would write on an envelope. When you send a letter, you normally take out an envelope and write on it the name of the one to whom you are sending the letter and their address of where they live. This is exactly what we have here. God is identified as "Our Father." God's address is identified as "in heaven."

Think about this. When we pray, we are addressing our Father in prayer. Or, you might say, we are addressing our loving and caring Father in prayer. What a lovely thought this is. We aren't praying to an ogre. We aren't praying to a dis-interested party. Rather, we are praying to our heavenly Father. Everything about the thought of praying to God as our Father ought to draw us to God in prayer.

1. Since God is our Father, we can approach Him with boldness. We are not like Esther, who feared entering the king's presence, without being summoned, lest she be put to death (Est. 4:11). Since we have a great high priest, we can "draw near with boldness to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). When children skin a knee or bonk a head, they run to mom or dad with complete boldness that they will receive comfort from them.

2. Since God is our Father, we can expect to get a hearing with Him. For instance, if you all would try to call my father at work, for the most part, the best you will do is the opportunity to leave a message, for him to return your call. I have always found it interesting when I have tried to reach my father, I simply say the magic words, and I usually get through. The magic words? "This is his son." Even if he is incredibly busy, there is something about the words, "this is his son," that get me access to him. I can get through to my father because I am his son. If you are a child of God, the same is true for you and your heavenly Father.

3. Since God is our Father, we can expect a favorable response. When we pray to God, we aren't praying to an enemy or a dis-interested party. Rather, we are praying to our heavenly Father, who knows our every need (Matt. 5:8). We have promises from scripture that this is the case. "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly" (Ps. 84:11). "Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4). "They who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing" (Ps. 34:10). See, God is for us, not against us (Rom. 8:31).

4. Since God is our Father, we can expect compassion and understanding from Him. "Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him" (Ps. 103:13). He knows our weakness (Ps. 103:14). "But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him" (Ps. 103:17).

We began our service by reflecting upon Ps. 48:9, "We have thought on Thy lovingkindness, O God." As we think upon the lovingkindness of God, especially as He is our heavenly Father, it ought to draw us to God in prayer. All of the things that are true about the Fatherhood of God ought to be temptations and allurements to pray. All of these things ought to make prayer more and more attractive to us. We can come with boldness. We can get a hearing with Him. We can expect a favorable response. We can expect compassion and understanding from our heavenly Father.

The second part of this address is the location where God dwells. Jesus mentions that God resides in heaven. This is not an afterthought. Rather, Jesus often mentions our heavenly Father. A few weeks ago, we looked at all of the references to God as our Father. It occurs 17 times in the Sermon on the Mount alone. Yet, this occurrence of our Father dwelling in heaven occurs in more than half of these references -- nine times to be exact.

5:16 - "your Father, who is in heaven."  
5:45 - "your Father, who is in heaven."  
5:48 - "your heavenly father."  
6:1 - "your Father who is in heaven."  
6:9 - "Our Father who art in heaven"  
6:14 - "your heavenly Father."  
6:26 - "Your heavenly Father"  
7:11 - "your Father who is in heaven."  
7:21 - "My Father who is in heaven."

Heaven is the realm where God lives and dwells and reigns. God has declared, "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is My footstool" (Is. 66:1). Look over at 5:34. We are told not to swear by heaven, "for it is the throne of God." Heaven is where God reigns. In verse 10, Jesus alludes to God's reign in heaven, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." There is not chaos in heaven. There is not disorder in heaven. God rules and reigns in heaven. His angelic servants are completely submissive to Him.

The picture of God in the heavens is a picture of a reigning king. So addressing our prayer to "Our Father, who art in heaven," essentially gives us two aspects to the God to whom we pray.

- On the one hand, we pray to our loving, compassionate Father.
- On the other hand, we pray to the king of heaven, who possesses all sovereignty.

Addressing prayers to our Sovereign Father was the practice of Jesus. When the Jews rejected Him, He prays, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You hid these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Your sight" (Matt. 11:25-26). In his High-priestly prayer, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee" (John 17:1).

This was also the general practice of Paul. "[I pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17). "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father" (Eph. 3:14).

This ought to be our practice in prayer as well. When we think of praying, we ought to fill our mind first with the One to whom we pray. He is a loving Father. He is a sovereign Ruler. He is our heavenly Father.

Let me add, by way of footnote, that we aren't bound always to address our prayers using this formula. Remember, this is a pattern for us. It is a guide. We don't have to stringently hold to each and every word and our only way of addressing God. For instance, the early church was in the habit, in its prayer meetings, to address God as "Lord." This week, I surveyed the history of the early church by speed reading the book of Acts. I found that in every instance where I found the actual words recorded to their prayers, they prayed using the words, "Lord," rather than using "Father" (Acts 1:24; 4:24; 9:5, 10, 13; 10:4, 14; 26:15). I found one exception, perhaps there are more. As Stephen was dying, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). In Paul's epistles, he sometimes prays using the title, "God" (Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2). The early church obviously didn't feel compelled to always address God by using the words, "Father" as if they needed to use the exact same words that Jesus used.

Furthermore, we don't need to limit our prayers only to "Our Father." We believe in the Trinity -- One God, yet three persons in the God-head. You can address any member of the God-head in prayer. Stephen's dying prayer was so addressed. At the end of his revelation, John writes, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). We can pray to God, our Father, or to Jesus, the Son, or to the Holy Spirit, our Comforter. So don't get hung up in the formula you use when you pray. Rather, realize that Jesus puts before us a pattern of prayer. His pattern begins by addressing God as our heavenly Father.

Let us now focus our attention upon the first request ...

Request #1: God's Reputation

This is found at the end of verse 9, "Hallowed be Thy name."

For historical reasons, this is how most of the translations have translated this verse. Of the 20 translations I surveyed, only three of them deviated from this translation, "Hallowed be Thy name." This is one of the phrases in the Bible, that translators have chosen not to change it, even though "hallowed" isn't a word that we use too much anymore. This is mostly due to the extensive familiarity of these words. Psalm 23

is another passage like this.

Today, the only word close to "hallowed" that we use today is "Halloween," which has spooky connotations. "Hallowed" simply means, "holy, consecrated, sacred, revered." This word comes from the Greek word, *agiazw* (*hagiazō*), which means "to sanctify, set apart, make holy, treat as holy." Translate verse 9 literally, and you come up with something like this, "Let Your name be sanctified" or "Let Your name be made holy."

On the one hand, this appears to be a strange request. We know that the name of God is a synonym for God, Himself. There are many, many verses in the Bible that demonstrate this. Listen to the following verses:

- "May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high!" (Ps. 20:1).
- "Some boast in chariots, and some in horses; But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God" (Ps. 20:7).
- Psalms 33:21, "Our heart rejoices in Him, because we trust in His holy name" (Ps. 33:21).

In none of these verses is there anything magical about the name of the LORD, as if saying "the name of the LORD" protects us. Rather, the "name" of the LORD is a synonym for God, Himself. When you speak of God's name, and you speak of God's person.

So, with this understanding of this phrase, we can step back and approach the verse again. We might paraphrase it this way, "God be hallowed," "God be sanctified," or "God be set apart." Now, you begin to see the strangeness of this request. We affirm this. God is holy! God is sanctified! God is set-apart! The seraphim, day and night, cry "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Is. 6:3). We find out in Revelation 4:8 that this will continue to happen throughout all eternity, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

So, what does it mean, "Hallowed be Thy name"? Why do we pray this if it is true? It simply means this, "God, may You (and your Name) be considered by us as being set-apart, sanctified." **It is nothing more, and nothing less, than a prayer for the world-wide saturation with an understanding of God's great holiness and purity.** The Phillips translation reads, "may your name be honoured." In other words, "may we (and others) walk in consistency before You. John Piper said that "this is a request to God that he would work to cause people to hallow his name ... that is, esteem, admire, respect, cherish, honor, and praise his name. It is basically a missionary prayer" (The Pleasures of God, p. 102). This is a prayer for the nations to be true worshipers.

This is why I entitled this request, "God's Reputation," because it speaks of how God is viewed by those in the world. This is particularly illustrated in Romans 1:5, "We have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, **for His name's sake.**" Paul longed to see the name of Jesus exalted and lifted high! He is worthy of worship, the Lamb of God. Yet, "The enemy has reviled and a foolish people have **spurned Thy name.**"

Perhaps you have come here this morning, and you have not hallowed God's name with your mouth, or by your actions. This is a prayer for you, that you would turn from your sin, and trust in the sacrifice of Jesus, and exalt His name! When you begin to think about this, it begins to have a tremendous impact upon your own life. This verse may not seem so practical, but it is immensely practical.

1. We hallow God's name when we come into the assembly of the church and give Him the praise and honor that He deserves.

This concept is all over Scripture.

- "Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; Worship the LORD in holy array" (Ps. 29:2).
- "I will be glad and exult in Thee; I will sing praise to Thy name, O Most High" (Ps. 9:2).
- "I will tell of Thy name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee" (Ps. 22:22).

If angels are before Him crying out holy, holy, holy, we ought also to be filled with His holiness. This takes the flippancy out of our worship. It replaces this with a reverence and a deep joy and genuine emotion. It doesn't make us somber. It makes us genuine.

2. We hallow God's name when we live lives of holiness.

Our actions are a direct consequence of God's holiness. God said, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). In effect, God is saying, "You shall be set apart, for I am set apart. You shall be sanctified, for I am sanctified." When we are holy, we reflect His holiness, and hallow His name upon the earth.

This will happen when you make righteous choices with the use of your time. Will you use your time in such a manner that will display to the world that God, who is on the throne, is holy, righteous and pure? Or, will you use your time in such a manner that will only bring shame and honor to His name and His reputation?

Paul writes to the Thessalonians, "We pray for you always that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power; in order **that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you**, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:11-12). Even such things as obeying your boss at work will reflect upon the name of God. "Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor **so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against**" (1 Tim. 6:1).

### 3. We hallow God's name when we tell others of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Where does the gospel begin, but right here with God's holiness and purity? You need to see this and understand this before you can ever realize your great need for your own holiness before Him. When others hear and believe this message of full redemption through faith in Jesus Christ, they also will be brought to be true worshipers of the one, true God!

It is interesting in Jesus' pattern of prayer, that this would be the first request. As we begin praying, we need first to acknowledge God in His place and us in our place. God is supremely holy and pure and righteous and totally apart from us in every way. We go from calling God our loving, heavenly father, to an intense desire for God's holiness to be manifest in the world. Charles Spurgeon said it like this, "The child lisping, 'Abba, Father,' grows into the cherub crying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy'" (Morning by Morning 10/29 am). Quite frankly, in our society, we are filled with little children who lisp, "Abba, Father," in their prayers, without comprehending God's holiness and majesty, and its implications for their lives. Yet, first and foremost, we need to understand and bask in God's purity and holiness and majesty and greatness.

We have seen ... Request #1: God's Reputation  
Let's look now at ...  
Request #2: God's Reign

This is found in verse 10. It is three simple words, "Thy kingdom come." Again, this request is concerned primarily with God and His glory. Now, the kingdom of God is a huge topic in Scripture. Let me seek to make it as simple as possible. Strap your seat belts, because we are going to go pretty fast.

For a kingdom to come, you need to have a king.

We have already seen it on a couple of occasions in the gospel of Matthew that Jesus Christ has been identified as the King. For instance, in Matt. 2:2, we see here that Jesus is described by the magi as "King of the Jews." The purpose of chapter 1 was to demonstrate that Jesus, Himself was of Kingly line. So, we already have some sort of anticipation of Jesus' kingly role.

By the end of the gospel of Matthew, we will see the King entering Jerusalem on a donkey as a king (Matt. 21:5), in fulfillment of Zech. 9:9, which anticipated this. We will see Jesus crucified for being a king. Above his cross hung the sign, which said, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37).

Here in the sermon on the mount, we Jesus speaking about the kingdom. He speaks of those who will inherit the kingdom: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:3) and "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (5:10).

Jesus also speaks of those who will enter the kingdom: "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (5:20). "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven" (7:21).

When you put all of these facts together, you can see that Jesus is the King. For a kingdom to come, you need to have a king. When Jesus was among the people of that day, the kingdom was nearby. It was close, because the King was close. That's why John preached in Matthew 3:2, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That's why Jesus preached in Matthew 4:17, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Yet, there was a sense where Christ's reign was never fully established upon the earth. It's not because Jesus tried to establish it, but failed. When talking to Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), otherwise, His servants would be fighting. It's not because the Jews refused the kingdom. Sure, Jesus mourned for Jerusalem, because they rejected Him (Matt. 23:37-39). Yet, it was prophesied that the Messiah would come and suffer (Isaiah 53). Jesus did suffer on the cross for the sins of those who believe. His reign would come later. It's not because Jesus lost His power. Right now, the Bible says that He is sitting at the right hand of God, waiting for His enemies to be made a footstool for His feet (according to Psalm 110). Jesus has the authority and power to crush Satan today. But, He refrains from doing so in order to manifest the beauty of His kindness and patience toward us.

And this prayer, "Thy kingdom come" is nothing more and nothing less than a prayer that Jesus would end His time of waiting and come back and fully consummate His reign as Messiah! This is the hope and expectation of every believer: that Jesus would come and bring His kingdom in full force to establish it fully. Listen to the hope of David Brainerd, "Oh that his kingdom might come in the world; that they might all love and glorify him, for what he is in himself; and that the blessed Redeemer might 'see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied!' 'Oh come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Amen.'" (written in his journal, Friday, Oct. 2, 1747). The return of Christ to establish his kingdom fully is the eager anticipation of every Christian.

When a king comes, he destroys his enemies and protects his friends (read 1 Kings 2-4 to see how Solomon destroyed his enemies when he established his reign). If you are still dead in your sins and have yet to be washed in the blood of Christ, the return of Christ will be a dreadful time for you. It will be filled with terror as your enemy returns to destroy you. Yet, for those of us who have placed our hope and trust in the cross of Christ, it will be a joyful time, as our redemption draws near. If you are innocent, when you stand before a judge, you have no fear, only an eager anticipation of your own vindication. Believers in Jesus Christ, have found our innocence in His innocence.

Listen to the joy of the world when Christ comes back: "Let the sea roar and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands; Let the mountains sing together for joy. Before the LORD; for He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with equity" (Ps. 98:7-9). Psalm 96 uses similar language, "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy. Before the LORD, for He is coming; For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, And the peoples in His faithfulness" (verses 11-13).

Perhaps we might be able to illustrate the joy of Christians when Christ returns by comparing it to a presidential election. Perhaps there have been a presidential election that you have followed very closely. You eagerly have wanted your man to win, because of your expectation that he will be better for our country. When he wins, there is great joy and rejoicing. Yet, when Christ returns, His reign and your joy will be far greater than that of any president.

And when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," this is what we pray. We pray for God's presence among us to be fully realized that we might behold Him fully.

Finally, this morning, let's look at ...  
Request #3: God's Righteousness

This is found in the second half of verse 10, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus teaches us to pray for God to bring heaven to earth. What things are like in heaven, we want them here on earth.

Think about what heaven is like:

1. There is unceasing praise given to God. We have already mentioned this in Is. 6:1-3; Rev. 4:8.
2. Jesus Christ is at the center of it all. Around the throne of Christ we hear, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever" (Rev. 5:12-13). D. L. Moody who said upon one occasion, "I want to sit down and look at Jesus a thousand years, and then I am going to say, Where's Paul?" (Bibliotheca Sacra, #432, p. 491).
3. There is no unrighteousness. In heaven angels are perfectly obedient and redeemed souls are perfectly obedient. The life Jesus described in Matthew chapter 5 is perfectly carried out. There is no murder (or even thoughts of hatred). There is no sexual sin of any kind. Truth is told in every circumstance. Perfect love for one another exists.

When you are praying for God's will to be done on earth, you are praying for the complete obedience of everyone upon the earth. In other words, you are praying for God's Kingdom to be fully established ("Thy kingdom come"). You are praying for God's Name to be honored in every way ("hallowed be Thy name"). In this sense, all of the first three requests in this pattern of prayer that Jesus gives are synonyms. They are all talking about the same thing. They are all describing God's perfect presence, rule and reign among us, which obviously is not happening right now. Today, people are rebelling against God, shaking their fists at him, doing whatever fits their fancy. These first three requests are an expression of our desire that God would bring all rebellion to an end, both in the world, and in us. This is what made Martin Luther call this, a "fearful prayer" (quoted by Kent Hughes, "The Sermon on the Mount," p. 175). In effect, you are praying for God to establish His reign and rule, right now.

If you think about it, there is something immensely practical about these requests. D. A. Carson said it well, "These three petitions, though they focus on God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will, are nevertheless prayers that he may act in such a way that his people will hallow his name, submit to his reign, and do his will. It is therefore impossible to pray this prayer in sincerity without humbly committing oneself to such a course" (Expositor's Bible Commentary, pp. 170-171). **They are all requests for God to be made big and for us to be made small.** They are all requests for God to accomplish His purpose in my life and in the lives of others. Such an attitude places us in willful surrender to His will in every area of our lives.

If these first three requests teach us anything, they teach us that we need to begin our prayers with God. If you are in the habit, of going right to God with your needy requests and laying them out before God, I would ask for you to begin considering God in His rightful place, before you begin asking for prayer requests. It will humble you and give you a correct perspective of anything that you might ask God for in prayer.

The early church understood this. When Peter and John were arrested for preaching in Jesus the resurrection from the dead (Acts 4:2), they were interrogated and finally released. They came back to speak with the others of everything that had happened. When the other believers heard this, they lifted their voices to God and prayed. They first focussed upon **God as creator**, "O Lord, it is Thou who DIDST MAKE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM." Then they focussed upon **God's perfect control** as they continued, "who by the Holy Spirit, [through] the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say, 'WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD, AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.'" They then reflected upon how **God had brought it all to pass**, "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur." **Only upon focussing first upon God did the early church turn to their requests**, "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:24-30).

Notice how they started first with God, putting Him in His place. The result was that they were put in their place. Thus, their own requests were completely in line with God's purposes, as they wanted to continue to spread His name. In verse 31 we see that God shook the place and granted their requests.

We need to do the same. Before we ever get to requests, we must first acknowledge God's rightful place. One unknown writer demonstrated how each phrase in this prayer demonstrated our need to place God first and ourselves in complete submission to Him.

I cannot say "our" if I live only for myself.  
I cannot say "Father" if I do not endeavor each day to act like his child.  
I cannot say "who art In heaven" if I am laying up no treasure there.  
I cannot say "hallowed be thy name" if I am not striving for holiness  
I cannot say "thy Kingdom come" if I am not doing all in my power to hasten that wonderful event.  
I cannot say "thy Will be done" if I am disobedient to his Word.  
I cannot say "on earth as It Is in heaven" if I'll not serve him here and now.  
I cannot say "give us this day our daily bread" if I am dishonest or am seeking things by subterfuge.  
I cannot say "forgive as our debts" if I harbor a grudge against anyone.  
I cannot say "lead us not into temptation" if I deliberately place myself in its path.  
I cannot say "deliver us from evil" if I do not put on the whole armor of God.  
I cannot say "thine is the kingdom" if I do not give the King the loyalty due him from a faithful subject .  
I cannot attribute to him "the power" if I fear what men may do.  
I cannot ascribe to him "the glory" if I'm seeking honor only for myself, and  
I cannot say "forever" if the horizon of my life is bounded completely by time .

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on July 7, 2002 by Steve Brandon.  
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