

# 11 HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

BOB: You know, I think God has it in for me.

CHRIS: What do you mean by that?

BOB: I've had an awful week. I flunked my math exam. Terry broke up with me. We lost the game—and it was my fumble that did it. Why shouldn't I think God has it in for me?

CHRIS: Because God doesn't work that way. You know that.

BOB: I know that? How do I know that? I know what happens to me. That's what I know and I tell you I think God's got it in for me.

CHRIS: Bob, there are other explanations for everything that happened.

BOB: Okay. Let's hear them.

CHRIS: Well, number one, not studying. Number two, acting like a jerk. And number three, slippery hands. But wait, Bob. You're thinking about God as if God is just some sort of big guy who holds a grudge. Well,

God's not like that. God is different than human beings.

BOB: Different? How?

CHRIS: Okay, sit down. We've got a lot to talk about.

- Because God wants to be known as a loving parent, it is easy for us to go too far and forget that God is God and not just some big human being.

The First Petition of the Lord's Prayer, coming as it does right after we've addressed God as Father, serves to remind us of who God really is.

## 3 STATEMENTS

- God's name is not only God's label, but also a "container" for all God has revealed about the divine personality.
- To keep God's name hallowed is to remain aware of how different God is from humans.
- God's holy nature is evident in Scripture, the sacraments, the world—everywhere.

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*Source*

## WHAT IS HOLY?

The Lord's Prayer uses a word that is hardly ever used, except in that prayer. Have you ever heard anyone ever use the word *hallowed*? Probably not. Many people aren't sure what the word



SAREN HOLSINGER MULLEN/UNICORN

*God's name is not God's label, but rather a "container" for all God has revealed about the divine personality.*

means, even though they pray it in the Lord's Prayer. *Hallowed* means "holy." We would pray the same thing if we prayed "holy be your name."

Holy is a word used more often, but people may understand it no better than hallowed. When we call God holy, we are saying that God is totally different from us—sacred. When we pray that God keep the divine name holy, we are really praying that *we* be kept aware that God is totally an "other" being. Because God is so "other," what we actually know about God is what God chooses to disclose or let us know.

There are many ways and times that God has revealed something about the divine nature. The main revelation was in Jesus. Jesus was God's fullest self-revelation.

Another important revelation was way back in the days of Moses when the people of Israel were still held captive in Egypt. Following are two portions of the story of when God called Moses.

Read Exodus 3:1-6 and answer these questions.

1. Why did God tell Moses to take off his shoes?

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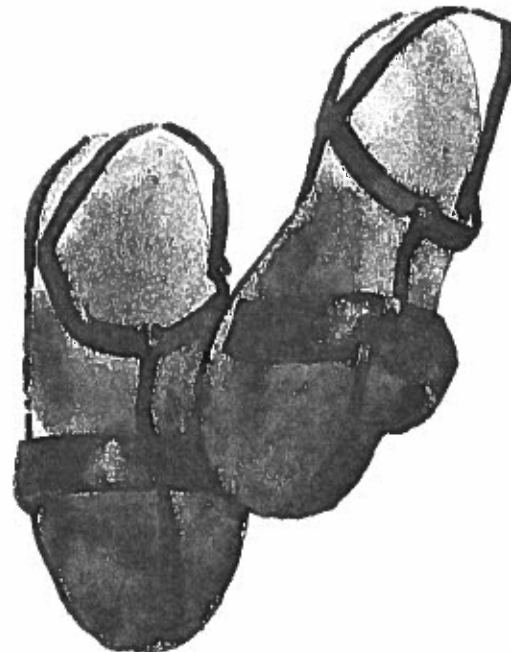
2. What did God say to help Moses know who God was?

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3. Why do you think Moses was afraid to look at God?

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Now read Exodus-3:13-15. In this section, Moses is trying to learn God's name so he could tell the people of Israel who God is. What happened?

1. What was God's answer to Moses' question about the name?

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2. What do you think "I AM WHO I AM" means?

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3. In the end, how did God insist on being remembered?

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Hold on to these thoughts because the session will return to this encounter between God and Moses.

## WHAT DOES MARTIN LUTHER SAY?

Turn in your book to page 172 where you will see the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer and Luther's explanation. It is in the form of answers to two questions.

The first question is "What does this mean?" Luther doesn't say that we can do something to make God's name holy; it already is. Luther points out that this petition is really about us keeping God's name holy or treating the name in a holy way.

The second question is "When does this happen?" His answer has two parts. First, he says that "whenever God's Word is taught in its truth and purity and we as children of God live in harmony with it," we are treating the name as holy.

Second, though, Luther points out, "anyone who teaches or lives contrary to the Word of God dishonors God's name among us."

Honoring God by knowing and telling the truth about God seem to be

Luther's key concerns. When you think about it, such activities on our part are not easily accomplished. Keeping God's name holy requires constant attention to our words and our actions.

## WHEN A NAME IS NOT A LABEL

The story of Moses can teach us much about the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer. First, did you get a sense in the story of Moses that God is some big human being? Not at all. God appears as being totally different than Moses, so much so that Moses had to look away.

More importantly, the discussion over God's name tells us something essential. In the days of Moses and in the days of Jesus, a name was not just a label; it was information about the character of the person.

When Moses asked God for God's name, God actually gave him a pretty clear answer. First God said, "I am who I am." That certainly tells us something, doesn't it? God is God.

But God also said that God is "the Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." That's long for a label, but right to the point for a description of God's character. Moses and the people of Israel knew about the God of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. They knew that this God had proved faithful and powerful. They also knew that this God was committed to a promise made to Abraham: Abraham's descendants would be God's chosen people.

When we pray the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer, we pray that we keep God's name holy. But we also remember that *God's name is not God's label, but rather a "container" for all God has revealed about the divine personality.* It is this nature of God that we are to respect and to keep holy.

## A REMINDER

When we pray "hallowed be your name," we are reminding ourselves that the essence or character of God is dif-

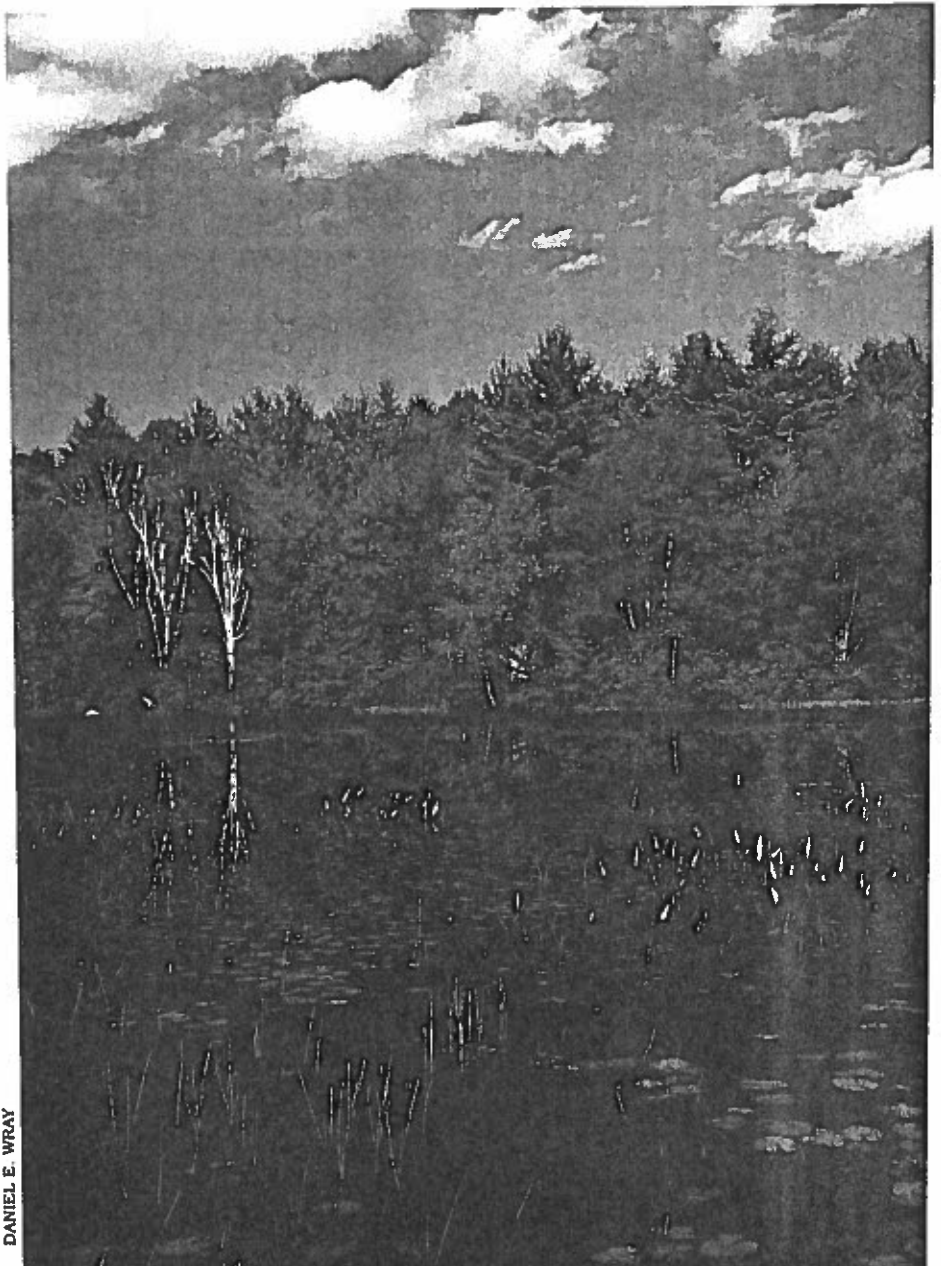
ferent from the essence or character of human beings. That is what makes this the ideal First Petition in the Lord's Prayer.

We begin the prayer by asking that we be put in our place. We are not God. God is God and no one else. Likewise God is not us. *To keep God's name hallowed is to remain aware of how different God is from humans.*

## SEEING THE HOLY GOD AT WORK

*God's holy nature is evident in Scripture, the sacraments, the world—everywhere.* The wonder of God is all around us, if we look. In the margin, write down some of the ways and places you can look to see your holy God.

*God's holy nature is evident in Scripture, the sacraments, the world—everywhere.*



DANIEL E. WRAY

# Shaping life

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Below are some statements people might sometimes think or say. What is your reaction to each statement?

*To keep God's name hallowed is to remain aware of how different God is from humans.*

● "I don't have to go to church. I know all I need to know about God by watching a beautiful sunset."

● "God is so different that I think we waste our time trying to figure God out."

● "If God really was out there someplace, there would be no more wars."

● "Oh, I believe in God. I'm just not sure God believes in me."

## AS ONE PUT IT . . .

Below is a poem that has no title. It was written by Dag Hammarskjöld. Before reading the poem, you should know that Hammarskjöld was Swedish and was the Secretary General of the United Nations until he died in a plane crash in 1961.

What is remarkable about Hammarskjöld is that his writings over the years show a constant struggle to understand who he was as one of God's children. This poem was written just two months before he died. Can you read it carefully and see how Hammarskjöld finally came to experience God as totally other and yet, at the same time, so intimately involved in his life? If we dared to give the poem a name, perhaps "Hallowed Be Your Name" would be appropriate.



BETTS ANDERSON/UNICORN

July 19, 1961

Have mercy  
Upon us.  
Have mercy  
Upon our efforts,  
That we  
Before Thee, In love and in faith,  
Righteousness and humility,  
May follow Thee,  
With self-denial, steadfastness,  
and courage,  
And meet Thee  
In the silence.

Give us  
A pure heart  
That we may see Thee,  
A humble heart  
That we may hear Thee,  
A heart of love  
That we may serve Thee,  
A heart of faith  
That we may live Thee,  
Thou  
Whom I do not know  
But Whose I am.  
Thou  
Whom I do not comprehend  
But Who hast dedicated me  
To my fate.  
Thou—

From MARKINGS by Dag Hammarskjöld, translated by Leif Sjöberg and W. H. Auden. Copyright © 1964 Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Used by permission.

## FURTHER

# opportunities

### *Bible Reading and Reflection*

Read these Bible passages during the week and take time to reflect on their meaning.

- Genesis 17:1-8
- Matthew 1:18-23
- Matthew 6:5-6
- Matthew 6:7-15
- Ephesians 4:1-7

### *Memory*

This week, memorize the two questions and answers that form Martin Luther's explanation to the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer (see page 172).

### *Activity 1*

Make a poster for your classroom. Title the poster "Keeping God's Name Holy." On the poster, put cut-out pictures of ways that God's name is kept holy among us. Pictures might include people praying, helping others, worshiping, teaching, and so forth.

### *Activity 2*

Cut a number of footprints from construction paper. During the

week, stay watchful of places where you have seen the presence of the holy God and write these places on the footprints. For instance, "In the hospital with grandma" or "In my room when I was sad." Bring the footprints to class and place them around the room. Be ready to tell about any of the footprints that were especially meaningful to you.

### *Activity 3*

Decode the following message. Each Bible verse contains one word of the message. Look for the first word of the first passage, the second word of the second passage, and so forth. Once you have found all the words, unscramble them to find the message. (Note: this puzzle only works with the Revised Standard Version of the Bible—RSV.)

Acts 4:15; Mark 10:7; Psalm 55:11; Zechariah 13:6 (strip off the last letter); 1 Corinthians 4:11; Romans 16:16; Genesis 6:11; John 12:7; Psalm 32:6; Acts 5:32; Numbers 24:11; Amos 5:15; Luke 11:17; 1 Corinthians 11:32; 1 Kings 10:1; 2 Kings 23:31; Matthew 24:15; 1 Peter 2:12; Jeremiah 50:37.

## FOCUS

ON  
WHAT  
IS A  
PETITION?

Most of us know that a petition is something that we take around to a lot of people to get signed by them. A petition is usually something that requests something of someone else. The

Lord's Prayer has seven petitions, but no signers are required. The use of the word here has to do with asking God for something.