

# The Power of Praying in God's Name

Twelve Brief Studies of Prayer

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- **And the Place Was Shaken: How to Lead a Powerful Prayer Meeting**  
by John Franklin
- **Disciple's Prayer Life: Walking in Fellowship** with God by T.W. Hunt

## Study 1: Calling on God's Name

Genesis 4:26

A person is his or her name. Just as in English today, a reference in Hebrew to people's names referred to their reputation and their character. In fact, we often speak of maintaining—or restoring—our good name, meaning our good reputation.

Likewise, God's name stands for his character as embodied through his actions and behavior. The meaning of God's name, the way in which it revealed aspects of his character, the importance of people's bowing at the sound of his name and praising it, and its connection with God's reputation—these are all components of a great “name” theology in the Old Testament. God reveals his name, in its many different forms and aspects, as a way of inviting his people to live with him in a dynamic, intimate relationship.

God's name tells us what kind of God he is. In fact, there are over 300 names for God given in the Bible. Why so many? Perhaps, it is because no one name can adequately convey all that God is. Each is a revelation of the holy, sacred character of God. For example, God is:

- “A holy God”—the only attribute of God repeated three times, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty” (Isa. 6:3 NIV). When we say God is a holy God that means that not only is he different, but that nothing can compare with him. He is distinct, unique, one of a kind. He is God and we are not.
- “A sanctuary”—a consecrated place; a place of refuge; a place of protection. With God we find sacredness and peace and calmness, protection and refuge from a world that has hurt us and abused us. Coming to God is like coming home where we know we are safe, we are accepted, we are loved. And, there is nothing we have to do to earn it.
- “A merciful God”—while we deserve God's justice and punishment, he chooses instead to look upon us with mercy. Aren't you thankful?
- “Alpha and Omega”—Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter, therefore, God is the “A and Z.” He is the beginning and the end, and everything in between. He is all we need.

It is the name of God that we need to call on. We need him and all that the character and attributes that he brings to us. Humans first began calling on the name of the Lord in Genesis 4:26. "At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26 NIV). When we call on God's name it is more than using a moniker to address him. We are calling on his character, his reputation, his attributes, his power, and his presence.

## Study 2: Make a Name for Yourself

Genesis 11:4, 2 Samuel 7:18-29

We have all heard about people who left humble beginnings to find greatness or stardom or riches: the kid who becomes a world-class athlete, the poor man who becomes a successful entrepreneur, the girl from the broken home that becomes a movie star. Often just one of their names is all that is needed: Madonna, Oprah, Shaq, Trump, Obama. They have earned success, status. As their achievements increase a greater reputation is gained. They, as we say, “have made a name for themselves.”

Hence, associated with a name is “renown,” “glory,” and “fame.”

This need to make a name for ourselves has been one of the latent problems with mankind, even from the beginning of time. We want to make a name for ourselves. We find this desire early in history. On the plain of Shinar the world's population settled. We can read this story in Genesis 11. As the inhabitants increased, the people wanted to build a tower that reached to the heavens. Why would they pursue such an action? For the same reason athletes want to be the best and business people want to amass a fortune. They answer themselves, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves . . .” (Gen. 11:4 NIV). The problem with the building of the tower of Babel was that the builders wanted to exalt their own name in the process, not God's.

Ted Williams, the famous Boston Red Sox slugger, would often say, “I want to walk down the street and have people say, ‘There goes the greatest hitter in baseball.’” Nothing wrong with being the greatest hitter in baseball or building skyscrapers or amassing a fortune unless you receive the glory and the fame instead of God.

Likewise, God wants to make a name for himself. David prayed, “How great you are, O Sovereign Lord! There is no one like you, and there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself . . . so that your name will be great forever. Then men will say, ‘The Lord Almighty is God over Israel!’” (2 Samuel 7:22-23, 26 NIV). David could only marvel at how great the Lord is, no one is or could be his equal. Only a divine being could

possibly do or be all that David attributed to the Lord: "there is no God but" the Lord.

Our God is without peer. His name trumps all other names. Therefore, God makes a name for himself through his fulfilled promises, his benevolent actions, his tender mercies, his redemptive love, his abiding presence. Let's take a closer look at a few of his names:

Adonai-Jehovah: The Lord our Sovereign  
El-Shaddai: The God Who is Sufficient for the Needs of His People  
Jehovah-Jireh: The Lord our Provider  
Jehovah-Ropheka: The Lord our Healer  
Jehovah-Shammah: The Lord is Present  
Jehovah-Eloheenu: The Lord our God

God never fails, because his name is above all names (Phil. 2:9). We are to bring renown and glory and fame to him and to him alone. We are to exalt his name. Place it high on a pedestal. Revere it. Acknowledge it. Worship it.

## Study 3: What's In a Name?

Exodus 2-3 (3:13-15)

God revealed his divine name to Moses in rather dramatic fashion. Moses, a fugitive, was tending sheep in Sinai. One day, all of a sudden he sees a bush burning that does not consume itself. He goes to check it out only to hear a voice asking him to remove his sandals, for the ground he is standing on is holy ground. From that bush Moses hears the word of God and revelation of his holy name.

God revealed his name in the context of his care for his hurting people. God's response came to them in four significant verbs: God hears, he remembers, he sees, and, he is concerned. "God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them" (Exodus 2:24 NIV). Then God adds two new dimensions to his relatedness. He says, "I have come down to rescue them . . ." (Ex. 3:8 NIV). And his promise to Moses is, "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:12 NIV).

Each of these verbs sets the context for the revelation of the divine name. God hears the pleas of his people; he remembers his covenant with his people; he sees the distress of his people; he is concerned about his people; he rescues his people; he promises to be with his people.

Then he gives his name in response to Moses' question: "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (Exodus 3:13 NIV). In good Hebrew style, for emphasis and clarity, God reveals his name in two parts.

First, God says, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14 NIV). Arguably these words may be the most difficult to translate in the Bible. Those five words in English come from the older form of the Hebrew verb "to be." In other words, God's name—"I AM WHO I AM"—speaks of his essential being. That God is! is essential to the meaning of deity.

In the second part of the revelation in verse 15, God moves from the first person "I AM," to the third person "He is." The Hebrew is Yahweh, translated "The LORD." Notice what God says, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the

name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation” (Exodus 3:15 NIV).

While several designations for deity are recorded in the Bible, essentially there is only one name—Yahweh. The English Bible traditionally translates this as The LORD, with all capital letters. This name is abundant with meaning. God's name is not simple; it is profound. God's name is not trivial; it is exquisite.

The name Yahweh and its short form Yah occurs over 6,800 times in the Old Testament—more than any other word. Yahweh is God's self revelation. Debates over its meaning have gone on for centuries. Some have suggested that it means absolute being, creation, and benevolent presence are all suggested. But God is revealed as One who cannot be fully comprehended in a word.

From the bush, a symbol of his hiding, and fire, a mark of his holiness, comes the word of his name, a symbol of his dynamic presence—“I AM WHO I AM.”

What's in a name? When that name is Yahweh, everything is in that name: life, reality, and relationship to the living God. Hence, to know the name of God is to know God as he has revealed himself.

## Study 4: For His Name's Sake

Psalm 23:3 and Selected Scriptures

Repeatedly we are instructed to live for God's name sake.

- God guides us for his name's sake (Psa. 23:3);
- God forgives our sins for his name sake (Psalm 25:11);
- God leads us for the sake of his name (Psalm 31:3);
- God delivers us from sin for his name's sake (Psalm 79:9);
- God deals with us out of his goodness for his name's sake (Psalm 109:21);
- God lets us live for his name's sake (Psalm 143:11).

Here's the point: God does what he does for his sake, not ours. We often want to know and do God's will, want forgiveness and deliverance of sin, and life on this planet for our sake. Why? Because we think, if we have all of those things it will make us happy, cause us to be blessed, give us provision. God says, "I want to give you these things—but not for your sake, but for my sake."

We exist as God's people, alive and thriving in God's kingdom, to embody his name. When God acts for his name's sake, he is acting in accordance with his revealed character and to uphold the honor of his revelation, which has been staked upon his people.

Let's take a closer look at Psalm 23—The Shepherd Psalm. As we studied previously, one of God's names is Jehovah-Rohi, The Lord our Shepherd. Think about sheep and shepherds for a moment. Sheep exist for the benefit of the shepherd? Sheep were lead into zones of comfort in order to be prepared for zones of discomfort. In other words, sheep were expected to produce a profit for the shepherd. The shepherd took care of the sheep, not for the sheep's benefit but for the shepherd's needs.

Likewise, we, God's sheep, exist for God, the Shepherd. To change or alter that relationship in any way would turn us into idolaters, where we use God for our benefit, rather than allowing God to use us for his benefit. We live for him.

God's reputation is at stake by the way his followers live. We are his hands and feet in the world. We are his ambassadors. We represent God to a watching world. When we fail to live righteously we are hurt, but the name



of God is hurt more. When we fail to take God's lead we are damaged, but the reputation of God is damage greater.

Have you ever bragged on your children? "Billy passed the bar." "Jamie's in her first year of residency." "Sally has three kids and bought a house on the lake." We brag on our kids because it makes us look good. God wants to brag on his children, too. He wants to say to a watching world: "Tim always finds himself in tempting situations, but he is faithful." "Betty works at a job where her boss wants her to deceive the clients, but she is honest." "See Sue, it would be so easy for her to be joyless in her desperate situation, but she's joyful." God wants to say of each of us: "Those are my sheep, my children, my followers. I'm proud of them. They make me look good."

When we understand the relationship we have with God, then we look to him in a different light. We see him through his name that benefit and provide for us. We look to him as:

He in whom I trust  
He that calls you  
He that speaks  
He that is mighty  
He that is true  
He that gives strength and power unto his people.

Knowing him and his name, we know the special bond that we have with him—a bond that a sheep has with a shepherd. The shepherd protects and cares and calls his sheep by name. Isn't that a wonderful thought? We are to know God's name and by the same token the God of the Universe knows each one of us by name. We are his.

## Study 5: Praise His Name

Psalms 138:1-3

Repeatedly throughout scripture we are commanded and encouraged to praise the name of God. But, what does it mean to praise God's name?

Praise is extolling the God and thanking him for what he has done, is doing, and continues to do. Praise is telling of his wonderful acts and lifting his great name to the highest heavens. Praise is earth-shattering, ground-shaking, hand-clapping, feet dancing, trumpets blaring, and bell ringing. But it is also acceptance of our situation, submission to his Lordship, acquiescence to his will, and rejoices in his plan.

God has chosen to manifest himself or reveal himself in the praises of his people. David wrote of God, "Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises (or dwelling in the praises) of Israel" (Psa. 22:3 ESV). God is enthroned in our praises. God is made Lord through our praise. We give God the right to rule and reign in our lives when we praise him.

This fact is the significance. We often think that praise is simply thanking God or singing a few songs or raising our hands or kneeling before God. While all of those things are elements of the act of praise, they don't get at the core of praise. When we praise the name of God we are saying that whatever the outcome to our prayers we will acknowledge God's sovereignty, his rule, his reign, his right to do whatever he pleases. The true test of whether or not we praise God is accepting from God the answers to our prayers that we don't want. It is easy to praise God when we get from God what we want, but what about when we don't get what we want. Do we praise God then? Real praise is accepting from God whatever comes our way.

Merlin Carothers wrote in *Power in Praise*: "Praising God is not a patent medicine, a cure-all, or a magic formula for success. It is a way of life that is solidly backed up in God's Word. We praise God, not for the expected results, but for the situation just as it is. As long as we praise God with an eye secretly looking for the expected results, we're only kidding ourselves, and we can be certain that nothing will happen to change us or our situation. Praise is based on a total and joyful acceptance of the present as a part of God's loving, perfect will for us. Praise is not based on what we think or hope will happen in the future."

William Law, an eighteenth century English clergyman, stated: "If anyone could tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing . . . ."

We praise God, not for what we expect to happen or hope to happen or even want to happen. We praise God for who he is and where we are right now. How would this change our prayers? How often do we pray for someone to get well physically when maybe God is using the illness to get their attention? How often do we pray for a new situation—a new job, a spouse, a child, a bonus, or any number of "good" things—when God is trying to teach us patience and character where we are now?

Does this mean that we just passively accept whatever lot we find ourselves in? Does this mean that we develop the "whatever will be, will be" attitude? No. The fact is that when we honestly praise God, something does happen as a result. His power will flow into a situation, and we will notice, sooner or later, a change in us or around us. The change may be that we come to experience a real joy and happiness in the midst of what once appeared to be a miserable situation, or the situation may change. But this is the result of praise, and must not be the motivation for praise.

## Study 6: He is Lord

Malachi 1:6-14

Billy Graham has said, "Ninety-five percent of church members live defeated, unvictorious lives . . . because they have never made Jesus Lord." George Sanchez wrote, "Ninety-five percent of the problems people have in their spiritual lives and for which they seek counseling are basically a result of a poor understanding of who Jesus Christ is—he is Lord." Well, let's try to get to some understanding of what "Lord" means.

*Adonai*, usually translated as "Lord" in English, generally has a capital *L* followed by *ord* in small letters. The name occurs nearly 300 times in the Old Testament. 215 of those times it is used in its singular form, *Adon*, in reference to people, often a title of respect or honor. In much the same way we would say "sir" or "your honor." It could mean "master" or "lord."

When *Adonai* is used of God, it is always stated in the plural. This could suggest the triune nature of God, who reveals himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. However, it is possible that the plural *Adonai* is used to enhance, or underline and exalt, the awesome majesty of God. In either case, we find that this name *Adonai* compels God's people to recognize and submit to his Lordship in our lives. This is reflected in at least three ways.

First, the name *Adonai* recognizes Jesus' ownership of those who call him Lord. We struggle with the idea of ownership, especially with giving it up. We are educated and taught that value of ownership—own a home, own your car, own land, own possessions, own a cemetery plot. But, the truth is that we are stewards while God is the rightful owner of everything and everyone. As Lord he requires worship and obedience from every member of the human family.

God asks a question recorded in Malachi 1:6, that we need to ask ourselves. "'A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?'" says the LORD Almighty. 'It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name'" (Mal. 1:6 NIV). The priests, instead of bringing a pure and acceptable offering, had dishonored and defiled God's name by offering animals that were lame and sick. The priests had brought reproach upon God's name by failing to acknowledge God ownership of all that exists. Their willingness to offer less than the best in sacrifice to God

demonstrated their failure to honor his name and recognize his authority as Master and Lord of all.

Second, the name *Adonai* requires complete submission of those who call him Lord. Thus, when we call God Lord we are saying that we will willingly and obediently serve him. Remember what Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21 NIV). "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46 NIV).

Here's the bottom line: The name *Adonai* denotes that Jesus is Lord. He's the boss. The King. The Master. The Ruler. Look at what Malachi recorded: "'For I am a great king,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and my name is to be feared among the nations'" (Mal. 1:14 NIV).

As Lord, Jesus takes control. We resign as general manager of the universe. We hang a new sign on the door of our heart that says, "Under New Management." We understand that when Jesus is Lord, he rules and reigns in every part of our lives. He becomes Lord not only generally, but also, specifically. Like a house, when Jesus enters our lives, he wants to take control. He doesn't want to just be a resident, he desires to be president. He is not a tenant, he is the landlord.

## Study 7: He is Personal

### Psalm 91

Two major philosophies existed in the Greek and Roman worlds—Stoicism and Epicureanism. The Stoics said that the gods were apathetic and indifferent. The Epicureans felt that the gods were uninterested and detached.

Modern thought does no better with descriptions of God. For many people God is a distant Grandfather image that has little input in one's life. Or God is a Life Force, some impersonal nether being unrelated to the real world. Others sense that God is an unloving judge that seeks only to be involved in one's life when punishment can be inflicted. Others see God as an apathetic Creator. Having created the world he now leaves it alone to choose its own destiny. Others see God as far removed, a distant, unapproachable power, having faded into the past with little meaning.

How do you see God?

In Psalm 91, David understands and knows the personal nature of God. "I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust' . . . who is my refuge" (Psa. 91:2, 9 NIV). Here was a man who knew God intimately. He dwelled with him (see verse 1). He lived in conscious fellowship with him, drawing strength from him daily. And, God did some amazing things for him: He saved him (v. 3). He covered him (v. 4). He protected him (vv. 5-8). He guarded him (vv. 11-13). God restates what he will do for David in verses 14-16. Notice the eight "I wills" of God:

- I will rescue (v. 14).
- I will protect (v. 14).
- I will answer (v. 15).
- I will be with him (v. 15).
- I will deliver (v. 15).
- I will honor (v. 15).
- I will satisfy (v. 16).
- I will show him salvation (v. 16).

While all this is true to the nature of God. There is another very important reason God acted. Don't overlook the important basis for God's action. The key is tucked away in verse fourteen: "for he acknowledges my name." David recognized, respected, and trusted in the name—the person, nature, and character of God. But he could only do that because he knew God in a personal and intimate way.

Let me remind you that God is not simply a power, he is a person. As a person, you can relate to him and love him and get to know him. "My" God is personally involved and absolutely intimate in nature. While I can't possess him, I can be possessed by him. While I can't understand all about him, I can know him.

When we tell someone our name, we reveal a certain willingness to be known. By revealing his name, God is seeking to make himself known to us. He is a God with whom we can relate and get to know. We can know him personally as:

My Father  
My God  
My King  
My Redeemer  
My Savior

He is a God who is present. He is not simply a God who is out there, but a God who is right here. He is my God, your God, a personal God that walks with us in the here and now. Once I saw etched in a door the words "God was here." When I returned to the spot a week later, someone had marked through "was" and etched above it "is." *God is here.* That's our God, he is here, every day, every step, every turn, every situation.

## Study 8: The Definitive God

Exodus 20:1-3

Often the definitive article “the” is used before God's names, and, rightly so. For example, God is:

The Almighty  
The eternal God  
The glorious LORD  
The Great, the Mighty God  
The Holy One of God  
The Highest

To distinguish *God* from other *gods* writers will do just what I did in this sentence. They will capitalize the “G” for God we know as “The Holy One” and use the lower case “g” to refer to all other gods. Our God is not one among many. He is *the* God not a god. He is not first and the other gods come second, third, fourth, and so on. He is it. He is not a territorial God, but a universal one. There is no other.

Consequently, as God states in the first of the Ten Commandments, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:2-3 NIV), and as his name indicates with the definitive article “the,” God has a place of prominence.

Why is God the definitive (ultimate, perfect, best, authoritative) God?

One, God is definitive because of his person. The phrase, “I am the LORD your God” (Ex. 20:2a NIV), speaks of God's person. We see three names of God in this phrase.

- “I am” speaks of his essential being as first mentioned in Exodus 3:14.
- “the LORD” is Yahweh. The name most closely linked to God's redeeming acts in the history of his chosen people. We know God because of what he had done. This God had just saved his people from the tyranny of slavery in Egypt.
- “God” is Elohim, the plural form of the simpler name El. It is the name most frequently used for God in the Old Testament. The name El, probably means “first” as in “Lord,” and indicates that God is the strong and mighty one.



But notice the other word in this phrase. It is the word "your," indicating that God who is essential to all of life, the redeemer, the first among all wants to be known in a personal way. He wants to be involved and a part of your life. He wants to give of himself to you. It is as if God is shouting at us: "Know me! Acknowledge me! Remember me! I am the Lord your God!"

The truth is everybody has a god. A god could be defined as anything that will have first place in your life. Martin Luther remarked, "Whatever thy heart clings to and relies upon, that is properly thy God." Security, position, power, social prestige, profession, job—it is not uncommon for any of these to replace God. The question you must ask of yourself is, will your god satisfy the needs and yearning of your heart. Bowing down before any god but the true and living God of Scripture is like hugging a mannequin. It can't respond. It can't produce. It can't offer anything to anyone. Why? Because it is impersonal, a non-being. On the other hand, the living and true God wants to respond to your needs and your cries for help. He wants to help because that is his nature.

Two, God is definitive because of his power. God reminded the people of Israel of his power by saying that I am the one ". . . who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2b NIV). The Ten Commandments were given to the children of Israel three months after their Exodus from Egypt. During the preceding three months, God reminded them of what he had done.

Many people today would have us think that while God is not dead, God is growing old and getting tired. The fact remains that God is not even out of breath. God abounds in power today as in the days of the Exodus.

Three, God is definitive because that is his place. The first of the Ten Commandments says it succinctly, "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3 NIV). God not only deserves and desires the definitive role; he demands it. God will not play second fiddle to anyone. He will have no rivals. He will not share his place with anyone or anything. The words *before me* literally could be translated as "against my face," meaning "in preference to me." It expresses God's insistence that he is to be the only God of Israel.

This first command is affirmed in a remarkable sentence, which for the Jew is the heart of the Torah: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one"

(Deut. 6:4 NIV). The Jews called this The Shema. It is the statement most often on their mouths in worship. To that statement of faith and practice is added, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5 NIV).

The central thrust of this commandment can be summed up in one word—priority. God is priority, not one among many. As the saying goes, "God is president, not just resident in your life." The rest of the commandments mean little or nothing unless God is recognized as the definitive one.

God is our definitive God. A throne room exists in your heart with only one throne. God's place is on the throne for we will have no other gods before him.

## Study 9: Misusing God's Name

Exodus 20:7

The third of the Ten Commandments informs us that we should be very careful about the use and misuse of God's name. At first sight the third commandment seems to be banning profanity. But careful study reveals that much more is at stake. God's name represents his character and his nature. His name tells us what kind of God he is. Of the over 300 names for God given in the Bible, each is a revelation of the holy, sacred character of God. Never are they to be uttered or treated lightly.

The name of God was so profoundly sacred that the orthodox Jews would not pronounce the name of God in normal conversation. In fact, as the scribes were making copies of the Holy Scripture, when they came to the name of God they place their pen down, rise, bathe themselves, and put on different garments. Then they would write with a pen that had never been used before the holy name of God. It was that holy, that sacred, that revered, and that honored.

Unfortunately, our society, including well intentioned believers, misuses the name of God daily. The words *misuse* or *vain* means empty of content or to make void of meaning. It describes that which is empty, idle, or insincere.

One of the ways God's name is misused is through profanity. Webster's dictionary defines profanity as to violate or treat with irreverence or contempt something regarded as sacred. The word literally means "before the temple." So, a profane word is one you would not use in church.

Another way God's name is misused is through intimidation. This occurs when one uses God and his name to get their way. Personally, I am always leery of someone who says, "God told me to tell you . . ." They are using God's name to get their way.

Still another way God's name is misused, oddly enough, is to impress. Sadly, some people use God's name to impress how spiritual they are. They become spiritual showoffs by employing spiritual sounding phrases and words while their heart is not in it. Every sentence is punctuated with the words, "Praise the Lord," "Hallelujah," "Amen," and "God Bless You." Don't misunderstand, I believe that we are to praise the Lord but let's not reduce God to a cliché. Well-meaning Christians have thoughtlessly

cheapened God's name by continually and mindlessly saying these spiritual sounding phrases. For many, these phrases have been used with no more thought or sincerity than the popular but empty, "Have a nice day."

God's name is also misused frivolously. We often hear God's name uttered as an exclamation point.

"I caught a ten pound fish." "Good God."

"Bill and Sarah got married." "O Lord."

"I split my pants." "O My God."

Such frivolous use of God's name reduces God to the level of "wow" and "amazing." God's name is not an exclamation point.

Let's not misuse God's name. Let's be ambassadors for him—not an embarrassment to him—because he is the Name above all names.

## Study 10: The God We Call Father

Matthew 6:9

In Isaiah the people cry out to God, “But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name” (Isa. 63:16 NIV). “Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand” (Isa. 64:8 NIV). God is addressed as Father. We see the “Father” name reflected in the following way:

A father to Israel  
Righteous Father  
Abba, Father  
Everlasting Father  
Father of glory  
The Living Father  
Father of lights  
Father of mercies  
Father of spirits  
Father of the Fatherless  
God and Father of all

Jesus addressed God as “Father” in his prayers and taught his disciples to do the same (Matt. 6; 7:11; 18:19; 26:39, 42; Mark 11:25; 11:2; John 4:23; 14:16). Jesus was praying the first words of the Lord's Prayer in the language of his heart, “Our Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:9 NIV).

When we pray “Our Father” it reminds us of the precious relationship we have with God. We are a part of God's family. We belong to God.

Who is the God we call Father?

He is personal. Jesus described God in two words—“Our Father.” Jesus was saying that God is a person and not simply a power. As a person, I can relate to him and love him and get to know him. This God we call Father is personally involved and absolutely intimate in nature.

He is paternal. For Jesus to call God Father was a radical thought. It shocked the Jews and awakened in them something lost long ago. God was called Father only seven times in the Old Testament. In this passage containing the Lord's Prayer Jesus calls God Father ten times. In fact, in all of the prayers of Jesus he used the word *Father* more than seventy times.

He is perfect. When Jesus referring to his Father "in heaven" he meant more than a place. He was referring to an attribute. The term means "to be lifted up" or "up-lifted." Heaven is generally thought of as being above. But again it is more than a location, it is a nature. What makes heaven heaven is that it is a perfect place. So when Jesus described his Father as being in heaven, he was implying that he is a perfect God. Earlier in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gave this description of his Father, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48 NIV).

He is preeminent. The next phrase "Hallowed be your name" means "to sanctify or set apart, to praise, to adore." In the context of this prayer it carries with it the thought to put God in his rightful place. "Hallowed be your name" is very Jewish in how it addresses God. It shows the deep reverence that Jesus says must accompany our approach to God in prayer. We come into God's presence remembering that God deserves our complete respect, our deepest awe and our submission.

Prayer begins with God. When you set God in his rightful place everything flows from there. All prayer is to begin with the character of God. When God is first, prayer makes sense.

## Study 11: In the Name of Jesus

John 14:13-14, 16:23-24

Over and over again in Scripture we read, "In my name," "In Jesus' name," or "In his name." The devils were powerless because of his name (Luke 10:17). The demons were cast out in his name (Mark 16:17-18). Healing occurred in his name (Acts 3:6, 3:16, 4:10). Salvation comes in his name (Acts 4:12, Rom. 10:13). We are to baptize in his name (Matt. 28:19). We are justified in his name (1 Cor. 6:11). Everything we do and say is done in his name (Col. 3:17). But, it is praying in Jesus' name that I want to bring to the forefront. Jesus has invited, urged, and commanded us to pray in his name and has promised incredible results.

(John 14:13-14 and John 16:23-24 are some of the most powerful verses in all of scripture related to prayer. In fact, when most of us pray we conclude with the phrase, "in Jesus' name." But what does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus?

1. When we pray in Jesus' name, we are admitting the bankruptcy of our own name.

When I pray in Jesus' name I come boldly before God because of the power of his name. It would be like a bride coming from abject poverty to marry a wealthy husband. At that point the woman takes the name of her husband and all that entails. She no longer acts in her name, but in his.

2. When we pray in Jesus' name, we identify with the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus has literally given us his name. When I use that name, I am confessing that he is mine and that I am his. It is like going to the bank of heaven, knowing I have nothing deposited. If I go in my name I will get absolutely nothing. But Jesus Christ has unlimited funds in heaven's bank, and he has granted me the privilege of going to the bank with his name on my checks.

3. When we pray in Jesus' name, we pray in his authority.

We are like the child who picked up a policeman's hat, wandered out onto a busy intersection and began to direct traffic. The people in the cars followed the child's direction because they respected his position of

authority. To pray in his name is to ask by his authority; and to ask by his authority is to ask in accordance to his will as revealed in his word.

4. When we pray in Jesus' name, we submit to his will.

Jesus' authority rested with his submission to the Father, so our authority rests with our submission to him. To ask in his name is to ask according to his nature, and his nature is one of submission. This, by the way, is why prayers that ask for things contrary to the Word of God will never be answered.

5. When we pray in Jesus' name, we are representing him and his interests here on earth.

It is much the same as the legal arrangement known as the power of attorney. In such matters one person may represent another in his absence. They act in their behalf. Jesus has given every believer unlimited and general power of attorney in all matters and with the right to use his name in every situation.

6. When we pray in Jesus' name, we pray expectantly.

When we pray in Jesus' name, we may expect the answer in accord with the value of his name. So we can pray with great and excited expectation.



## Study 12: My Favorite Name

Proverbs 22:1

According to The Associated Press, Emily again topped the list of most popular baby girl names last year (2008), registering as number one for the twelfth straight time. Jacob led among names for boys for the ninth year in a row. Biblical names continued to dominate the boys' list. Besides Jacob, other top picks for boys were Michael, Joshua, and Matthew. For girls, Isabella, Emma, and Ava has been the most popular female names since 1996.

When we think about God's name, which is your favorite?

Consider this partial listing of the names of God.

God is the I AM, The Author and Finisher of our faith, the Alpha and Omega, the Almighty One, the Redeemer, the Prince of Peace, the Anchor Behind the Veil, the Most High, the Bright and Morning Star, the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Savior, the Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Ancient of days, The Lord our Sovereign, The Everlasting God, The God who is sufficient for the needs of his people, the Eternal Creator, The Lord our Provider, The Lord our Banner, The Lord our Healer, The Lord our Peace, The Lord our Righteousness, The Lord our Sanctifier, The Lord of Hosts, The Lord is Present, The Lord our Shepherd, The Lord our Maker, The Lord our God, The Bread of Life, The door, The first and the last, the good shepherd, the light of the world, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, My Father, My friend, My help, My high tower, My lamp, My refuge, My salvation, My shepherd, My strength and power, My defense, My fortress, My glory, My goodness, My hiding place, My hope, My king, My love, My Redeemer, My rock, My Savior, My song, The Almighty, The Branch of Righteousness, The Christ, The Comforter, The glorious Lord, The great God, The Great, The Mighty God, The Holy One of God, The Deliverer, The bridegroom, the chief Shepherd, The Amen.

I have discovered that my favorite name for God is the one that I need the most I this particular time. If I am hurting I need him as the Comforter. If I have sinned I need him as the Redeemer. If I am sick I need him as the Healer. If I am spiritually hungry I need him as the Bread of Life. If I am in conflict I need him as the Prince of Peace.

The song "Your Name." says it best:

As morning dawns and evening fades  
You inspire songs of praise  
That rise from earth to touch Your heart and glorify Your Name

CHORUS

Your Name is a strong and mighty tower  
Your Name is a shelter like no other  
Your Name, let the nations sing it louder  
'Cause nothing has the power to save  
But Your Name

Jesus, in Your Name we pray  
Come and fill our hearts today  
Lord, give us strength to live for You and glorify Your Name

CHORUS

Your Name is a strong and mighty tower  
Your Name is a shelter like no other  
Your Name, let the nations sing it louder  
'Cause nothing has the power to save but Your Name