

## How to Pray Part 2

### *What Sort of Praying Do You Do?*

Years ago I paid to ride in a biplane with a stunt pilot. I certainly didn't know what to expect. He took me out over the beach at St. Augustine, the breeze blowing through my long hair as I sat in the open cockpit, gazing down at the surfers and sun bathers. I was a bit disappointed though as I thought the ride would be a bit more thrilling than that. It was beautiful up there though and peaceful. But then the pilot turned around and asked me if I wanted to try something a bit more adventurous. "Sure", I smiled. "Ok", was all he replied, and he then flew with the left wing pointing straight down toward the beach. That, I must admit felt a bit more scary and the thought came to me, "What if I fall out of the plane? Then we started flying upside down and I was not sure I liked that. We spun around several times and now I was feeling dizzy. Then came the most frightening part of all. The pilot flew straight up towards the sun and all I saw was red for a moment. This went on for what seemed like an eternity when all of a sudden he took the plane into a nosedive, and we barreled down towards the earth. At that point, I was no longer screaming with joy or even fear but praying with more fervency than I ever had in my life. "Please Lord, do not let me throw up!" After that brief thirty minutes in the air, I never found a roller coaster ride all that scary. I wonder, what sort of praying do you do? As we look at the model for praying Jesus gives us in the Sermon on the Mount, the Big Idea for today is, "God honors the prayers that honor Him."

Let's do a deep dive into the phrase, **hallowed be your name**, (Matthew 6: 9b NIV) A way to translate this and it is difficult to make the intensity of the meaning come out in English is, **your name is to be revered as holy...** The phrasing is in the form of a command. It is like we are telling ourselves as we pray that the name of God is to be revered, magnified. The idea here is similar to what we see in practice as the four living creatures in the book of Revelation circle the throne of God crying out, "**Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.**" (Revelation 4: 8c NIV) There is nothing silly or flippant about those cries of the living creatures. It is all business in this sense. You are speaking to God, not your buddy or your children or the used car salesman. The honor and reverence for God is at the very onset of all real praying. Without it, the rhetorical question ought to be asked, "What are you doing?" Praying, without the ultimate honor the living creatures had for God is just talking to the wind.

There is something important to note about the reverence for God commanded in the model prayer. It quite precisely tells us to revere God's name. That is a bit different than revering God alone and although it may seem like it is not much of a distinction, it does need to be addressed though because it is how Christ wants us to pray. The phrasing is fascinating when Moses spoke of what to look forward to when the Temple would eventually be built in the land promised to Israel. **And rejoice before the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name — you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you.** (Deuteronomy 16: 11 NIV) Notice, he does not say the Lord will dwell in the Temple. It is His Name that will be there. Your name is a symbolic representation of you. It is not you, however. When you walk in the door, I may think of your name, I could even call out your name in greeting, but your name is not you. That is rather obvious of course, it is not a new revelation. The name makes me think of you. It is almost impossible to say the name of a person either silently or out loud and not see that person in your mind. God, who you haven't seen or touched or heard audibly, (at least I assume you haven't), is known to us spiritually by His name. The Temple was never meant to be the literal house of God as if that was His last known address. It was instead the place where those who love Him and know Him as LORD think about Him and honor Him. The Name of the LORD resided there as the place where His people could spiritually connect with Him, and it was really Him.

When you revere the name of the Lord as holy, it is an act of your mind connecting with the Spirit of God who is real and really Him. You are not connecting with your better self or the essence of godness or godish ideas. You literally, when you revere the name of the Lord as holy, bond with God. Perhaps an example of how not to do this could help. When Moses was told by the LORD to speak to a rock so that water would come out and provide for the people of Israel, he instead struck the rock twice with his staff. **So Moses took the staff from the Lord's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.** (Numbers 20: 9-11 NIV) The situation was complex. Moses was furious with the people of Israel because of their constant complaining.

He was tired of their ongoing lack of trust in God and him, their disobedience, and their annoying nagging. Instead of doing precisely what the LORD told him to do, Moses lashed out at the rock. God was not pleased.

**But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."** (Numbers 20: 12 NIV) Notice what the primary issue was. Moses did not honor the LORD as holy. He did not reverence Him. Much praying is like this. At the moment his fury rose up against his fellow Israelites, Moses lived as if God did not exist, or what God wanted didn't matter or as if He was not perfect and good and Lord over all the universe and beyond. We many times forget, or at least get disoriented by our emotions, our desires or just by plain old distractions and stop seeing God as truly Lord in the moment. He vanishes from our thoughts as we go about whatever we care about more than living through and in Him. Moses struck the rock because at the moment, He didn't care about God. It wasn't that he lost his faith in God, didn't want to follow Him at all. He just let his frustration with the Israelites sweep up his devotion to God and as a result of his lack of keeping the name of the Lord holy, he lost his opportunity to enter the Promised Land.

Praying is first and foremost, restoring your approach to God. When your mind has been distracted by work, family issues, normal stresses and just by your desires, you regain your grip on reality when you pray properly, when you pray by revering the Name of God as holy. Imagine walking into a room and a magnificent, people eating lion is standing off to the side. You go over to a table and pick up your phone, scrolling through it for TikTok videos. You then text your daughter, look at yourself in the mirror, pick up your water bottle and take a sip, all the while giving not a thought to the lion in the corner who in a flash can leap at you and crush you with a single pounce. All the time, whatever you have been doing, the most important part of what is in your room you have ignored or even forgotten. Another example. Perhaps you go into a job interview and you are discussing your qualifications, asking pointed questions about the job and responding to the interviewer. As you are chatting, the owner of the company is sitting off to the side and you forget the two of you went to high school together. Would it matter much if you bullied him when you both were young, or would it be pertinent if you rescued him from bullies? The most important part of the job interview, you have completely dismissed in your effort to impress the interviewer.

There is not a moment in your day when God, the Savior of the world and the Lord of all is not the most important part of it. You can ignore Him, pretend He is not there or just go about your business not noticing Him but it is to your peril and your great detriment. I liken it to having a great, powerful bodyguard and going through the most dangerous parts of town trying to lose him so he isn't bothering you as you walk through the dark alleyways. Samson sure was pitiful after he let Delilah cut off his hair. His strength gone, his eyesight taken from him, his freedom removed. It was all because of this. He completely ignored God for so long, he never recognized the threat Delilah posed. How much guidance do we lose, help do we forfeit, unnecessary struggles do we endure, all because we forget the name of the Lord is to be revered. I read this year about a mother who flipped off a motorist on the freeway because the other driver cut her off. The passenger, infuriated by the mother's disrespect shot into her car and killed her little son. It was of course completely the fault of the gunman that the child died but I wonder if it might have never happened if the mother was revering as holy the name of the Lord as she drove.

If you were to summarize what it means to pray "**your name is to be revered as holy...**" and make it the way you live, it is perfectly described in the Psalms. **But my eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign Lord; in you I take refuge.** (Psalm 141: 8a NIV) That is precisely how it looks when you pray to revere as holy the name of the Lord. Your concentration becomes glued on God as the Sovereign Lord of not only the universe but also yourself. Sometimes we think it is all about us but it certainly is not. It is all about Jesus and when that becomes clear in our minds, our lives get so much better. A friend of mine, Pastor Mark Milwee, wrote of a special Christian who suffered for years from kidney failure but lived his life uplifting and encouraging others. He told Pastor Mark that he was about to start radiation treatment. "This is the journey that God has given me and I'll witness to all I meet at the Cancer Center. These people are hurting and some have no love at all. I'll bring them love, joy, smiles and tell them about our Jesus." Such a different take on life than those who complain about what they don't have and forget all about God as they go through the day. Our Big Idea for today is, "God honors the prayers that honor Him." Your day will go much better if you keep your mind focused on Christ and your praying centered on Him as your true Lord. Take a moment and declare it to Christ. "My eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign Lord and in you I take my refuge."