



The House of Prayer

PRAYING THE NAME

How many of you have been victims of identity theft, or have known someone who has been a victim of identity theft? Whether someone starts using your social security number or just steals your credit card number, identity theft can snowball into a huge mess. If someone steals your identity, they can drain your bank account, wreck your credit, and even compromise your reputation. It then becomes your responsibility to restore your good name and credit. How do you convince the bank or the credit card companies that you are not the one racking up all the charges?

Sometimes we don't think about the importance of our identity until it gets stolen.

Your name matters.

Shakespeare tried to tell us that names are not important—after all, “*A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.*” That, however, is not the Bible's view. In the Bible, a person's name was part of Him. To abuse, or insult, or belittle someone's name was to do the same to the person. It was like identity theft. It did real damage.

Likewise, to give honor or reverence to a person's name was to show that person honor. And when we honor the name of God, we are not just talking *about* Him, we take hold *of* Him.

Since September, we have been talking about Prayer. And this month, as we conclude our Houses of Prayer and enter a season of summer rest, we are going to talk about the importance of Naming God in our Prayers.

When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, he said ⁹ *Pray then like this:*

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.”¹*

Jesus was saying that the first thing you need to do when you pray is to make sure we know to whom we pray. We need to make sure that we are praying to the right person. That is why it is critical that we address God by name.

Grace and Peace,
Bob Fuller

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Mt 6:9). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.



The House of Prayer

Prayer Guide, Week 1 (April 29 – May 5)

This Week's Focus: Naming the God to Whom We Pray

:00 Arrive at _____

Call to Order: Facilitator or Host

Brief Opening Prayer: An Invocation asking God to Be Present in the Meeting

:05 Check-In: Prayer requests, prayer reports, testimonials and faith stories. "What has God been doing?"

:20 Preparing to Pray. Read Exodus 3:13-18 together (each participant reads one verse until the reading is finished) and reflect.

:30 First, pray the whole Lord's prayer together.

Then, pray through each petition in turn, and lift up the group's prayer concerns before God.

1:00 Conclude the meeting with Prayer.

When God liberated his people from Egypt, God not only Gave Moses His Law, He gave Moses His name. When Moses asked the burning bush, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses:

“I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’ ”

God said my name is “Yahweh.” It means “I Am.” God said,

*“This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.”*²

God’s personal name is not “God.” That is like saying that your dog’s name is “dog,” or your son’s name is “boy.” God gave Moses, and has given us, his personal name.

Why was this important? Because when God revealed his name, He made his relationship with his people personal. Even though he was mysterious, divine and supernatural, he bridged the gap with humankind by revealing his name.

Praying to God by name, reminds us that God is a person. He is not just any generic “higher power.” This is not just some “force,” or “ground of being.” Remembering His name makes it personal.

When we baptize a child, we do not say *“Baby 2018, serial number 4318, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”* We use his name, because the child is not just a number. He is a child of God. He is a person. When I conduct a Marriage... or conduct a funeral I use people’s names. When people say their vows to each other, they are making those vows to a specific person. Those names matter. Those names are important because that marriage is not generic. Funerals are not generic. They are held in memory of a specific person.

When Jesus began the Lord’s Prayer with the address, “Our Father,” he was saying, “When you pray, remember that you are praying to a specific person.” When you pray, make sure that you know that you are addressing the real and living God. The Alpha and Omega. The Lord of Hosts. The God of Moses. Not one of the so-called gods of pharaoh. Not Zeus. Not Allah. Not Shiva. Not to the “Universe.” Not “To Whom it May Concern,” But to Yahweh—the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Ex 3:13–15). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.



The House of Prayer

Prayer Guide, Week 2 (May 6 – 12)

This Week's Focus: Praying to the Father who loves Us

:00 Arrive at _____

Call to Order: Facilitator or Host

Brief Opening Prayer: An Invocation asking God to Be Present in the Meeting

:05 Check-In: Prayer requests, prayer reports, testimonials and faith stories. "What has God been doing?"

:20 Preparing to Pray. Read Luke 11:1-13 together (each participant reads one verse until the reading is finished) and reflect.

:30 First, pray the whole Lord's prayer together.

Then, pray through each petition in turn, and lift up the group's prayer concerns before God.

1:00 Conclude the meeting with Prayer.

When we pray, we are praying to the LORD, to the one who calls Himself, “I am.” There is only one God who hears prayers, because there is only one God *to* hear prayers. There is no force or stronghold that can oppose him, there is nothing that can separate us from his love... He is alive, death could not beat Him, time cannot forget Him, History cannot ignore Him, pop culture cannot pervert Him, science and philosophy cannot out-think Him, injustice cannot escape Him, nature must obey him, and we can never out-sin the forgiveness of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is the God to whom we pray.

Next to him we pale into insignificance...

...And yet we are significant to Him. So much so that Jesus tells us to address Him as “Father.” We are so used to thinking of God in this way that we miss the fact that before Jesus, the Jews did not call God “father.” Let me be clear, in all of Jewish literature, there is not a single recorded reference calling God “father”—not until Jesus came along. They never would have dared. It is only through Jesus Christ and by the adoption of the Holy Spirit that we have any claim to call God “father.” But that is exactly what Jesus wants us to do, because even though we are praying to the emperor of the universe, the ancient of days who hold the stars in the span of his hand and commands light and gravity to do his will, Jesus wants us to make this prayer “personal.” God is a person. He hears, he listens, and he loves us.

Jesus explains that God will answer us because **he is Good.**

¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

God answers our prayers because **he is Good.** Not because we are good, or powerful, or worthy, or rich or annoying. He does it because He is our father.



The House of Prayer

Prayer Guide, Week 3 (May 13 – 19)

This Week's Focus: Respecting the Name of Jesus

:00 Arrive at _____

Call to Order: Facilitator or Host

Brief Opening Prayer: An Invocation asking God to Be Present in the Meeting

:05 Check-In: Prayer requests, prayer reports, testimonials and faith stories. "What has God been doing?"

:20 Preparing to Pray. Read Philippians 2:5-11 together (each participant reads one verse until the reading is finished) and reflect.

:30 First, pray the whole Lord's prayer together.

Then, pray through each petition in turn, and lift up the group's prayer concerns before God.

1:00 Conclude the meeting with Prayer.

We need to understand the importance of naming Jesus when we pray, because without Him, we don't have a prayer.

First of all, we have to remember what the Bible says about the name of Jesus. In Acts 4:12, John and Peter Proclaimed

¹² there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." ³

And the Apostle Paul told the Philippians:

⁹ God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. ⁴

The name of God is not just a word. It is not just a personal pronoun. It is part of God. It is a manifestation of his authority, power, his truth, his holiness, his love—of God Himself.⁵

God has made the name of Jesus as Holy as His own. He has invested the name of his son with the authority of Heaven and earth. That means that any time we hear the name Jesus, it should either make us flinch or give us goose bumps.

Second, the way we use the name of God, and the way we treat the name of Jesus—especially when we pray—tells us a lot about our respect for God Himself. Sadly, even though the third commandment warns us not to take the name of God in vain, we toss the name of God around with casual contempt. We commit identity theft, and use the name of God for our purposes. We invoke it to promote our own agendas rather than His. We treat God's name and the name of Jesus as a curse rather than a blessing—or worse. We treat the name "Jesus" like it's not a big deal at all. And the reason is this: we treat the name of God with contempt because honestly, we don't take God seriously. To take God seriously is to take God's name seriously. In Malachi, God said:

*"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. ... ² But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.*⁶

When we treat the name of Jesus with disrespect, or contempt, God sees us heaping insults on his beloved child. But, when we treat the name of Jesus as Holy, God sees that we love and honor his son just as he does.

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* 2001 (Ac 4:11–12). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* 2001 (Php 2:9–11). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

⁵ Saying His Name—that's as close as we are ever going to get until we meet Him face to face.

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* 2001 (Mal 4:1–3). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.



The House of Prayer

Prayer Guide, Week 4 (May 20 – 26)

This Week's Focus: The Name of Jesus: Access to the Father

- :00 Arrive at _____
- Call to Order: Facilitator or Host
- Brief Opening Prayer: An Invocation asking God to Be Present in the Meeting
- :05 Check-In: Prayer requests, prayer reports, testimonials and faith stories. “What has God been doing?”
- :20 Preparing to Pray. Read John 14:8-14 together (each participant reads one verse until the reading is finished) and reflect.
- :30 First, pray the whole Lord's prayer together.
- Then, pray through each petition in turn, and lift up the group's prayer concerns before God.
- 1:00 Conclude the meeting with Prayer.

When we treat the name of Jesus as Holy, God sees that we love and honor his son just as he does. And that is important, because it is God the Father who has the power and authority and love to make a difference—not only in our lives but in the world. But, it is his son, Jesus Christ who gives us access to God.

If you want to talk to the president to ask him a favor—good luck! Even if you are one of his top advisors. But if the President's sons or daughter want to ask him a favor—they have immediate access to him because of their relationship to him. He is not just their president—he is their “daddy”—their “Abba.” The same is true with Jesus. He has access to God and the only way to get to God is through Him.

So, On the Night before he was crucified, the night before he gave his life on the cross to die for our sins, Jesus told the disciples:

¹⁶ *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.*⁷

Jesus Christ is our mediator. He is our access to God, and his name is the password for our prayers.

When we pray in the name of Christ, it is both a confession and a testimony. When I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, it's a confession that

- *I don't deserve to be heard,*
- *I haven't earned God's love,*
- *God doesn't owe me anything,*
- *I have no right to demand anything from him,*
- *I have nothing to trade, nothing of my own to offer,*
- *But I believe that you love your son, who was faithful and perfect in every way, and that you love me because you sent your own beloved son – who gave his body and blood on the cross to save me from my sins, to proclaim your truth, to show me your way and to prove how much you love me. And I believe that because you have the power to raise Him from the dead, you have the power to make a difference in the world, in my life, and in the lives of those I love.*

A great missionary named Donald Bloetch once wrote

... To pray in his name means that we recognize that our prayers cannot penetrate the tribunal of God unless they are presented to the Father by the Son, our one Savior and Redeemer.

But Pastor Tim Keller gives us a Warning:

To pray in Jesus' name is not meant to be a magic formula, as if the pronunciation of the words coerces God's power or mechanically taps into supernatural forces. ... To come to the Father in Jesus' name, not our own, is to come fully cognizant that we are being heard because of the costly grace in which we stand.

We pray in the name of Jesus, not to manipulate God, but because we know that without Him we don't have a prayer. To pray in the name of Christ means that we know that Jesus is praying for us. Richard Foster writes that

By ourselves we have no entrée to the court of heaven. It would be like ants speaking to humans. We need an interpreter, an intermediary, a go-between.

People have often asked me if God answers our prayers, if we pray in some generic way of if we don't pray in the name of Jesus? For that matter, does God hear the prayers of non-Christians?

I don't know if God hears other people's prayers or not. The Bible doesn't say anything about that. What I do know, and what the Bible tells us is that if we want to make sure God hears our prayers—pray in the name of his son.

What I believe is that without God the Father and without Jesus Christ, we don't have a prayer. By giving us his name, God has given us **a relationship**. And by giving us His son, and by allowing us to pray in His name, He has given us **access**. He has given us his private cell-number. He has said "you are my children and you have access that no one else has."

So when you pray, do not pray generically, "to whom it may concern." Pray to the Father, who loves you, and pray in the name of the one who gave His life to save you.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Jn 15:16). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.