



a study on
PRAYER



Yes, No & Maybe

1. Most of the people in this room pray incorrectly.
2. There is a proper formula to prayer.
3. Because of my personal experience with an earthly father, it is a challenge for me to pray to God as my “Father.”
4. God wants me to call Him “Daddy.”
5. Many Christians struggle today with their prayer journey, because unwittingly their prayers are lifeless.

Dig Deeper

➤ **READ Matthew 6:9** (NIV)

9 *“This, then, is how you should pray:*

*“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,*

» **Our Father** - [pater hemon - πατήρ ἡμῶν] God is only referred to as Father 14 times in the Old Testament’s 39 books, and even then rather impersonally. In those 14 occurrences of Father the term was always used with reference to the nation, not to individuals. But when Jesus came on the scene, he addressed God **only** as Father. He never used anything else! All his prayers address God as Father. The Gospels (just four books) record his using Father more than 60 times in reference to God. No one had ever in the entire history of Israel spoken and prayed like Jesus. To the traditional Jew, this was incomprehensible. How could any mortal address deity in such a way? But that was the foundational awareness that Jesus advocated.

This is only part of the story, for the word Jesus used for Father was not a formal word, but the common Aramaic word with which a child would address his father—the word **Abba**. A careful examination of the literature of that day shows, it was never used of God—under any circumstances. Abba meant something like Daddy—but with a more reverent touch than when we use it. The best rendering is “Dearest Father.”

• Jesus started a revolution when he taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father.” How might a fresh understanding of this phrase revolutionize our prayers today?

➤ **Romans 8:15, 16** says the same thing: *“you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”*

Dig Deeper... Continued

- How might this perception increase our confidence when we pray?

» **in heaven** - [en tois ouranois - ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς] “In heaven” stresses God’s transcendence. Sovereign and reigning, he surpasses all that is human. He is our Father and our King! We can affectionately call him “Abba,” “Dearest Father,” but we do it with a deep sense of wonder and reverence.

He is our Father, but he exceeds our earthly fathers in every way because he is “our Father in heaven.” He always understands. He is always caring and loving. He never forgets us. And he always comes through for us.

- What are the greatest challenges to, and greatest rewards of, comprehending fully that you can communicate with a loving God who lives in heaven?

» **hallowed be your name** - [hagiasthētō to onoma sou - ἁγιασθῆτω τὸ ὄνομα σου] The root word means “to set apart as holy,” “to consider holy,” “to treat as holy.” The best alternate term is reverence. “May you be given that unique reverence that your character and nature as Father demand.”

Today names don’t mean much more to us than convenient labels to identify people by. But for the Jew a name was anything but a convenient label because names were considered to indicate *character*. This especially applied to the name of God. The psalmist said, “*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name [the character] of the LORD our God*” (Ps.20:7).

God’s names revealed aspects of his being. For instance, Jehovah Shalom—“The Lord Our Peace”—was a name that Gideon hallowed by raising an altar to God by that name. Jehovah Jireh—“the Lord will provide”—was the name by which Abraham came to know God on Mt. Moriah when God provided a ram in place of Isaac. Jehovah Tsidkenu—“the Lord our Righteousness”—is the name by which God revealed himself to Jeremiah during the Captivity. The list of God’s names in the Old Testament is quite long, including Jehovah-nissi, El Shaddai, El Elyon, Adonai, and all reflect his character. What is the name that is prominent in the Lord’s Prayer? Very simply but profoundly it is “Father”—“Abba Father”—“Dearest Father.”

- With this understanding, how can we hallow the name [character] of God while we pray? What does this look like in a practical sense?

- How might this tie in to a new understanding of the Third Commandment, “*You shall not take the name [character] of the Lord your God in vain*”? (Ex. 20:7a)

- « How does God’s character show itself in the methods He wants us to pray?

My Prayer...

1. How am I praying to God as my “dearest Father”?
2. How can I hallow His character in my prayers?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?