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# A PRAYER OF PRAISE



*What's a name you associate with greatness?*

**QUESTION #1**

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE **77**

## THE POINT

*Our prayers are driven by the desire to honor God.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We associate one name with the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln: John Wilkes Booth. Most people have forgotten Booth had co-conspirators, but one American family can't forget. The descendants of Dr. Samuel Mudd are still attempting to clear their family name.

After Booth shot the president, he jumped from the balcony to the stage and broke his leg. He escaped and made it to Dr. Mudd's farm in Maryland. Dr. Mudd set his leg and allowed Booth to rest. When Mudd learned of the assassination the next day, he alerted the authorities. Unfortunately, Dr. Mudd became a suspect. He was convicted of conspiracy and sentenced to life in prison. President Andrew Johnson later pardoned him, but a question lingered—was Dr. Mudd innocent?

Samuel Mudd's descendants believe his name (and theirs) has never been cleared. In fact, our language now has a phrase for someone who is unpopular or questionable: "His name is mud (Mudd)."

Our names are important to us. Without question, one name above all others deserves honor: the name of God. Jesus taught us to honor the name of God when we pray.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## **Matthew 6:9b; Psalm 96:1-3**

**Matt. 6:9b hallowed be your name. ... Ps. 96:1 Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth! <sup>2</sup> Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. <sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!**

Some forms of prayer are easier than others. For example, most of us find it easy to ask for our own needs to be met or to pray for the safety of our kids, but not everyone feels as confident when it comes to offering praise. A church member sheepishly confided to me that praise was the most difficult part of prayer for her. I'm sure she was relieved when I agreed! Unfortunately, praise doesn't always come easy.

In the Model Prayer, Jesus directs us to place praise at the beginning of our time with God. Jesus could have said much more about the subject, but He chose only one core value of praise: honoring the name of God. These words serve as a model for all future praise.

When Jesus taught us to praise, He did so by exalting God whose name is honored as holy. We are not praying God's name will be made holy. Instead, our prayers are to acknowledge His name is *already* holy.

Once we recognize what praise is and begin to practice it, praising God begins to flow more freely. Psalm 96 is a good example of a declaration of praise that exalts God's name. We exalt His name in three ways.

- 1. Sing a new song.** In the opening verses, we see the exuberance of the psalmist as he praised the Lord. What do I mean by exuberance? The psalmist urged us to "sing to the LORD a new song." This is a call for "all the earth" to praise.

***What are some ways we can honor God's name as holy?***

**QUESTION #2**

2. **Bless His name.** Praising God entails more than singing. We also “bless his name.” The word “bless” is related to the Hebrew word for kneeling, and not surprisingly, it can be translated as praise, salute, or adore. We also read in the Bible that God blesses His people, which imply bestowing His favor and benefits. We, in turn, bless God because of His greatness, power, and love. We praise and honor His name.
3. **Tell His salvation.** One of the great things God does is reach down and brings us back into a right relationship with Him. He saves us! We honor Him as we declare “his marvelous works among all the peoples!”

## ***Psalm 96:4-6***

**<sup>4</sup> For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. <sup>5</sup> For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens. <sup>6</sup> Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.**

It doesn't take much news, violent images, or stories about injustice to feel discouraged. Discouragement can lead to a sense of being overwhelmed by the problems surrounding us. Fortunately, God has given us a way to remain hopeful despite the bad news. The path to a healthier soul is praise. Praising God not only honors Him, it lifts our spirits too. When we focus on the One who is greater than all, we gain the right perspective and we lose our discouragement.

- ▶ **Praise the greatness of God.** The psalmist knew God is greater than any of the false gods since they are mere idols, so he focused his praise on the greatness of God. People made these other gods, “but the LORD made the heavens.” How can there be any comparison between the two?

*Where do you see God's splendor and majesty at work in the world today?*

### **QUESTION #3**

- **Praise the beauty of God.** “Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.” In the same way, he reminds us to seek the God who is surrounded by such beauty. *Splendor* is a Hebrew word embodying the concept of someone’s grand appearance. Translated “majesty,” “glory,” or even “honor,” at various places in the Old Testament, the word always describes something of great value. The psalmist was offering an invitation for us to look at God because He is filled with splendor and beauty. In a world of ugliness and broken things, God is splendid.

We pray to the God who is full of majesty, strength, and beauty. He is welcome relief for our weariness. The world is brutal; God is beautiful. The nations are merciless; God is majestic in His mercy. People are full of petty self-interest; God is full of splendor! Seeing God for who He is leads us to praise because no one else is like Him!

If we saw God as small, weak, or unpredictable, our prayers would also be weak. In fact, we probably wouldn’t pray at all. Why would we if God was neither great nor glorious? Fortunately, the psalmist directs us to think much differently about God when we pray. He is powerful and majestic; God is worthy of our honor.

***Which one of these qualities of God do you most appreciate about Him?***

**QUESTION #4**

## ***Psalm 96:7-9***

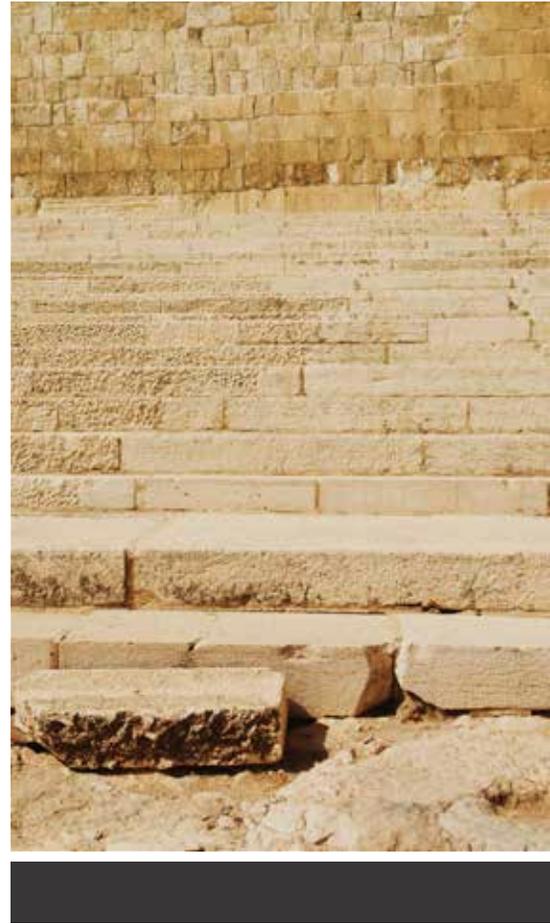
**<sup>7</sup> Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength! <sup>8</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! <sup>9</sup> Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!**

How do we respond to the greatness of God? We “ascribe”—we give—to Him the glory and strength His name deserves. We can’t make His name any more glorious or powerful, but we openly acknowledge He is full of glory and strength. He is worthy of worship. He is draped in holy splendor. His greatness should cause us to humble ourselves before Him. “Tremble before him, all the earth!”

As we acknowledge God’s glory, we also bring an offering as a way to honor Him. Consider these ways we are to bring an offering:

- ▶ **An offering of praise.** “Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name” (Heb. 13:15).
- ▶ **An offering of our possessions.** “Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce” (Prov. 3:9).
- ▶ **An offering of our lives.** “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1).
- ▶ **An offering of our prayers.** We tend to start our prayers with our needs, our concerns, and ourselves. The model Jesus gave us begins with the request that God’s name be honored, but the prayer for God to be honored doesn’t end there; we are to honor God’s name with every single request we make after that!

Even today visitors can see the original steps of the temple mount in Jerusalem, the last steps one used before entering the temple courts. These steps are deliberately irregular in size. The steps continue in a haphazard method to the top. They most likely were engineered to keep a person from rushing thoughtlessly into the presence of God. Staggered steps slowed the pace of a worshiper entering the temple courts, giving him time to reflect on the privilege of entering into God’s presence. In the same way, Jesus’ Model Prayer calls us to focus on God in praise as we begin to honor Him.



***How can we practically make our lives offerings that honor God?***

**QUESTION #5**

# ADORATION

*Below is a list of words of adoration for the character and nature of God—praising Him for who He is and what He has done. Circle the words that describe the traits of God that are the most significant to you right now. Add some of your own words.*

Gracious

Righteous

Sustainer of the world

Merciful

All-knowing

Pure

All-powerful

Ever-present

Majestic

Loving

Forgiving

Revealer of Truth

Creator

Kind

Lord

Provider

Redeemer

Great

Savior

Faithful

Eternal

Holy

Victorious

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"Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name!"

—HEBREWS 13:15

## LIVE IT OUT

Praise elevates our own awareness of God as few other activities can do. For this reason—and because God deserves it—we should excel in the prayer of praise. Choose one of the following activities:

- ▶ **Offer praise.** Every day this week let a specific praise to God be your first words of the day.
- ▶ **List attributes.** Make a list of every attribute of God you can think of. Take time this week to praise God using the entire list.
- ▶ **Evaluate your requests.** Write out your prayer requests and evaluate them on whether they are focused on God's honor or simply on what you want. As needed, adjust the way you pray so you are seeking to honor Him.

How will you seek to honor God with your prayers? One name above all others deserves honor: the name of Jesus Christ. Honor Him through prayer and by sharing Him with others this week.

My thoughts

