

## SESSION 2

# A PRAYER OF PRAISE

### ▶ **The Point**

Our prayers are driven by the desire to honor God.

### ▶ **The Passage**

Matthew 6:9b; Psalm 96:1-9

### ▶ **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.

### ▶ **The Setting**

Jesus had given attention to teaching His disciples how to pray. In His instruction, He pointed to the necessity of honoring the name of the Lord as holy. What He taught them connected with Psalm 96:1-9, in which God's people had been directed to honor His holy name as they worshiped Him. A portion of the psalm can be found in David's call to celebrate when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem. (See 1 Chron. 16:7-33.)

# What does the Bible say?

**Hallowed** (Matt. 6:9)—This term has to do with setting someone or something apart as different with an attitude of reverence.

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

**Matt. 6:9b** hallowed be your name.

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**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!**

**<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.**

**<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!**





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

**[Matthew 6:9b]** When we begin our prayer, Jesus instructed us to honor our Father. In this portion of His Model Prayer, Jesus showed us how to acknowledge God as Father when we begin to talk with Him. How we approach our Father makes more of a difference than we may realize at first. It's tempting to start by telling God everything we need. When we do, our view of Him diminishes to the point we lose sight of the honor He deserves, and our view of ourselves inflates so that we nurture a bloated perspective of our needs and ourselves.

Jesus taught us to approach God with a reverent awareness of His holy name. When we focus our attention on God's name in prayer, we're drawn to what His name means to us. When we reflect on the meaning of His holy name, the truth about His character, authority, wisdom, and power become more vivid to us. When we meditate on the holiness of His name, we're moved to honor Him. We begin to grasp how He's set apart from all His creation. The name of the Lord reminds us that He's completely different from us. He's altogether set apart. In other words, He's holy.

**[Psalm 96:1]** This psalm offers us some keen insights into how to honor the Lord as holy when we pray. Applying each insight can render a noticeable difference in our prayer lives. Verse 1 prompts us to sit up and take notice of the Lord's great name by praising Him. We are challenged to express the honor He deserves by singing to Him. God's people sing **a new song**. It's new in that it's stirred by the fresh work He's done in our lives. Our new song underscores His gracious ways among us and the incredible changes He has made in us. Along with His people, His creation—**all the earth**—has been directed to join in the new song of praise. The evidence of His remarkable work around the world and throughout the universe fuels our praise to Him.

**[Verses 2-3]** As we sing to the Lord, we're directed to focus our complete attention solely on His wonderful name. When we fix our eyes on Him alone, the features of His perfect power, wisdom, and authority become sharper and clearer to us. When He comes into view in that way, we praise His name with renewed minds and sincere hearts. While we bless His name by singing to God, we also praise Him by talking openly and freely about Him. His **salvation** provides us with the words to our song and the content of our conversations. When we make His salvation through Christ a part of our daily discourse, we bless His name. Because God has saved us, glorifying Him always remains our primary passion. To glorify God implies that we cast the light on Him and call attention to the weight His name carries in our lives and in the world. When we declare His glory to others, we eagerly put the light on Him so they will turn to Him. We want to proclaim His name to every people group and every nation in the world.



## Psalm 96:4-6 Commentary

**[Verse 4]** The psalmist offered some rock-solid reasons for whole-heartedly praising God. When people compared the glory of the Lord to the actual weight false gods carried in their world, they would notice a huge difference. With such a comparison, the idols would become smaller and smaller while the living Lord would become greater and greater. If they measured His greatness in terms of sheer might or in terms of importance, people would have no choice but to declare that His presence made all the difference in the world. The comparison between the Lord and idols would render another critical distinction. People would normally not worship the false gods in a spirit of healthy respect and loyal love. Instead, their worship would be characterized by nothing but horror or dread. On the other hand, when God's people came into the presence of the Lord, their worship would be marked by godly fear. Such fear meant they recognized His ultimate authority in their lives and their need to take God seriously. However, it also meant they understood God loved them like the perfect father loves his children.

**[Verse 5]** The psalmist gave us yet another point of comparison. The pagan gods had been crafted by the hands of worshipers out of pieces of stone or wood. Each idol literally had to be picked up and placed in prominent spots so everyone could worship them. They didn't even have the power to move, much less to help, heal, or forgive. Such an observation could never be made about the Lord. He has proven His power by creating the universe they saw all around them. Even more miraculous, God made it out of nothing. Only Almighty God could have performed such a miracle of creation. When we think about the Lord in this way, we find ourselves setting Him apart and honoring His great name. While people in pagan lands might craft idols to worship, God's people worship Him because He created them. His creation recognizes Him as worthy of our worship. Therefore, we eagerly honor His great name as holy.

**[Verse 6]** This verse calls on us to behold the Lord on His throne. There, we notice what's surrounding Him—two captivating features that stand before Him like guards. **Splendor** stands there, sending forth a radiant message of His honor. **Majesty** stands there as well, reminding us that we have come into the presence of divine royalty. Splendor and majesty constantly abide in His holy presence. When we worship Him, His **strength and beauty** emanate from Him. His strength can be seen in His creation. However, we can also behold His power in His redemption of those who trust Him. He alone has the power to give life and to take it. By providing the way of redemption through the cross, He exerts His power to give eternal life to anyone who receives Christ. In the same way, the beauty of His presence comes into view when we consider that He wants us to know Him as our Father. A parent cuddling a child stands out as something beautiful, but not as beautiful as the intimate relationship God intends to enjoy with His children.



# STUDY THE BIBLE

## NOTES

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## 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!***

**READ:** Ask a group member to read aloud Psalm 96:7-9 on page 81 of the PSG.

**SUMMARIZE:** Highlight the main points from pages 81-82 of the PSG. 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.**
- ▶ **An offering of our possessions.**
- ▶ **An offering of our lives.**
- ▶ **An offering of our prayers.**

### ALTERNATE QUESTION:

***How can our prayers be offerings that honor God?***

**DISCUSS:** Question #5 on page 82 of the PSG: **“How can we practically make our lives offerings that honor God?”**

**DO:** Direct group members to complete the activity, “Adoration,” on page 83 of the PSG to help them direct their praise to God.



*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. [The PSG has a list of words and some blanks.]*



**LEADER PACK:** Display **Pack Item 8**, the “Psalm 96:9” poster, to help members direct their praise to God. Invite them to read the verse and write their responses to the question in the space available on the poster to create a word cloud of praise for God.



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

**[Verse 7]** We honor the Lord by offering everything in our lives to Him. When we pray, honoring Him takes center stage. Ascribing involves placing the credit where it belongs. Thus the psalmist instructed us to give God the credit for who He is and what He is doing in our lives and in our world. God's people respond to His outstanding work by attributing the glory to Him for His achievement. We applaud Him by giving Him the credit He deserves. Of course, that's what Jesus taught us as well. In His instruction on prayer, He showed us how to recognize God's name as holy when we pray. For disciples, therefore, honoring His name as holy becomes our highest priority as we begin in our prayer time.

Notice that the challenge to honor the Lord has been given to families instead of nations, tribes, or individuals. The picture painted by the term **families** brings to mind the unique relationships associated with being sons and daughters, fathers and mothers. We don't come before His presence as individuals among a crowd of strangers who happen to be with us when we worship. We never want to engage in prayer with a selfish attitude that causes us to lose sight of others while we talk incessantly about our personal issues. Family members share life with each other. When we pray, we honor the Lord as spiritual siblings in Jesus Christ who value the intimate kinship we have with other believers.

**[Verse 8]** The psalmist repeated the challenge to give God the credit He deserves by glorifying His altogether peerless name. To honor the name of the Lord as holy, the psalmist instructed us to **bring an offering** to the Lord. Of course, God intends for us to offer something that honors His holy name. When we think about an acceptable offering, we find help in Romans 12:1-2. When we present ourselves as living sacrifices to God, we present Him the offering He deserves. When God's people worshiped Him at the temple, they passed through the gate and then made their way into the temple courts. Entering His court served as an initial step in approaching Him in worship. For believers today, entering His court implies honoring His name as holy as we begin to pray.

**[Verse 9]** Like God's people generations ago, we have been directed to keep the holy name of the Lord in mind when we pray. Accordingly, we present everything in our lives as a tribute of praise to His holy name. Even when we begin to talk with God about what we need, we do not lose sight of the honor that's due His holy name. Honoring His name as holy has a way of refining the list of needs we bring to God in prayer. It also influences the way we see ourselves in His presence. Instead of treating God like He owes us something, we find ourselves trembling at the reality that we have come into the presence of Almighty God. At the same time, we enjoy the privilege of knowing God intimately as our Father.

Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "Glory: A Hebrew Understanding" (Summer 2015), "The Churches' Use of the Lord's Prayer" (Fall 2012), and "Salvation: A Word Study" (Winter 2006-2007) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator). Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.

