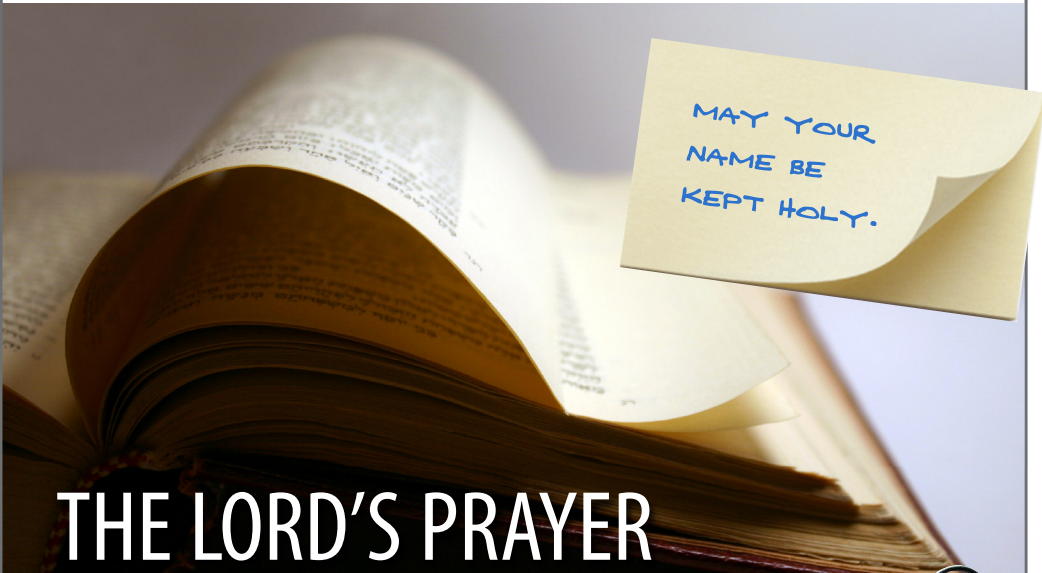


# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

An open book with a yellow sticky note on it. The sticky note has the text "MAY YOUR NAME BE KEPT HOLY." written on it in blue ink. The book is open, showing the pages and the binding.

MAY YOUR  
NAME BE  
KEPT HOLY.

# THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,  
may your name be kept holy.

May your kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today the food we need,  
and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven  
those who sin against us.

And don't let us yield to temptation,  
but rescue us from the evil-one.

<sup>1</sup>For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.  
Amen.

**Matthew 6:9-13 The New Living Translation**



Addressing God as *our Father* has some dangers. It can seduce us into thinking of him as someone just like us. But he is much more than that. It's for that reason that the next request in the *Lord's Prayer* asks for *his name to be kept holy*.

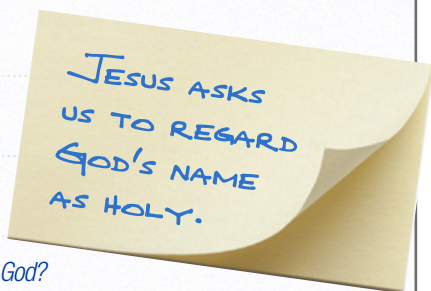
## What does holy name mean?

For many people the word *holy* has religious and church connections. For others the word is not very comfortable, because to them it brings up images of something *mystical* or *spooky*. In the Bible, if something is called *holy*, it means that it is different to ordinary things. It has been deliberately set apart from common everyday objects and dedicated to God. For example - here's a list of a few things mentioned in the Bible that were called *holy* because at some time in history they were set apart from common things and devoted to God -

- **The Sabbath day** (See Exodus 20:8)
- **Gifts to God** (See Leviticus 27:28)
- **Jerusalem** (See Revelation 21:1-3)
- **Prophets** (See 2 Peter 3:2)
- **Holy Spirit** (See John 14:26)

## Get involved =

Can you think of other things that can be holy - separated for God?



In just the same way, Jesus asks us to regard God's name as holy. It is set apart from all human names, so that we do not put God on the same level as ourselves. In Bible times, the name of God was so holy that people chose not to even speak it. It is translated in most of our English Bibles as *Jehovah*, but no one really knows exactly how it was pronounced. Professional copyists from Old Testament times believe *Yahweh* was probably closer to the original pronunciation. In many Bible translations you can see when the word is used, as it is translated in all capitals - LORD.

One of the Ten Commandments actually tells us not to misuse the LORD's name. *You will not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.* (Exodus 20:7) When we claim to be one of his followers, but our speech and actions contradict his character, then his name has been dishonoured and misused. This is what it means to be a hypocrite.

## Get involved -

Have you ever misused the name of God? How?

## God is bigger than we think!

The ancient Greeks regarded their gods as oversized human beings who behaved far worse than we do here on earth. People in those days didn't really worship them - they were scared of them! They merely gave sacrifices or offerings to these unpredictable gods, hoping that they would protect them from getting hurt. Paul, a follower of Jesus who wrote many letters now included in the Bible, was so concerned for the Greeks when he first visited Athens - their capital city - that he stood up before the city council and delivered an impressive message -

*Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with the inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.* Acts 17:22-25 (Paul's speech continues through to Verse 31)

These are the things that Paul mentioned about God in this speech -

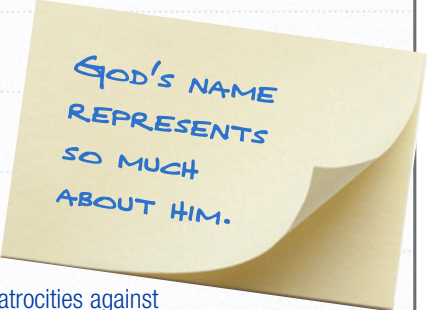
- He created the earth and everything in it
- He is Lord of heaven and earth
- He doesn't need anything our hands can make
- He is not confined to a temple
- He places a longing in us to search for him, but leaves us with free will to choose
- He keeps our heart beating every day of our life
- He provided us with all we need
- We owe our very existence to him
- We are his children
- He is Lord of heaven and earth
- He is not like any image carved from wood or made out of metal
- He calls everyone to turn away from wrong attitudes and choices
- He has appointed Jesus as the one to do the judging
- One day he will judge everyone
- He has proved all these things about himself by raising Jesus from the dead



# The dangers of being flippant with God!

Every day in the media and in casual conversation, we hear people using God's name thoughtlessly, flippantly and even blasphemously. God calls this *misusing the name of the LORD*.

Some struggle with the idea that God gets angry with people at times, and will judge humanity in the future. If he does not sort things out (judgment), it means he is powerless to deal with evil in this world. If we as parents get angry when we become aware of others abusing our children, why should we be surprised when our Heavenly Father feels the same about his children? If law and order could not be maintained in our society because it was morally wrong to deal with offenders appropriately, then our world would be reduced to chaos and anarchy. In the same way, if God were not to stand up some day and call the Hitlers and Pol Pots and Stalins of this world to account for their atrocities against humanity, we would struggle with his morals and his claims to be the God who is our Heavenly Father.



GOD'S NAME  
REPRESENTS  
SO MUCH  
ABOUT HIM.

God's name represents so much about him. The way we speak it and use it indicates how much we understand about him and how well we know him. The more we know of God - his character and his actions - the more we will respect his name. But it is thoughtless if we speak to God in prayer as if he were a person quite similar to us. God's response to such an attitude is -

***You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.*** Exodus 20:7

In fact, that is the third commandment in God's holy law.

The holiness of God does not imply that he is some sort of watchdog, waiting to punish you if you step out of line. Holiness is a quality that is the opposite of all that is evil. Just as darkness cannot exist in the presence of light, so evil is banished by the presence of holiness.

When Jesus was on earth, there were several occasions when his holy God-nature flashed through his human-nature, and every one present was either terrified or fell to the ground. (See John 18:6; Mark 4:35-41) If God were to reveal himself to us in all his fullness, we would be overwhelmed with awe. The sinfulness of our human hearts cannot stand in his presence, and we would pull back from his holiness. An example is when Peter - one of Jesus' followers - caught a glimpse of the holiness of Jesus, he cried out -

***Get away from me for I am a sinful man!*** Luke 5:8



If we were living in Jesus' time, we would be either drawn to be like him, or his holiness would make us so uncomfortable that we would try to get rid of him. It is interesting that ordinary people, even the outcasts of society, were drawn to Jesus, but the religious leaders of the day ultimately put him to death. Strange!

## Get involved -

*How do you feel when you hear the name of God used flippantly?*

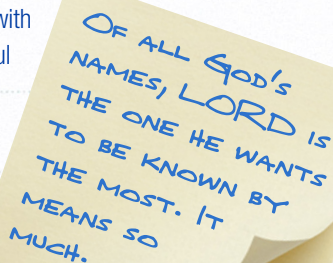
## What's in a name?

There is no contradiction, however, in calling a holy God *our Father*, or even more intimately, *our Dad*. The God who created the whole universe, and keeps our heart beating, wants to be close to us and talk constantly with us through our prayers.

The name of God, however, has far more significance than to just remind us of his holiness. People's names become identified with their characters. Just think of the names of some famous or infamous people, and what do you remember them by?



It was the same in Bible times. Parents named their children with a great deal of care, because it signified something meaningful about that child. It usually portrayed the character they hoped their child would develop, or the things they hoped he or she would achieve in life. It's the same with God. When people wanted to understand what he was like and asked him to reveal himself, he didn't give them a glimpse, or even a description, of what he looked like physically. Rather, he described his character and activity. It is written -



OF ALL GOD'S  
NAMES, LORD IS  
THE ONE HE WANTS  
TO BE KNOWN BY  
THE MOST. IT  
MEANS SO  
MUCH.

***Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.*** Exodus 34:5-7

Notice the qualities of God's character and the things he does for us that are listed in this passage. Who would reject approaching a God like this? He would make us feel safe, no matter what wrong things we had thought, said, or done. These qualities are so inviting that they draw us to come to him.

Of all God's names, *LORD* is the one he wants to be known by the most. It means so much. It is translated as *Jehovah*. When God's son was to be born on this earth, God sent a special message -

***She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*** Matthew 1:21

The name **Jesus** literally means *Jehovah saves!*

The significance of the name of Jesus is emphasised when God says -

***... that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ...*** Philippians 2:10

As God finally brings an end to the mess of this world, everyone will agree and admit that what God has done in judging the world is right. His name is holy. The last book of the Bible says that his name will be in everyone's forehead (in their thoughts) -

***They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.***  
Revelation 22:4

# Get involved =

*What aspects of God's character appeal to you, or still leave you feeling uncomfortable? Why?*

The reason that we can approach a holy God with freedom and confidence is because Jesus has already gone into his presence on our behalf. If we have received him as our God, then we have become his children. As our Father, he delights to talk to us. Because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, there isn't a barrier between God and us any more. Evil has been overcome and faced its judgment in the death of Jesus.

***In him (Jesus) and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*** Ephesians 3:12 (additional information supplied in brackets)

## God has many alias names!

The Bible shares with us many other names that are given to God. That is because any one name could never fully convey everything about God's character and activity. Here is a list of some of those names as they appear in the Bible, and the meaning they convey to us about God -

<b>Elohim</b>	<b><i>The God who is great and powerful</i></b> Genesis 1:1
<b>Jehovah/Yahweh</b>	<b><i>The God who always exists and keeps his promises</i></b> Exodus 3:14-15
<b>El-Shaddai</b>	<b><i>The almighty God, able to provide</i></b> Genesis 17:1-2
<b>Adonai</b>	<b><i>The God who is our owner, requiring our obedience</i></b> Deuteronomy 10:17
<b>Jehovah-jireh</b>	<b><i>The God who appears and provides</i></b> Genesis 22:8
<b>Jehovah-rophe</b>	<b><i>The God who heals</i></b> Exodus 15:26
<b>Jehovah-nissi</b>	<b><i>The God who is our banner in warfare</i></b> Exodus 17:15
<b>Jehovah-M'Kaddesh</b>	<b><i>The God who makes us holy</i></b> Leviticus 20:8
<b>Jehovah-shalom</b>	<b><i>The God who is peace</i></b> Judges 6:24
<b>Jehovah-tsidkenu</b>	<b><i>The God who is good and right</i></b> Jeremiah 23:5-6
<b>Jehovah-rohi</b>	<b><i>The God who is our shepherd</i></b> Psalm 23:1
<b>Jehovah-shammah</b>	<b><i>The God who is always there for us</i></b> Ezekiel 48:35





It is the same with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Bible attributes at least 300 different names to Jesus, and about 90 to the Holy Spirit. This naming of God gives us a clue about how to pray to him more meaningfully. Jesus shared it with us when he made the amazing statement -

***I will do whatever you ask in my name.*** John 14:13

In saying this, he didn't mean for us to just tack his name on the end of every request to ensure that we will automatically receive what we ask. That would be trying to use God as a kind of genie to magically open his treasure chest by uttering a heavenly *Abracadabra!*

To pray *in Jesus' name* is to pray for something that corresponds with what his name means - such as something that aligns with his character and activity. In that way we can be sure that our prayers are not self-centred, but are actually in line with what he really wants. He has promised to *ALWAYS* answer these prayers. For example - if we ask God to forgive us for doing wrong things, we know that he will always do that, and we can rest assured that our sins have indeed been forgiven. To doubt that our request has been granted is to question whether God can be trusted. He makes it quite clear that -

***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*** 1 John 1:9

So trust in him. He's as good as his name - whichever one you pick!

## **Get involved -**

*Which name of God appeals to you most? Why?*

A large dashed rectangular box, intended for a person to write their response to the question 'Which name of God appeals to you most? Why?'. The box is empty and occupies the lower half of the page.



MY FATHER IN HEAVEN,  
I WORSHIP YOU FOR YOU ALONE ARE GOD.  
YOUR NAME IS HOLY. YOU ARE A GOOD GOD.  
FATHER, THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME.  
PLEASE HELP ME TO UNDERSTAND YOU BETTER  
AND BE MORE LIKE YOU.  
PLEASE HEAR MY PRAYER.  
I ASK IN JESUS NAME, AMEN



*This is my prayer right now.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Writer:** Dr. Graeme Loftus

**Copy editors:** Jean Pierre Martinez and Sue Robinson

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