

Lord's Prayer

Holy, Holy, Holy Is Your Name

On the Sunday that I was to give this message, I went through my normal routine. I went into the computer room hooked up my laptop computer to my printer. I turned all the machines on and made sure all the cords were attached appropriately. I found my message, and then I hit the print button. I got this message staring back at me on the screen "The computer is not communicating with the printer. There is a parameter difficulty. Restart Windows." I am reasonably computer literate, so I restarted Windows. After I reopened Windows, I came back to the same screen where it was time to print up my message. Again, I hit the print button and got the same message "the computer is not communicating with the printer. There is a parameter difficulty. Restart Windows." I know enough about computers to know that if you reboot, that solves most problems. So, I decided, that's what I'll do. I'll reboot the computer. I went through the reboot process and got back to the page where I found my manuscript. I hit the print button now for the third time and got the same identical message, "The computer is not communicating with the printer. There is a parameter difficulty."

Now I knew I had a serious problem, and I also knew I didn't have a message to give my congregation in about an hour and a half.

So, I came out of the computer room, and I muttered to my wife, "that stupid computer isn't working. I don't know what I'm going to do because I've got to give this message on prayer in just a few minutes and I can't get my message out." So, I thought, maybe I could go find some of the books that I had looked at the previous week and see if perhaps I could recapture some of the thoughts that way. While I was trying to figure out what to do, I thought, "at least I can take my shower and maybe after the shower I'll have a better idea what to do next."

While I was in the shower thinking about what to do, Joan went into the computer room, and she sat down, and began to pray. I asked her later, what did you pray? And she said, it wasn't a particularly profound prayer. I just simply asked that God in his grace and his mercy would allow the printer to print your message. So, she prayed.

I know some of you already think you know what happened. But lest you think that Joan is somehow a more dynamic prayer warrior than I am, what happened is that when she prayed, she got the same message on the screen. The computer is not communicating with the printer. There is a parameter difficulty. But as she got that message, the printer rumbled into action and printed out my message on prayer.

Now there's a thought. When you're giving a

message on prayer, praying might not be a bad idea. But what do we pray and why do we pray? Those are very important questions that Jesus answers in his teaching on the Lord's Prayer. It's clear that Jesus wants us to get beyond where we normally are when we pray. CS Lewis said that for Christians around the world their chief prayer is "give me this day my daily bread." Typically, we don't get beyond that. Jesus had given his disciples the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter six. Then on a second occasion, Jesus went some distance away from his disciples and they watched him pray. And as they saw him pray, they saw there was something about the relationship that Jesus had as he prayed and the dynamic that he experienced as he prayed that was different than their experience. So, after they had watched Jesus pray, they said to Jesus, "Jesus, teach us to pray." What they were saying is, "we want you to teach us how to pray the way we saw you pray." Then, for the second time in the Gospels, we see that Jesus gave them the same prayer he had given them in Matthew chapter six. Furthermore, he says, in effect, when you

pray, if you want to pray like me, what you need to do is pray to the Father about the Father. You need to pray to the Father about the person of the Father, "hallowed be Thy name." You need to pray to the Father about the plan of the Father, "thy Kingdom come." You need to pray to the Father about the purpose of the Father, "thy will be done." Then as you continue praying, you should pray about the family, not about yourselves. Pray about the provision for the family, "give us this day our daily bread," and then pray for the pardon of the family, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," and then pray for the protection of the family, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

Jesus recognized that what his disciples lacked was a relationship with the God of the universe. So, he said, if you pray this way, you will receive something more than your daily bread. In this message we will examine the first petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Hallowed Be Thy Name."

What is the name of God?

I have a question for you, "Exactly how do we go about hallowing God's name?" There are two distinctive names of God in the Old Testament. The first is the name that appears in Genesis, "Elohim." You've probably heard that name. El is the chief God of the Canaanite pantheon. Elohim is generally described by Old Testament scholars as perhaps a majestic plural, because the "im" ending is a plural; it should be translated "gods." daily bread." Then we pray aThe two letters in the middle of "Elohim" (the "oh") doesn't match anything that we know in the Semitic world, because the normal name for gods would be "Elim." "Elohim" is a word that is unmatched in the Semitic world. So, the general explanation is this must just simply be the majestic name of God that is only used in the Hebrew Bible and no place else. Or could it be that the Hebrew Bible is acknowledging what we as Christians know to be true, that the God who created the universe was not just a God, it was God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit? There is a plurality in the

Godhead!

There are two Psalms that are nearly identical, Psalm 14 and Psalm 53, "The fool says in his heart, there is no God." In Psalm 14, the fool says in his heart, there is no creator God (Elohim). Then in Psalm 53, you have the other word for God. The fool says in his heart, there's no Yahweh, the God who is present in my life today.

In the Old Testament, there are, in fact, 80 names of God. They tend to be names that are expansions of the name Yahweh. Before we examine those expanded names, we should note how the Jew hallowed the name "Yahweh" in the Old Testament times. First, the Jews wouldn't say the name. They wouldn't pronounce "Yahweh." Instead, whenever they saw the name "Yahweh" in the Old Testament, they would say the Hebrew word "Adonai." "Adonai" is the Hebrew word that is translated as Lord or Mr. or Master. Over time they developed a hybrid name "Jehovah." Jehovah is a combination of the consonants from the name "Yahweh" and the vowels from the name "Adonai." All of this was their way of avoiding saying the sacred name "Yahweh."

Another way they hallowed God's name is that as they translated manuscripts in the Old Testament, when a scribe came to the point where he wrote the name Yahweh with a pen, he would immediately throw the pen away. The thinking being that how could a pen be used to write any other mundane word when it was used to write the most sacred word in the universe?

Even more significant for us today is how the

Jews came up with the other 80 names for God in the Old Testament. Perhaps you have heard the name "Jehovah Jira." We see a name like that and we can immediately think, that's a cool name for God. But it's important for us to know how the name was developed. There was an occasion when Abraham was on Mount Moriah. He had been asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac, and he wasn't quite sure what he was going to do. What happened is that God provided a ram to be sacrificed in the place of Isaac. So, Abraham gave God a new name. For Abraham in that moment, Yahweh, the God who is present, the God who desires to appear in our lives, appeared in the life of Abraham as Yahweh Jira, the God who provided the ram.

Another notable example comes from the life of Gideon. Gideon was a judge. God told Gideon that he was going to use him to deliver the Israelites from the Midianites. Gideon wasn't so sure about that. If you read the account about Gideon in the Book of Judges, you find that Gideon was afraid. He was so afraid that God gave Gideon three signs, not just the sign about the fleece. There were two other signs as well. It was only after he got three signs from God that Gideon and 300 men went up against the Midianites. In that great battle, God showed up. After the battle, Gideon had a new name for God. "Yahweh Shalom." "Shalom," of course, is the name that means "peace," because out of Gideon's experience, he discovered that the God who calls himself the "I am" in both the Old Testament and the New Testament was the God who appeared in his own life. So, now he could say, I have a new name for God. God is peace.

During our experience as Christians, I believe it's God's desire for us to create new names for God. They come out of our experiences as we are living our lives and asking the inevitable question that we all ask, "Where is God now in the midst of this life experience?"

Pastor David Jeremiah has shared a wonderful story about a man by the name of Spencer who was part of Company I in the United States Army's 35th Infantry Division. Company I was summoned to the Rhineland region of West Germany. Another company already there had been under heavy attack. Several soldiers had died, and the few that were left were hiding behind a building for cover. As Company I appeared, they rushed to the building to get the wounded soldiers. But as they got there, they were immediately pinned down by the Germans.

Spencer cried out, "God save me!" He had a young son at home and a wife. He was trusting that somehow God would intervene on his behalf. Just about that time, he noticed that there was a long, fluffy white cloud that

appeared that obscured the view of the Germans and the house where they were hiding. The cloud stayed in place just long enough for Spencer and the Americans to retreat away from the house, back into a wooded area where now they were safe. Just as soon as that cloud had come up, poof, it was gone. When the Germans could see the house again. They opened their artillery fire and wiped out the house and everything that was around it. But Spencer and the soldiers with him survived that battle.

Two weeks later, Spencer got a letter from his mom. She said in the letter, "Son, what happened on the morning of March 9, because I got a phone call at 01:00 in the morning from Mrs. Tankersly from our Church?" She said, "God told me that your son, Spencer, is in danger. You need to get up and pray and call everybody you know to pray." Mrs. Tankersly told me that she prayed until 06:00 in the morning. Finally, at 06:00 in the morning, while she was still on her knees, she was convinced that God was going to send a cloud of protection for you, Spencer. So, what happened on March

9?"

Regularly throughout the Old Testament the patriarchs, when they experienced God doing something special, they gave him a new name. In that spirit, in the light of my computer/printer story, I have a new name for God. I'm here to tell you that our God and Father who desires to be present in our lives is a computer whiz!

How do we hallow God's name?

So how do we hallow the name of God? That's my second point. What does it mean to hallow? I hear the word "hallow," and I think of the hallowed halls of some Ivy League institution. The word that is translated hallow is from one of the very common verbs in the New Testament, the Greek verb "hagiazō," which means to make holy, to set apart, to make distinct. I suspect that the reason why this is translated "hallow" is so that we wouldn't be confused with the notion that what we do when we pray is that somehow we make God holy. God is holy enough already. He doesn't need us to make him

holy. Our praying "Hallowed be Thy name" doesn't make God holy. As we pray "Hallowed be thy name," we are asking that the God of the Bible, the great I Am of Old Testament and New Testament, become holy in my life. This word "hagiazō," has the basic meaning of set apart or to be distinct or to be special. So, when I pray "Hallowed be thy name," what I'm really saying is "God, it is my desire today that you become special in some new and distinctive way for me. So, God be set apart for me."

We can ask further then. "How exactly do we do that?" We do that by following three suggestions on how we can make God's name Holy. First, it seems to me that we need to believe that He is the I Am. And therein lies the problem. So often we're not quite so sure that God is the "I Am" of the Old Testament and the New Testament, because when we face frustration in prayer, invariably our frustration comes from the fact we're not sure that God is even there.

That's why one of the names of God in the Bible is Yahweh Shammah, which is the word that means God is here. He is the God that is present with us today. We're not always so sure that is the case. So, we start by believing God is the God who exists. We need to believe that he is more than a God who established the universe. He's a God who is present today.

As we at 2Restored work with couples we end every session asking the "I Am" of the Bible to reveal himself to our clients and their families somehow in this next week. We pray with expectation that the God of the Bible does want us to grow in our understanding

of Him. God truly longs for us to experience Him in new ways so that we can give Him a new name. So, we start by saying, I want to believe God is the God who exists, and I'm going to trust him for that. But it seems to me the second way that we make him Holy is the way that people of the Bible did.

In Isaiah chapter six, we find there was a politician by the name of Isaiah. He was the court prophet. So, I think I can call him the politician. Like any good politician, Isaiah talked and talked and talked and talked and talked until he had an experience where he was in the temple. According to John 12:41, he saw Jesus Christ high and lifted up in the temple. Suddenly, this politician had nothing to say because he stood in awe of the God of the universe who appeared to him in the temple. He said, "Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips."

Similarly, in the book of Job, there was a theologian by the name of Job who was caught up in his theology. Today we'd call it prosperity Gospel. It's Deuteronomistic theology for Old Testament scholars. It's the notion that if you suffer, it's because there's some sin in your life. In the New Testament, the disciples of Jesus were still struggling with that theology a bit, because in John chapter 9:1 and 2, they come across a blind man, and it's the disciples of Jesus who say, "Who sinned?" Was it this man who sinned? Or was it his parents who sinned because they had one explanation for suffering? If you're suffering, it's because of some sin in your life. But Jesus said, nobody sinned. This man was born blind for the glory of God. So, Jesus gives us at least one additional reason for suffering. I believe there are seven categories

biblically for suffering. In any case, Job had only one. As he realized that he was suffering, looking at the theology that he had, he had one of two choices. Either he was a sinner or that God forgot the theology. So, for 37 chapters in the book of Job, Job wants to have an audience with God. He wants to go to court with God. He wants to present his case to God. He even tells Eliphaz and Bildad and Zophar, his three friends, who were also caught up in prosperity gospel, "no, it's not that I've sinned. It's that God forgot his theology. If I could just get together with God and explain to him that according to God's own theology of suffering, he made a mistake with me. He knows and I know I haven't sinned. If I can explain this to God, God will look at me and say, oh, Job, I'm so sorry. My bad. I'm glad you explained my theology to me because now I know what I'm supposed to do. I will correct my treatment of you immediately!"

For 37 chapters, Job demands an audience with God until in chapter 38, God shows up. Finally, the theologian has nothing to say because God, out of a whirlwind speaks to Job and says,

"Job, where were you when I hung the stars in the sky? Where were you when I created the oceans? Job, you really think that your puny little brain can understand me?"

I am amused by the efforts of so many theologians who have attempted to cram God into their theology. God is too big for us to comprehend. What we need to do when we're facing any kind of a challenge is to come into a relationship with the God of the universe so that we can experience him and have a "God moment." In chapter 38 of the book of Job, that's what happens. Job stands in awe of the living God. Now he has nothing to say, nothing at all.

It seems to me that we need to come to the point where, as we sing on Sunday morning, we experience the Great "I am." As we pray on Sunday morning or through the week that we experience the great I am. We should anticipate moments like Isaiah had and Job had where we're so overwhelmed with the music or so overwhelmed with the prayers, so overwhelmed with the sense of the awesome presence of God, we can't even sing anymore or

talk anymore. We just sit weeping in our place because we're overwhelmed with the sense of the presence of God.

When we do that, we are entering into the kind of relationship that God longs for us to have. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name," there's a third way that we can make God's name Holy. We make God's name holy when we give him a name that describes what he has done for us.

As we've been thinking about these names of God in the Bible, it was customary for the Jew to keep expanding on the list. As they experienced God in a new and more profound way, they would create a new name for God. We know how that happens in every relationship. It was many years ago that I noticed that there was this real cute looking girl that moved into the house right next to the house that my parents were building. I thought to myself, "I've got to figure out a subtle way to meet this girl." I was in college at the time. I didn't have a key to my parents' new home so I

decided I would come home from college when I knew my parents wouldn't be home from work. Since I didn't have a key to get into my parent's house, I could go to the neighbor's house and ask if I could just hang out there for a little bit until my mom got home. That was my plan. I went to the cute girl's house. But I had to talk to her parents for about an hour and a half before the girl I have come to know as Joan finally came downstairs.

So, Joan went from cute girl to the girl I hoped to date to girlfriend, to fiancé. I created a special name for her. I called her my Pooker. Don't laugh. Some of you have given names like that to your sweetheart as well and I didn't go around in the neighborhood calling everybody I saw Pooker. I had one Pooker in my life. That was my wife-to-be, Joan. Since that time, I've given her a lot of new names. I call her my wife. She is the mother of my children. I call her my best friend. And I've learned affectionately to call her boss!

It happens in every growing relationship. As a relationship grows and expands, we give the people that we care about new names. And that's precisely what we see happening in the Bible. As people grew to understand who the God of the Bible was, they expanded on the basic names, and they gave God new names that came out of the experience they had understanding who God really is.

Beware then! We can pray the Lord's Prayer and miss the whole point. The disciples of Jesus did. They had heard this prayer before. They wanted to pray like Jesus. And Jesus said, "let me tell you again, you want to pray like me and experience the kind of power that you sense that I have and the

relationship that you sense I have. Let me give you the same prayer I gave you before. Pray this way."

Pray hallowed be thy name! When we pray that, what we're doing is saying, "God, I know that you are the great 'I Am.' I pray then that I experience you in some new and distinctive way as the I Am in my life. God, I want to be able to come away this week and declare you are a computer whiz because you've demonstrated your power for me in some unique and dynamic way!"

So, how exactly do we go about doing that?

1. We need to keep track of the ways that God answers our prayers and the ways we have seen evidence of him working in our lives. I suggest that you periodically make a list.

Years ago, I was using the ACTS method of praying. I divided my prayer time into four sections where I prayed prayers of Adoration followed by prayers of Confession, followed by prayers of Thanksgiving and ending with prayers of Supplication. I quickly discovered that my adoration prayers and my thanksgiving prayers were very similar. I tended to "adore" God for his grace or sovereignty and then later I "thanked" him for the same traits. That quickly became very redundant, so I decided to change my whole approach and reserve my "thanksgiving" prayers to acknowledge how God had answered my prayers. That forced me to realize how seldom I had paused to think about how God was working in my life. It also made me realize how much God was in fact doing.

I strongly suggest that you take the time to

reflect on how grateful you are that God has answered your prayers.

2. Once you have prepared your list, examine it to determine what names you can

give God for how He has revealed Himself to you! Do that and the names you give God will immediately remind you of incidents in your life when God revealed Himself to you in a powerful way!

Pray "God, hallow yourself in my life. Be holy to me." Do that and you are beginning to pray like Jesus!

