

# “Teach us How to Pray”



**I love the tips and tricks that teachers use to get classes to be quiet. It**

might be that a teacher gets really quiet and says, “If you can hear my voice clap twice” and the instructions get more elaborate until the teacher says, “If you can hear my voice, turn your voice off.” In my wife’s fifth grade classroom, she yells, “Less talk,” and has taught her class to respond, “More action” and then turn their voice off. Back in my after-school program days, we did “Sonic Boom” as our call and response.

But about the best one I’ve seen comes from camping ministry (which is a huge shock, I know). Paul Lint, who is the co-director at Wesley Acres with his wife Brenda, quiets groups down by putting up the ASL sign for “I love you” and waiting for everyone else to do the same. And once the “I love you” sign is up, it’s time to turn voices off. And he explains it the first few times he does it as having two purposes. The first is that it is really Paul saying, “I love you.” But it’s more like “I love you enough to want you to hear this instruction” and returning the “I love you sign” is the group saying, “I love you enough to listen.” The other purpose is that there’s an imaginary string that goes from the thumb to the mouth that holds our mouths shut when the “I love you” sign us up. It’s super effective and hard to miss.



**But with human nature as it is, every single one of those tricks stop**

working after awhile. There’s more talk and less action in Linse’s classroom; we can clap until our hands are chapped trying to get people to hear our voices. At camp, on Sunday, that first night of camp, the “I love you” sign goes up, and you can hear a pin drop. It’s immediate, and everyone is listening. But by about Wednesday, we’ve seen it enough that it goes a little more like this. The sign goes up, and then we immediately start talking to our neighbor again, quieter but still talking.

## Teach Us How to Pray | 2

Campers, counselors, and, yes, even deans, are going through the motion of what we've been taught. But we're not thinking about what it means anymore. I wonder if that happens to us during certain parts of worship. We have an order of worship, because Paul the Apostle (not Paul the Camp Director) and all of Christian tradition points out that worship should be orderly. That means there are things we do and say every week, and it can happen that they lose their power or their impact or their importance.

This morning, we are beginning a message series on the prayer that Jesus used to teach us how to pray. We say it every week, next week we'll sing it, we may even hear it sung in a few weeks. But it can happen that the Lord's Prayer becomes like the "I love you" sign at camp. We go through the motions and the words, but how often do we think, really think, about what we're saying as we pray this prayer Jesus used to teach his disciples?



Our scripture this morning tells us that one day while Jesus was praying,

his disciples came to him and made a request of him that would change the world: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John had taught his disciples to pray." This was typical of a rabbi/disciple relationship; the rabbi would teach his disciples a simple prayer that they'd say over and over again. Jesus obliges as a good rabbi and says, "When you pray, pray this way..." And he gives to them a version of what we now call the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father or the Disciples Prayer.



"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Hallowed be thy

name. Hallowed. What it means is to make holy. To revere, to recognize as awesome, beautiful, good. Hallowing God's name. When we pray to the Godhead, in whatever fashion we are praying, we keep in mind that we are not talking to someone who is equal or a peer. We're talking to the God of the Universe, the Holy Trinity

## Teach Us How to Pray | 3

existing in perpetual relationship as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. When we pray, “hallowed be your name,” we are talking to someone who has no parallel on earth. Whatever awe we give to anyone in prominent position on earth is nothing compared to the awe we give to God’s name.

And what we might automatically miss about this is that it’s a request; it’s the first request we make known to God. We’re asking God to make God’s name as glorious, make God’s name known, make God’s name made known as glorious. The Common English Bible, which I use from time to time, renders it this way: “Uphold the holiness of your name.” And it’s more than just God’s *name* we’re talking about. When our Hebrew faith ancestors talked about the name, they were talking about the essence of the person: their character, their nature, their personality. So, we’re praying that God will uphold the holiness of God. When we pray this, we’re not trying to convince God that God’s name should be great, we’re shaping our own heart around this idea that God’s name should be hallowed even if it means that our name is not.



**In this and in every step of this prayer, we are making conscious decision**

to yield to God. Hallowed by *your* or *thy* name. As Adam Hamilton said in a sermon awhile ago, “Any time you hear *thy* in the Lord’s prayer, it stands in contrast to saying ‘my.’” By praying hallowed be *thy* name, we’re saying, “God we want your name to be hallowed and not ours.” And that’s hard to do. From a very young age, we want people like us or be impressed by us. Ever been around children a little older than Auden when you’re new to them? They pull out all the stops to make sure we’re impressed by them. And if we’re being completely honest, that never really goes away. We want to be liked. We want to be thought well of; we want to have a good reputation. Whether we acknowledge it or not, there’s a part of our choices that comes from this

## Teach Us How to Pray | 4

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desire: we like to wear nice clothes, drive a nice vehicle. There's a desire for us to be remembered or known.



But it should be more important to us that God's name is hallowed,

upheld as holy, and made known to the world around us. Consider Psalm

115:1: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name give glory." We want God's name to have the glory or be hallowed. Not ours.



Hallowed be your name, O God. As we live and pray, let us give God the

reverence which his character and nature deserve.