

The Name of God



One of the ways we connect in conversation and relationships is through names. Finding the name that best helps you to connect with God is essential as we learn how to pray.

The best place to start is probably Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, if for no other reason than this is how God has revealed himself to us. Over time it is good to learn to pray to each of them and healthy to foster a relationship with each person of the Trinity.

One way to do this is to consider the qualities of God and discern which quality you ascribe to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I have always seen the Holy Spirit as the great encourager, inspiring us and transforming each moment into a mini-Pentecost; Jesus has always been a teacher and friend; and, God the Father has always been adviser, guide, and wise counsel.

But it is different for each person, and it is different for you. What's important is that you explore it for yourself and get comfortable with the name that most draws you into conversation with God. This daily habit of prayer we are striving to develop is a conversation, a prayer of the heart, and names are intimate and important.

This is not an academic quest, but a deeply personal exploration of which name best helps you to encounter God.

I pray mostly to God the Father. Imagine the most amazing father, all the best of any father you have ever known, with none of the bad. The idea of God as Father resonates with me deeply, and it has always struck me that when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he instructed them to pray to God as Father. But I know people who didn't have great relationships with their earthly fathers who find it very difficult to pray to God as Father. This is not insurmountable, but understandable.

Other people find that praying to Jesus makes it easier for them to relate to and encounter God. The Gospels provide so many images and stories of Jesus that stimulate our knowledge and imagination. These are all very helpful when it comes to praying in the conversational style we have been discussing.

Others relate more easily to God as Spirit and find that praying to the Holy Spirit is the best way for them to engage in a deeply personal relationship with God.

Of course, in different seasons and situations we may find ourselves spontaneously praying to God as Father, Son, or Spirit. And, even within each of the three persons, there are dozens of names by which we may call upon

God. Jesus alone is known as Lord, Master, Christ, Logos, Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, Lamb of God, the New Adam, the Second Adam, the Light of the World, King of the Jews, Rabbi, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Word made Flesh, Emmanuel, and many others.

Find the name that best facilitates a relationship between you and God. It may take time, but you will be glad you did. Lord, Yahweh, Spirit of God, Adonai, Father, Jesus... find what works for you... and sometimes the way to find what works for you is to pray using different names. As you address God using different names, pay attention to which name resonates most deeply. You will know it when you find it. You may already know it. It may change over time, and that's okay. Our relationship with God should be by its very nature dynamic: positive, full of life and energy, changing and growing, a force that stimulates change and progress.