

Should I call you "Reverend"?

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"Should I call you 'Reverend'?" someone asked me recently. I paused for a moment, thinking a million thoughts at once. I'm not much of a fan of the "reverend" title, in part because of its problematic grammar but mostly because I don't want to be revered.

"Reverend" isn't actually a title at all; it's what's called a [style](#).

It's similar to calling a judge "the Honorable John Doe," and some grammarians get their stoles in a twist if "reverend" occurs without the officially correct "the" before it.

More importantly, "reverend" isn't a noun synonymous with "pastor"; it's an adjective that means "deserving reverence." When someone calls me "Rev. Adam," the absent definite article bothers me a lot less than the fact that I'm being called "reverend" just because I happen to be ordained. I'd rather earn respect than be given it by default.

Maybe I wimped out, but I went ahead and told the person who asked that I'm happy just being called "Adam," but if she's more comfortable with "Reverend," that's fine too. A rose by any other name would smell as sweet--or as sour.

Do you call your pastor "Reverend"? Why or why not? And pastors, what do you prefer to be called?