

The Pattern of Prayer

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Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

We started a brand-new series last week. We're calling it Pray Like Jesus, and we have said that we're making it our goal this fall to go deeper in our walk with the Lord, to grow in intimacy with Him, and to pursue His presence at a greater level than we've ever experienced Him before. And the way to do this is through prayer.

I don't know of a believer who has not, at one time in their walk with the Lord, been frustrated with their prayer life. I meet with a lot of people, and if there are two areas of weakness, if you will, where they say, "Man, I wish I could grow in this area," it typically boils down to two things. One is sharing their faith, and the other is prayer.

We know we should pray. We've been commanded to pray, but it's a frustration for many of us. We go to our prayer rooms, sit down to pray, and don't even know where to start. After three to five minutes of sitting there in silence, we kind of throw up our hands and go, "Oh, I just can't do this. What is this?"

Or we rush right into our list of needs, and we pray for our needs: "We need this and this and this and this." After about two or three minutes, we're done with our needs and our blessings, and we don't know where to go next.

So you have this desire to pray. You sit down, but your mind wanders. Or you have this thought. We'd never say it out loud, but we've had the thought, haven't we? "God, why am I praying? You know what I need anyway. Just let's do this, all right?" And there's your prayer.

I often run into believers who know that there's a greater dimension, if you will, to the Christian faith, but you're just not experiencing it. So many are living in defeat because of a nonexistent prayer life. You're not tapping into the power that is yours that comes by way of prayer.

And while many are sincere, God-loving, God-fearing, and faithful to the church - you're not going to give up on God - you just know that there's something more.

My friend Daniel Henderson, who is leading the Resilience Conference, has been here on a number of occasions and led us in our prayer and praise times. He'll be leading the conference in October that we're hosting. He wrote this in his book, **The Power of Transforming Prayer**. It goes right along with what I'm talking about as it relates to wanting to go deeper and desiring to walk with God in a greater way.

He said, "In spite of our common environment of spiritual superficiality, religious routines, and massive distraction, I am convinced that true believers carry an unquenchable appetite for legitimate life change. We hunger for worship encounters with His holy presence that mark us and make us more like Jesus. Deep within, we know there is another dimension of Christian living beyond a cultural faith that simply checks in with

God at church or in times of crisis. We are tired of feeling bored, inept, confused, frustrated, or weary in any sense with the idea of prayer."

Now, don't raise your hand if Henderson just read your mail there. But I believe it's true.

The Pattern of Prayer

I think it was true for the disciples who came to Jesus and said, "Lord, would You teach us to pray?"

That's what we're looking at today. We're looking at the Lord's Prayer. It's been called the model prayer. Other places, it's called the Disciples' Prayer. We read it twice in Scripture: once in Matthew, in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is teaching how to pray, and He's holding it in contrast to how hypocrites pray, or how those He refers to as the Gentiles, the pagans, pray.

We read it again in Luke's Gospel, where the disciples come to Jesus and say, "Jesus, will You teach us to pray?"

So whether it is one moment retold twice at different places in the Gospels, or whether it's two distinct moments in the life of Jesus, it really doesn't matter. What matters is that in both instances in which this prayer is given, Jesus is giving us a pattern of how to pray and what to pray.

I'm calling this message, if you're taking notes - you can write the title down - "The Pattern of Prayer." Now, this is part one. We're going to divide the Lord's Prayer, this model prayer, into two parts this week and next week.

What we're going to learn here is very important. Remember what we said last week: 25 times we have recorded in the Scripture Jesus praying, but only eight or nine of those times do we have the exact words that Jesus prayed. This is one of those times where we have the exact words - the red-letter edition, okay? This is what Jesus said as it relates to prayer.

So we need to lean in, because if it was important for Jesus to teach it in this way, it's there for a reason.

Before Jesus teaches His disciples to ask for anything as it relates to personal needs, He's going to teach them to engage with the Father first and foremost, okay? It goes right in line with what we said last week.

Remember how we defined prayer? We said that for Jesus, prayer wasn't a box to check; it was a life to share. This is exactly where He starts in the model prayer. He starts with relationship.

Prayer Is Personal, Not a Performance

We're going to look at this in Matthew's Gospel as told in the Sermon on the Mount. Rather than just reading the Lord's Prayer, I do want to read it in the larger context in which Jesus was speaking, where, again, He was contrasting it with how hypocrites and pagans prayed.

We'll start in verse number five of Matthew chapter 6. The Bible says this:

And when you pray...

— Matthew 6:5

Notice, "when you pray." It is just a given that followers of the Lord are going to pray. They're going to cry out to God.

You must not be like the hypocrites.

— Matthew 6:5

All right, these are the play actors of the day. You've probably heard this before, where we get that word "hypocrite." They would put a mask on, perform, and be a different person. Jesus says, "Don't pray like that." They're pretenders. Don't be a pretender when you pray.

For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.

— Matthew 6:5

Jesus is saying prayer is not a show.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.

— Matthew 6:6

Now, if you take notes in your Bible, I want you to circle the word "Father." You're going to find it four times in this series of verses that we're looking at. If you trace it through the Sermon on the Mount, I believe there are 17 times Jesus refers to God as His Father.

We're going to highlight this more in just a moment, but I just want you to see it. We'll talk through it.

So He says, "You go into a room." This is a sacred act. Prayer is first and foremost personal and private. You are sharing life with the Father, and you can bet that when you go into your secret place and share life with the Father, He sees you.

Jesus even says that:

And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

— Matthew 6:7

Prayer is not mechanical. It's not this magic recitation of words, if you will, where if you just say it the right way, then ta-da, the answer is going to happen. Jesus says that's not prayer.

Even the model prayer, which we should memorize and recite together - and we're going to recite it together at the end of our time today - we should know it and pattern our prayer lives after it. But if we just say that prayer without thinking about what we're saying, that kind of prayer, just babbling words, isn't going to move the hand

and heart of God.

This is what Jesus is saying. You're not going to be heard just by saying words, babbling on and on and on. And He even says in verse 8:

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Pray then like this:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

— Matthew 6:8-13

There are seven petitions in this Lord's Prayer that Jesus is encouraging us to pray. We're going to look at the first three this week. We'll look at the following four next week. Again, this is a little two-part series here.

Now, the first three petitions, you're going to notice, are all God-centered. They're all Godward.

This prayer, as given in Luke 11, remember, comes in response to the disciples saying, "Jesus, teach us to pray."

I just want you to think about that for a moment. Jesus' disciples knew Him better than anybody else. They saw Him behind closed doors, so to speak. They traveled with Him for three years and shared meals with Him. They saw Him in tense situations. They saw Him do mighty miracles.

They come to Jesus, and notice what they don't say. They don't say, "Jesus, Your leadership is incredible. Teach us a little bit about leadership." They don't say, "Jesus, Your teaching - man, You've got the crowd right where You want them. They're in the palm of Your hand. Would You teach us how You communicate like You do?" They don't say, "Your miracle-working ministry - man, we see You doing these mighty works. Teach us how to do those."

They don't do any of that. They see His prayer life, and they say, "Jesus, teach us to pray." And He teaches them.

In this prayer, there are seven petitions. The first three have to do with the Lord and His purposes. The next four petitions have to do with man and his personal needs.

Prayer Begins With Relationship

But before any of the asks, before any of the petitions, look at where Jesus starts - right where we started last week. Prayer isn't a box to check. It's a life to share with the Father. What Jesus teaches is that prayer begins with relationship. It's all about relationship.

One of the most remarkable truths that Jesus communicates is this whole idea of using the word "Father." Now, historically, this isn't unique to Jesus. You can read in the Old Testament about God being referred to as Father. In Isaiah 63:16, God is referred to as "our Father." In Jeremiah 3:19, God Himself says, "I thought you would refer to Me as Father and not turn from following Me."

This language of God as Father isn't unique to Jesus, but Jesus does take it, turn it a little bit, and make it a lot more personal. In other words, He gives another layer to this idea of Father - not just God being Father in the sense of headship, like the fatherhood of God, but instead He turns it and makes it more tender, more personal, more intimate.

We take trips to Israel. I'm prayerful that at the end of '27 we can go again. We'll let you know and keep you posted on it. But when we go to Israel, you can be in a marketplace somewhere, and you'll hear little children running around crying out, "Abba! Abba! Abba!" And what are they crying out? "Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!"

That's the language that Jesus uses here. But it's not just like a toddler. It's tenderness. It's relationship.

My dad, who I've told you before is my hero, is one of the greatest men I've ever known. I talk to him on a weekly basis. When I call him and he answers, I don't go, "Well, hello, Father." No, it's, "Dad, what's going on?" There's this relationship.

This is what Jesus is stating at the outset of this model prayer: When we begin prayer, it begins with relationship.

Now, the question that every single person in this room has to answer, and the question people watching online have to answer, is this: Are you in a true relationship with God? Because not everybody is.

You can't call God "Abba, Daddy" unless you know Him in a personal way. And the only way you can call Him "Abba, Daddy" is by trusting in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus - the fact that Jesus died on a cross for your sins, shed His blood in your place, was buried according to the Scriptures, and was raised on the third day.

When you trust in the sacrificial death of Christ and in His resurrection - that that's what forgives your sin and makes you right with God - it is at that moment that you are adopted into the family of God. That's when you become a son or daughter of God.

Paul would write about this once in Romans 8 and again in Galatians 4. In fact, look at this Galatians passage. I'll put it on the screen for you. He says:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

— Galatians 4:4-7

Look at this: adoption as sons - sons and daughters.

See, if you don't know the Lord in a personal way, if you've never put your faith and trust in Him, He might be your Father in the sense that He's the Father of all creation. But until you, by faith, trust in Him, He's not your Abba Father.

Only when you call on the name of the Lord and are saved are you adopted into the family of God and become a true son or daughter. That's when the Holy Spirit lives in you, and as Paul said, that Spirit is what allows you to call Him "Abba."

So you've got to answer the question before you leave today: Do you know God in this way? Is He your Abba? This is where prayer begins.

The Tenderness of a Father

You know, it's amazing. This week, many of you were asking me as I was shaking hands before the service, "How'd you do dropping off your daughter at school?"

Horrible, all right?

And the follow-up question: "Did you cry?"

Yes, I cried like a baby all the way home, all right?

This past Thursday, we moved her in. It's amazing. You see these - first of all, these girls spend more money on this dorm room than I do on my living room, kitchen, and master bedroom combined, all right? It is amazing.

And these dads come in wearing work belts. I mean, they're ready to go. They mean business. They're putting furniture together, and they're getting everything done.

In our room, Kelsey's roommate's dad was trying to get up these curtains that they wanted. You could tell when they first got them up that it wasn't quite right. It was hot in that room, and he was sweating. You could just tell, man, this was not his best day, having to put up these curtains.

But do you think he's saying a word about it? No way. He's going to get them exactly where his baby girl wants them.

You know why? Because there's tenderness there. He's Abba.

And that little girl wants them looking good, and her daddy was going to stay and get them done until they were just right, because he's Abba.

When we were getting ready to tell Kelsey bye, we went out. I didn't know Debbie had snapped this picture. She sent it to me later, but here's the picture of me telling Kelsey bye. I've got my good sunglasses on because I'm crying like a baby.

This is right after I told her, "Listen, if you want me to unpack your room right now and take you back to Houston, we'll do it, all right? Let's go."

I didn't tell her that. I'm speaking words of life over her, praying for her, encouraging her, telling her she's ready. But I want you to look at this picture, and I want you to have this in mind when we talk about prayer as relationship.

If you're a son or daughter of God, this is what I'm talking about. This is how God sees you. When you enter into your prayer room, that's it right there. It doesn't matter what you've done. It doesn't matter where you are in life. If you're a son or daughter of God, when you enter into prayer, when we say prayer begins with a relationship, this is how you have to see God holding you.

I fear that some, because of their earthly father - maybe he was not a good dad, hurt you, abandoned you, maybe even abused you - you've got to get that picture out of your mind. When you're dealing with your Father, it's the picture that was just up that you have to wrap your mind around.

And so He introduces this idea of relationship. This is what prayer is. It's sharing life with our Father.

Then He lists these petitions, and we're going to look at the first three. Now, as I pray through this, my heart - I need you to hear me on this - do not see prayer as a box to check. I'm going to give you these in steps, if you will: one, two, three, four. But that's not what prayer is.

Remember, prayer is not mechanics. Prayer is more movement. It flows. It's a relationship. And so, while I give you these in steps, don't think, "Okay, I'm going to enter into my prayer closet, and I'm going to do one, two, three." Don't think that way. This is more movement, okay?

But there are petitions. The prayer is going somewhere. There is a direction to it. It starts with the relationship: "Our Father." But then it moves to petition number one.

God's Name Will Be Honored

Jesus teaches His disciples that this prayer is that God's name will be honored. That's what He means when He says:

Hallowed be Your name.

— Matthew 6:9

Now, some teach this as a declaration of praise or worship, and it is to a degree. But more than that, it is a petition: "God, we want - I want - Your name to be revered."

The word "hallowed" means to sanctify, to make holy. It's to treat something or someone with the highest degree of respect and honor. "God, I want Your name to be made much of. I want Your name to be hallowed

and respected in my life, in this home, in our church, in this workplace. Hallow Your name, O Lord."

"Name" in the ancient days represented the totality of someone's being. It represented their character. It represented their nature.

I named my girls their names because I thought they sounded good coming out of loudspeakers, you know, at a soccer game or a basketball game, something like that. In the ancient day, your name was so much more than that.

My friend terms it like an academic CV or a professional resume. That's what "name" represents. It encompasses the totality of a person. So when we say, "the name of the Lord," we're declaring, "This is who God is. This is what He does."

In the Old Testament, He would reveal Himself through names. So, for instance, with Isaac and Abraham, when there's a ram provided in the thicket as the substitute, what does Abraham name the place? He says, "The Lord is our provider." So we know the Lord by His name: Jehovah Jireh, God who provides. Jehovah Shalom, He is our peace.

So, "God, I want Your name to be honored. I want it to be revered. I want it to be set apart as holy."

In the words of D. A. Carson, he says this: "In other words, Christ followers are asking their heavenly Father to act in such a way that they and an increasing number of others will reverence God, glorify Him, consider Him holy, and acknowledge Him."

The name of God - who He is - is sacred and holy. This is one of the top ten, right? Exodus chapter 20, verse 7, the third commandment:

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

— Exodus 20:7

Anytime you treat His name in a way that is not holy or sacred, you are taking His name in vain.

This week - I love how God does this. You can't make this up. In my systematic reading through the Scripture, this week I'm reading through the book of Leviticus. I'm in Leviticus chapter 24, okay? Leviticus is hard to get through. It's just hard.

But I'm reading Leviticus 24, and there comes a time in the chapter where there is a son of an Israelite woman, and all it says is that the son blasphemed the name of the Lord. It doesn't say what that means. It just says he blasphemed the name, and you can tell the community of Israel is like, "Whoa." They don't know what to do. They actually wait on the will of God. They put him in custody, they lock him up, and they say, "We're going to wait until God tells us what to do. He blasphemed the name."

God shows up and speaks to Moses in Leviticus 24, verse 13:

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Bring out of the camp the one who cursed, and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death."

His Holy Spirit lives in us. We are His kingdom bearers, right? Heaven has come to earth when God's Holy Spirit lives in us. When we are sons and daughters of God, we are walking around as salt and light. We are representatives of the King while we walk this earth.

That was inaugurated at the resurrection, and it will ultimately be consummated at the return of Christ. When Jesus returns, we will rule and reign with Him forever and ever and ever.

So just leave this description on the screen, and I want you to think about what Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray when we pray, "Your kingdom come." We're sharing life with the Father. It's all about relationship. We're asking, "God, Your name be honored. Your name be revered." And we say, "Lord, Your kingdom come."

That kingdom that existed for all of eternity before the fall of man - we want that kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. The kingdom of heaven that came when Jesus walked the earth, and He would cast out demons, and He would heal diseases, and He would preach, and people would leave their life of sin - Lord, we want that kingdom to come.

That kingdom was inaugurated at Your resurrection and ascension, and now Your Spirit lives in us. God, let me be an answer to "Your kingdom come" as I go to school today, as I work today. Lord, consummate this today. You come and let us rule and reign with You forever and ever and ever.

Prayer one is all about worship. God, we want Your name to be lifted up in praise. Petition two is all about God's kingdom coming. It's all about this whole idea of rule and reign. God, You rule. You reign. Your kingdom come. Advance Your kingdom. Expand Your kingdom. Not my kingdom - Your kingdom.

In God's kingdom, what He says goes. In God's kingdom, light extinguishes darkness. In God's kingdom, the blind can see, the deaf can hear, and those in chains are set free. Your kingdom come.

Your Will Be Done

Then the third petition is for God's will to be done. It's the second part of verse 10:

*Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

— Matthew 6:10

You could actually put that last phrase, "on earth as it is in heaven," before every one of these petitions. "Lord, I want Your name to be worshiped in my life on earth as it is in heaven. God, I want Your kingdom to come on earth through me as it is in heaven. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Prayer one is all about worship, the name being revered. Prayer two is all about rule and reign. "God, You

reign supreme. You rule this day. Your kingdom come." Prayer three is all about alignment with God's purposes. "God, Your way, not mine."

You'll never pray, "Your will be done," if you don't know, believe, and trust that God knows what is best for you and wants what is best for you. You'll never pray it.

We'll see Jesus model this in His own life in the Garden of Gethsemane. It's one of the weeks when we'll study warfare prayer. When He's in the garden, ultimately, you know what He says?

Not My will, but Yours, be done.

— Luke 22:42

"God, I know You want what's best for me. I know You know what's best for me."

Ultimately, your prayer is so God-centered. We say, "Lord, we want Your name lifted up and glorified, Your kingdom to come, and Your will to be done. That's what I want. So be it."

It takes faith to pray like this. It takes knowing God to pray like this. That's why all of these petitions up front are centered on the Lord.

The Seven-Minute Challenge

Now, before we take the Lord's Supper - and this is a beautiful passage to preach on a day when we're taking the Lord's Supper - I want to give you some homework this week, just in the flow of school getting back in session, okay? This is the application of the message.

I'm calling it the seven-minute challenge, okay? I'll show it to you on the screen. I've been thinking about this application all weekend. I was praying about it this morning. I think I came up with the seven-minute challenge on the way here this morning, all right? That's application. You're getting bread right out of the oven, all right? I'm not sitting on this meal.

So here it is right here: the seven-minute challenge.

Now, some of you are varsity-level prayers, all right? This seven-minute challenge is going to be no big deal for you. But I'm trying to get our entire church, no matter where you are, just to begin - to know where to start so that you don't feel so frustrated. This is where I know to start.

We're only going to cover the first half of this prayer. For the seven-minute challenge, I want you to spend seven minutes in the morning every day this week, all right? Just do what we talked about last week: get alone and get a routine. I'm giving you a routine. It starts this week.

Spend one minute thinking about your relationship with the Father. You don't even have to pray. It's one statement: "God, I'm coming to You as Father."

For one minute, I want you to just think about that picture of crawling up in Abba's lap and Him holding you. He's doing it not based on anything you have or haven't done, but just because you're a son or daughter of the

King. He's got you.

I want you to think about that picture before you do anything else, because it's all about relationship. From relationship, it flows to worship.

I want you to spend two minutes hallowing the name of the Lord, asking that His name be revered and honored in your life. You say, "What if I'm done in two minutes?" Again, this is not rigid, okay? This is meant to be more of a path, not a step. But if you get done, pray it over somebody in your family.

"God, I want Your name to be honored in my life. I want it to be honored in my wife's life. I want it to be honored in my church."

Just two minutes. "God, I'm reverencing Your name. I want it to be all about Your name today."

Then spend two minutes praying, "Your kingdom come. Not my kingdom. God, I want Your kingdom to come."

Then spend two minutes praying, "Lord, Your will be done." You've got a decision before you. "God, You know my heart. I want this to happen, but ultimately, I want to pray like Jesus. I want Your will to be done. Will You help me to want Your will over mine?"

Two minutes. You do this every day, all right? Seven minutes.

For some of you, this will be the first time in your life that you've spent seven minutes in concentrated prayer. I'm just trying to give you a routine, and we'll worry about the next four petitions next week, okay?