

What Prayer is and What it Isn't Session 1

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[0:00] The Lord be with you. And also with you. Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you.

And then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Lord and Heavenly Father, we thank you for gathering us here tonight. We ask you to be with us, speak through us, help us to know your word, help us to speak your word only, help us to speak your truth.

Lord, we ask that everyone here may hear your voice this evening, and your wisdom about prayer.

[1:29] And I ask you to send St. Michael and his angels to protect us, and surround us, and keep us safe, as we are here, to hear your word spoken.

And we pray this in Jesus Christ's holy name. Amen. Amen. I'm going to read from Luke chapter 6, verses 12 and 13.

In those days he went out in the morning, to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

And when day came, he called his disciples, and chose from them 12, whom he named apostles. Thank you for coming.

Now, some of you remember a movie with Indiana Jones, where he had to get to the Holy Grail.

And what was the first test?

[2:38] Anybody remember? That was the second one. That was the third one, actually. The first one was the breath of God.

He had, Indiana Jones had his father's cue book, on how to get to the Holy Grail. And his father had been wounded. He was lying down.

That was Sean Connery. And so Indiana took the book, and he went to the first test. It was called the breath of God. And it said, Only the penitent man can pass through.

And he said, What does that mean? He didn't know what that meant. He did know there were two people lying in front of him with their heads lopped off. They were not able to pass through. And so you can hear Indiana on one side, the penitent man, the penitent man, and the father saying, The penitent man humbles himself.

And kneels before God. And kneels before God. And finally, Indiana gets that. The penitent man humbles himself and kneels before God.

[3:48] He knelt, and the blade went run by him and didn't get his head off. And he got through, and he says, I'm through, Dad. Well, all that we're going to be teaching for the next five weeks has to do with being humble and kneeling before God.

That's what God calls us to live. I don't know how it was when you grew up, but when I grew up, my mother had me kneel by the bed to say my prayers at night.

Some of you may have done that. Some not. And started with the sign of the cross, and then we do the Our Father, and the Hail Mary, the Oh My God, the Apostles' Creed, the Angel of God, and Take My Body, Jesus, and ending with the Gloria.

And I had to memorize all that by the time I was three years old. But the big thing for me was always kneeling at the bed. Well, that was teaching me a life lesson.

This statement, the penitent man is humble and kneels before God, comes out of the Knights Templar back in medieval times.

[5:02] They had a sense of how we address God. And if we're not doing it in a penitent way, in a humble way, kneeling our hearts to God, we're kind of missing the boat on prayer.

So that's kind of where we're going tonight. I'm going to pass out. I'm not going to pass out. But I'm going to give you course outlines. If you could get those out.

I'll take one of those. I'm not going to pass out. So while we're getting sheets passed out, the first thing I'm going to do is go over the course with you for the next five weeks.

So you know what to expect. And then the next thing I'm going to do is have a sheet passed out to you where we're going tonight. The first night tonight is going to be basics night.

I know for a fact that some of you are much more advanced in your prayer life than I am. So we're not standing here as experts giving you the gouge.

[6:22] I'm helping get the cobwebs out. Mary Ellen's helping get some basic teaching out. And we'll go from there. So the course outline, if you take a look at that, tonight we're not going to talk about Acts, the book of the Bible, but Acts, what that means.

And then we'll talk about types of prayer. And then we'll finish with fulfillment or lack of fulfillment in prayer. So that's where we're going now. And Caleb's starting out.

He's a good rector, isn't he? He's a great rector. He's going to pass out. He's not going to pass out either. But he's going to give out the sheets for tonight. A working definition of prayer is based on our attitude.

So what I'm going to do is talk about a working definition of prayer. A working definition of prayer is that prayer is reverence for God.

It's a devout fulfillment of our religious obligations. Now, a lot of us don't like that word obligation. Right? But in fact, God obligates us to talk with Him.

[7:41] And we have found through our fathers who wrote the scriptures that a humble way is a way to address God.

So it's reverence for God, revering Him, and it's a devout fulfillment of our religious obligations. Now, that's all great, but how do you do that?

Marilyn's going to talk a little bit about how you live out that definition. You see in... And it's going to... To project over, you're going to have to really talk loudly.

You see in your notes acts. And this is a... Kind of a... Anagram. And the first letter, A, represents adoration.

So we start out adoring God, praising God, giving Him all the glory. We... We...

[8:49] call Him by His names, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor. We adore you. We love you. You are the one true God.

You are our God. And this... Kind of... If we're feeling kind of in a slump, doing this really lifts our mood.

And then... We go into the C, which is confession. confession. And... We... confess...

our sins... to God. We ask for... um... forgiveness. And then we promise Him that we will repent of those sins and... try not to...

do that... again. And... we also... confess our faith to God. We confess that we... we believe in you...

[9:48] and that we believe in your teachings. Um... We may even want to... recite the... the... um... Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed during that time.

Because that's a good confession of our faith. Um... And then the next one, the T stands for Thanksgiving. So we thank God for everything He has done for us.

For all that He has blessed us with. Everything that He has given us. Which is everything on earth. Um... And we thank Him for our lives.

Once again, that's another way of... um... elevating our mood. It's a... it's amazing how when I'm really kind of feeling down or...

anxious or troubled. If I just start praising God and thanking God for what He has given me, my mood lifts almost immediately.

[10:50] And then, um... the S stands for supplication. And this is where we pray for our own needs and those of others.

So we pray for everybody. Um... We keep prayer lists. We pray for everybody on our prayer list. Dave and I do, um... morning prayer with each other every morning.

And we have a prayer list. And we... we go through that prayer list every day. We're constantly adding more and more people to it.

But, um... It... It just... It starts the day out right for us. And it's very nice to be able to pray together that way.

Interesting. The Book of Common Prayer does prayer this way. And we're going to talk about that in a few minutes.

[11:51] But this is a... This is a way of maintaining a close contact with God. Which is our privilege that God has given us through the cross of Jesus Christ.

He has brought us as children into His kingdom. And I don't know if you're a dad or if you've been a dad or if you had a dad. But... Being involved with your children is a really important thing and getting them to talk to you.

Except for the teenage years they won't talk to you. But on other... Other ages they will. We just came back from a family reunion where we had our three kids and their spouses and our...

Five of our six grandchildren. What a wonderful thing just to sit and let them talk to me. Talk to you. Talk to each other. And talk to each other.

It's really fun to listen to them talk to each other. It's amazing. God the Father cherishes our just sitting in His lap and talking to Him.

[12:54] And so Acts is a way of addressing Him. Now this... Now what I want to talk about are types of prayer. You know, did I mention the prayer book?

Oh, okay. Well, great. Thanks. Here's one. So the book of common prayer was mainly the work of an archbishop of Canterbury in the 1500s named Thomas Cranmer.

Thomas Cranmer looked at the whole island as a monastery. He wanted to see every person in England following a common prayer system.

That's why it's called the book of common prayer. We have it in common. For a while, as you know, I was a chaplain in the Air Force and one of the neat things was to be distributing communion and here's a general and here's an airman basic kneeling together.

That's the queen of England spends every day in her book of common prayer. And she would like us to join her in that. So, now, a neat thing for us who are Anglican church in North America, we're getting a new prayer book.

[14:25] It's coming out this summer. by late summer, early fall, they will be in our pews. Now, the leadership team here has put that beautiful booklet together that we use for Holy Eucharist.

That's the new prayer book. I don't have any new prayer books except I have this one, which is not what the new prayer book will look like. This is kind of a ripped off copy that I can use.

But, we do have the 1979 prayer books. Now, these prayer books are, in my opinion, kind of deficient in the Eucharistic prayer.

They're not atonement centered. However, this book has some of the best prayers that you can find anywhere. prayer. So, what I'm going to do, I have permission to do this.

There's a box full of those. I'd like to lend one to you for the Lenten season. And, if you would use it for prayer, it will absolutely benefit your walk with Christ.

[15:39] So, you can take one home tonight and then return it during Holy Week at our last class. The reason I say that is we have something in common.

We have Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In a parish, we are brothers and sisters. God knits us together. Sometimes we get mad at each other.

Sometimes we feel like we can't walk with each other. Sometimes we feel like nobody loves me, everybody hates me, I'm going to go out and eat worms. But the fact is, we have been put together. I said to a priest one time, I don't know how you can put up with me. And he said, well, I'm stuck with you. Right now we're stuck with each other.

That's the beauty of a parish. We are able to, in common, move closer to our Lord. So, what do we learn from that prayer book? First, we learn types of prayer.

[16:44] The first is praise. Always, we start with praise. What does Father Caleb say when we finish the opening hymn and he turns us, what does he say?

He doesn't say, hey, how are you? How do you say that in Appalachian? It's hard to replicate in this setting. What does he say?

He says, blessed be God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We are blessing God. You know when someone sneezes, what do we say?

God bless you. Okay, if you turn that around, bless you, God, we're called to bless God. That's the first thing we do in prayer.

And it's right out there in the Eucharist service. The same thing happens in daily prayer. prayer. Praise needs to be on our lips all the time.

[17:48] In my heart, when nothing's going on, I find myself saying, I love you, Lord, praise you. Where does that come from? It comes from a relationship with God as my daddy, my father, praising God.

second is called intercessory prayer. We do that especially well in the Eucharist service with prayers of the people, don't we? And this church does it very, very well. The lay leader leads down through a series of prayers, which are intercessory prayers.

We always pray for our church. We pray for leaders. We pray for our government. We pray for our environment.

We pray for those who are ill. We pray for those who have died and the families of those persons. Intercessory prayer. Mary Ellen mentioned a prayer list.

When you're doing your own prayer, daily prayer, a prayer list is important. Now, there are some people who don't like lists.

[18:56] Now, I used to be a vomiteer navigator. Checklists are important. we do a prayer list.

We put names on, we take names off. We give thanks when people get better who have been ill. We give God a commendation of those who die.

We believe it's important to pray. We even pray for Donald Trump. Why do we do that?

He's our president. We honor our president. That's part of intercessory prayer. The three branches of government. Here we go back in class, right?

Executive, legislative, judicial. That makes up our federal government. We pray for them. We intercede for them.

[19:54] the third is called evangelistic prayer, which is really, really important. Do you know that most of us don't think it's very important that someone worship God?

Why not just worship a tree? Who cares? A lot of us kind of feel that way down deep. I had to go to the airport yesterday to reclaim my sunglasses from a rental car.

and so the guy was going to drive me over to the I didn't know they had a secret lot where they keep their cars and clean them up. So he's driving me over there and I said, well, where are you from?

He said, I'm from Uganda. I said, oh, are you an Anglican? He said, no, I'm Muslim. I thought, I didn't know they had Muslims in Uganda.

I didn't say that. Okay, now, part of me wanted to say, what a wonderful thing. I hope that you have a great relationship with Allah. Part of me wanted to say that.

[21:01] Part of me knew that was wrong. Now, he was not going to be led to Christ when we went to that secret lot. But he had a lot of prayers going his way.

We have lost that in Christianity. The desire that someone come to the Lord. evangelistic prayer is a way of putting it right at the front of what we do.

Do you know that morning prayer we don't do very much anymore? But at the end of morning prayer, well, we do it every day, but in church we don't do it much anymore. Stand by.

On the record. I'm right at finding evening, morning prayer. is it page 16? Okay, here's the prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hardwood of the cross, that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace.

[22:11] So clothe us in your spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you for the honor of your name.

Evangelistic prayer is key. Praying for specific people. In our men's Bible study, I mentioned to you that my oldest brother, Jack, who is now dead, he always had a curious relationship with God.

And then his grandsons were in a car accident. One was killed and the other was paralyzed. And he decided, there definitely is a God and I don't want to have anything to do with him.

I prayed for Jack continually and I tried to talk to him about the gospel. Of course, he told me to shut up. But I still prayed for him and I explained the gospel step by step.

About a year before he died, I wrote out the plan of salvation and I sent it to him. Now, I don't know if he ever became a Christian or not, but my desire, as God would have me to do, is to share the gospel with everybody I can in a loving but firm manner.

[23:31] Evangelistic prayer is how God helps us to do that. In fact, he makes us excited to do that when we pray evangelistic prayer.

Then the next is healing prayer. We do that pretty well here. We have people praying after church every Sunday and prayer for healing for us is second nature.

You know, it's not that way in a lot of churches. Starting with the Reformation, through no fault of his own, John Calvin, who's not here to defend himself, saw prayers for healing as kind of magic. And so he said, you know, the apostles probably did prayers of healing. In fact, they did it. I read it in the Bible. But that gift died when the last apostle died.

And so gifts of the Spirit are a thing of the past. If God wants to heal somebody, that's fine. But it's not one of our gifts.

[24 : 39] Well, today, many, many churches are scared to death of prayers for healing. They think, what do they think about? What?

Some think of witchcraft. Yeah. What about TV? Some of the TV people don't help in teaching about the prayer of healing.

Our prayers are geared toward moving people through the grace of God from being ill emotionally, spiritually, physically, relationally, into the well category.

So that's important. And then finally, petition. Notice, that comes at the end of our list. Petition is something I ask for myself. I would have to say that 100% of us, if left to our own desires, would only do petition.

And you may, maybe you want to look at what happened to you today. Probably petition. Because we are self-centered. Part of that is survival, right?

[25 : 52] Most of that is sin. And so it's, Lord God, give me a million bucks, would you? In Jesus' name.

Petition is something that's important, but it's at the end of the list. You ever hear the prayer of Jabez? Yeah, that's in the Bible.

Jabez was a Bible guy. And he did this special prayer that we use today. It is, Oh God, bless me, increase my territory, keep me from evil.

Now you can adjust that prayer in the area of petition. Oh Lord, bless me indeed, that I may be a blessing. Oh Lord, lay your hand on me and increase my territory for you and for me.

Lord, keep me from evil or doing evil. You see how that flips? Prayer of Jabez is really important for us today in a very confused world to bring brightness to the world as we ask the Lord to brighten us.

[27 : 12] Mary Ellen, give us an example of us seeing prayer fulfilled. Okay. A few years ago, we were involved in a healing ministry at Christ the King Spiritual Life Center in Albany, in the Diocese of Albany.

And they had a Tuesday morning healing service every week. and we were part of the prayer team. And after the healing service was over, the prayer teams would spread themselves out around the chapel and people would come up to us for prayer.

There was this one morning that Dave and I happened to be praying together, that this one woman came up for prayer and you could see she was full of fear and she was very anxious and she really wasn't sure what she needed prayer for, but you could just see it on her face.

And so we talked to her for a few minutes and then we started praying and we realized that she needed to get rid of that fear.

So Dave put his hands out and he asked her to take that fear off of her shoulders and put it in his hands.

[28 : 55] It took her probably about maybe five minutes to make the decision to actually do that.

But when she actually did that and Dave carried it to the cross and laid the fears at the cross, the woman's whole face changed.

You could just see the peace of God come over her. And she had this huge, beautiful smile on her face and she was just full of peace.

And you could see it, literally see it in her eyes and on her face. She was just, she had actually laid down that fear.

And that was an answer to our prayer right there. Thank you. We don't always get that kind of fulfillment, do we? I'm going, I have been designated as the one to give you an example of prayer unfulfilled.

[30 : 03] All right, so let's step back in time to 1990. I was a chaplain teaching at the chaplain school in Alabama.

I was a colonel and it was time, my three years were up, it was time to move. I filled out my dream sheet, where I would like to go, and then the personnel guy talked to me and he said, well, it's time for you to go overseas.

And I said, well, we really want to go overseas now because we've got two kids in college, one's in trouble, we really can't go now. He said, okay, we'll find something for you.

And he did. Minot, North Dakota. We never even thought we'd get assigned to North Dakota.

And I began praying earnestly that that would change. And I prayed and I talked to the personnel and I cried with my wife and we prayed some more and sure enough, it didn't change.

[31:15] And so in August, we found ourselves driving two cars from Alabama to North Dakota. I don't think I had ever been in North Dakota, except maybe traveling through, which is how most people experience North Dakota.

Well, I could not understand why God would do that to me. I mean, I'm a good guy. I'm one of the good guys. Why did he punish me that way?

And so the prayer was unfulfilled. But there's a big but. It's not mine. There's a big but.

But God had a purpose for me to go there. And it turned out to be probably for me the sweetest assignment I had in the Air Force.

God gave me seven good chaplains who worked hard for me. And a number of enlisted personnel who made things go smooth.

[32:20] We had some civilian employees that took care of Christian education. Aside from the weather, it was probably the sweetest assignment I ever had.

I had to repent for not trusting God. And thinking this, God does not fulfill every prayer and it's not fair.

God's purposes sometimes move us away from where we want to go. But they do come across sometimes as unfulfilled.

So, a couple of hints now in seeing prayers fulfilled. One is John 15:7. Anybody got that memorized? John 15:7.

Yes. Karen, would you read John 15:7? Yes. Yes. Um, John.

[33:20] John. John. 15:7.

7. Yes. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done.

Thank you. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever and it will be done for you.

Notice, Jesus didn't say, just pray for anything, who cares?

No. If you abide in me, that means we spend our life in God. and my words abide in you, that means we're spending time in the word, then ask whatever you like, and it will be done through, because then we'll be praying in God's will.

that's a really, that's a really, that's a key thing. All right, James 1, 26, 27. Anybody get there first, read it off.

[34:37] James 1, 26 and 27. Anybody there yet? I got it.

Okay, good, would you read that? If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

If any man among you seem to, oh wait, I got it listed in different, okay, verse 27. complicated.

Okay. Okay, here we go. See, we don't have trouble with a book. Yeah, you open a book, it's a lot easier. Okay, okay, okay. Let me start over.

Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves and the religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows and their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

[35:52] Excellent. Thank you for reading that. See what God calls us to do? He calls us to move the earth, to be intercessors for those who are not as well off as we are and sometimes for those who are a whole lot more well off than we are.

We're called to bridle our tongue, gossip, to be unstained lifestyle, and to be movers of the earth in Jesus' name.

Okay, then one more passage. James 4, 1-3. James 4, 1-3.

Now, we've heard from the Martin family, so we need to move on to Dino or Barb. James 4, verses 1-3.

I do have a mom and dad. Oh, okay. Are you one of here? Oh. That works. Did you see that?

[37:18] The phone people got it first. It's easier to find it on your phone. Watch the thing. What causes fights and quarrels among you?

Don't they come from your desires that battle? Believe it. You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive because you ask for draw notice. Then you may spend what you have on board.

Excellent. That's excellent. Thank you, Barbara. And so, for the recorder, who probably couldn't hear you, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

[38 : 19] You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. That, James, we believe, is the brother of Jesus.

Did he always treat Jesus nicely? No. His brothers were not fun brothers to be with. And here, James, years later, he's got it.

He's got it. One reason our prayers aren't fulfilled, and this is not the only reason. One reason our prayers are not fulfilled is that we're looking out for number one.

When I was an athlete, I didn't pray that the other team members would do a good job. I prayed that I would make the next touchdown.

Okay? I also prayed about girls. Yeah, well, it did. Eventually, it did.

[39 : 25] It worked. But that's what happens to us. We kind of get caught up in our own stuff in our prayer life. And it's going to be unfulfilled because it's self-centered rather than God-centered.

And sometimes God's not going to answer it at all the way we like. What about Paul and the thorn in his flesh?

What was that thorn? Anybody have any idea? Sin. Well, sin. All right. We think it had an eye condition which causes eyes to water continually.

And you pick that up in little pieces of scripture. some people say he actually had a thorn in his side. Like he had kidney problems or something. He had a condition that he prayed and prayed for and God did not bring physical healing.

We don't know why. That's going to happen sometimes. But Paul was not one that was praying for number one. And so God gave him healing in another way.

[40 : 41] He made him strong spiritually and a great teacher. And remember he said, when I am weak, then I am strong.

Weakness before God. The penitent man humbles himself and kneels before God. Mary Ellen, does anybody ever have low expectations in prayer?

prayer? I think a lot of us do. We don't really, a lot of times when we pray, we don't really think that God is going to do anything.

We pray, but we're not really expecting much. And that's the opposite of what we should be doing. We should be praying, expecting that our prayer is going to be fulfilled. In fact, when I've done prayer ministry with people, I ask them how, if they're praying for someone else, I ask them how they picture the person they're praying for.

[41 : 50] And they usually picture them being sick or disabled or unhappy or depressed. And what I tell them is picture them as being well.

As you're praying for them, picture them as being well. And that helps you learn how to pray for them.

And that helps you know what God's will is for them. And then we know that something always happens when we pray.

prayer. Something always happens. We may not see it. We may never know what it was. But something always happens when we pray.

Sometimes we see our prayers answered and sometimes we don't. But if we come in with very low expectations of what God can do, we probably are not going to see any answers to prayer.

[43 : 02] And I think we need to raise the level of our expectations a lot more when we go to God in prayer for anything.

So the last thing we want to talk about before we do some group discussion. Prosperity gospel. Health and wealth. Pray it, believe it, and claim it. Name it and claim it. Is there a problem with that? Yes. Now there are hints to that in the scripture, scripture, but that's not the overall pattern. Can you imagine what it would be like if everybody prayed to have an airplane?

And God gave them an airplane. We'd have air traffic problems. We'd not only have near misses, we'd have collisions. There was a movie, was it called Bruce Almighty?

[44:08] I think there were several of them. Morgan Freeman was gone. Morgan Freeman and he was going on a vacation. And so he gave Bruce the ability on the computer to say yes or no to people when they asked for things.

And so he's going yes, yes, yes, yes. Turned out a whole bunch of people prayed that they would win the lottery. He just kept saying yes, yes, yes, yes. And they all won.

But so many won, he's got a dollar. I mean, it's kind of crazy. But I'm not sure I want to pray in such a way that I insult the Lord with my own self-needs.

I do have needs, but I don't think the name it and claim it thing really works because it's not of God. and then name it and claim it, pray for healing and you will receive it if you have enough faith.

What would life be like if everybody prayed for healing and got better? It would be great, right? And we'd have the greatest overpopulation in the whole world.

[45:26] Well, it is the world. God has a pattern. one dies, another comes along. One dies, another comes along.

We pray for prolonging our life. We pray for healing from our ills. But we know that at some point, the breath is going to stop, the heart's going to stop, the blood's going to stop.

We, as a body, are gone. Now, for Christians, because of the cross, there's a whole new world that's going to open up. But while we're here on the earth, we do pray for healing.

We just don't insist that it happen to us. It's not name it and claim it. All right, so now, we're going to have a little time to do a group.

Now, I know that all of you love talking in groups. It's your favorite thing. And so, we're going to have just like 10 or 15 minutes where we spend a little time at our tables.

[46:33] And you'll see the two deals. Share a time when you felt God show up when or after you prayed. Share a time when you felt God did not show up when or after you prayed.

So, this will be a table. And, Brian, you're going to be the coordinator. Okay? this will be a table. Deacon John, you're the leader of that one.

This will be a table. Marty, you're the leader. And this will be a table. And, um, where'd she go?

Carol, you're going to leave that. And what I'd like you to do with the coordinators, just lead a prayer, lead the questions. and it's 5 till 8. At 10 after 8, say a closing prayer.

Turn the recorder off. Turn the recorder off. Okay. Okay.