

# God is Accessible

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. This morning we'll be talking specifically about the topic of prayer and looking at it in light of the book of Daniel.

! Almost often be drawing your attention to Daniel chapter 2 again, which you can find on page 738 of the Bible in the seat back in front of you.

Page 738. The topic of prayer has been very interesting to study over the last few weeks. In a time where culture is so often anti-religion, anti-Christian, anti-church, even anti-God, surprisingly prayer is still a largely accepted concept and acceptable practice.

So, for example, if you ask to talk to somebody about Jesus, you'll far more often find resistance than if you offer to pray for someone or indicate you are praying for someone.

Now, as we begin, let's look at a few definitions of prayer from the internet. The first is from CollinsDictionary.com and it simply says, Prayer is the activity of speaking to God.

[ 1 : 18 ] Vocabulary.com says, A prayer is something you say to a god or deity. Your prayer can be silent words of thanks or a plea for help that's spoken out loud.

Most religious believers say a prayer from time to time. While some people might use prayer as part of their plan for recovering from an illness, others bend their heads in prayer whenever they attend church or temple services.

Then Wikipedia, which I think probably gives us a better idea of the world's view on prayer, says, Prayer is an invocation or act that seeks to activate a rapport with an object of worship through deliberate communication.

In the narrow sense, the term refers to an act of supplication or intercession directed towards a deity or a deified ancestor. More generally, prayer can also have the purpose of thanksgiving or praise, and in comparative religion is closely associated with more abstract forms of meditation and with charms or spells.

Prayer can take a variety of forms. It can be part of a set liturgy or ritual, and it can be performed alone or in groups. Prayer may take the form of a hymn, incantation, formal creedal statement, or a spontaneous utterance in the praying person.

[ 2 : 46 ] Today, most major religions involve prayer in one way or another. Some ritualize the act, requiring a strict sequence of actions or placing a restriction on those on who is permitted to pray, while others teach that prayer may be practiced spontaneously by anyone at any time.

So, given all of that, watch this brief video about prayer from the website called Skylight, which is part of the Radiant Foundation. Today in America, we'll roll out enough prayer rugs and mats to reach coast to coast five times.

Today, we'll count enough tiny prayer beads to encircle the 48 states. And today, we will light so many prayer candles and flames.

They could lift 20,000 hot air balloons. But most astonishingly, today, prayer will lift her heart just a little bit higher.

So, the Radiant Foundation, who produced this video, commissioned a National Day of Prayer survey in 2023, and they gathered information from almost 1,800 people ages 18 to 64 that reflected the demographic diversity of the U.S. adult population.

[ 4 : 17 ] What they found was 85% of Americans connect to their higher power. 61% of those connect with a higher power through prayer.

What are the top three reasons people give for praying? One, to connect with God. Two, to feel less anxious or depressed.

Three, to find solutions to my problems. What is it that people are praying for? The top three are this, for loved ones in crisis, when somebody else is ill, for other people suffering or in crisis.

Now, the people who said they are praying said they average about 18 minutes a day. 18 minutes a day in prayer. And after they prayed, people said they most often felt calm, grateful, optimistic, humbled.

Now, of those that were surveyed, 87% of those praying had at least one prayer answered in the last 12 months. And 84% of praying Americans think your prayers are heard no matter how you believe.

[ 5 : 33 ] Now, I'm sure, like me, there are several things that stood out to you from the survey that are interesting, surprising, possibly alarming. Yet I found myself wondering how often those of us in the church find ourselves in very similar situations.

taking our 18 minutes a day to connect with our higher power, trying to connect with God, trying to feel less anxious or depressed, hoping to find some solution to our problems, praying for our loved ones who are in crisis or ill, for those who are suffering, or maybe for our own challenges or needs. Praying so we can feel more calm, more grateful, more optimistic. We're probably not hoping to be humbled, but maybe hoping to have some type of transcendent or mystical experience, content with at least one answer to prayer a year, or maybe a month, maybe a week, generally believing that any prayer is authentic prayer and that God hears them all equally.

You see, I think it's pretty easy for us to function in this way with this mystical, anemic, vague, worldly view of prayer, at least until you have one of those days.

One of those days where your life or your marriage or your family, your job or something else that's essential or precious to you blows up. You're caught off guard, suddenly finding yourself helpless in the middle of some raging storm in a broken and fallen world.

[ 7 : 15 ] And maybe it's not the first day things blow up. Maybe it's the 30th day or the 100th day when you're facing some overwhelming loss, some feeling, some sickness, some pain, some frailty, some need, maybe a disappointment or a fear that continues without any hope of getting better.

There's no light on the horizon. It's the day that you realize you're facing a problem that there's no way you can fix and there's no way you can endure.

That's the day that our mystical, anemic, vague, worldly prayers fail us. All the formulas or the incantations that we've practiced in the name of prayer are not enough, leaving us wondering, does prayer really work?

Does God really hear? Does God really care? The day that God seems so far away. And that's exactly the kind of day we find in Daniel chapter 2.

If you would, follow along with me as I read Daniel 2 verses 1 through 11 again. Daniel 2 verses 1 through 11. It reads, In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams.

[ 8 : 35 ] His spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams.

So they came in and they stood before the king and the king said to them, I had a dream and my spirit is troubled to know the dream. Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, O king, live forever.

Tell your servants the dream and we will show you the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The word for me is firm. If you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb and your houses shall be laid in ruins.

But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore, show me the dream and its interpretation.

They answered a second time and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream and we'll show its interpretation. The king answered and said, I know with certainty that you're trying to gain time because you see that the word for me is firm.

[ 9 : 49 ] If you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change.

Therefore, tell me the dream and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation. The Chaldeans answered the king and said, There's not a man on earth who can meet the king's demand.

For no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. And the thing that the king asks is difficult and no one can show it to the king except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.

You see, King Nebuchadnezzar is having one of those days. The most powerful man in the world has a dream so vivid that he's troubled. He's undone. He can't stop thinking about it. He's not sure what to do. So he calls the spiritual experts, the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, the Chaldeans. Then suddenly, the spiritual experts are having one of those days. [10:56] The king wants them to do what? And if they don't, they're going to be torn limb from limb and their houses laid in ruins? Suddenly, all of their collective knowledge, their power, their spiritual expertise, and their mighty prayers are undone.

They're shown to be what they are, empty, anemic, powerless, merely for show. When push comes to shove, their prayers are worthless.

You can hear it in their voice. The thing that the king asks is difficult. No one can show it to the king except the gods and their dwelling's not with flesh.

Their argument is clear. Nobody in their right mind would expect anyone to be able to do this. Nobody's connection to God or the gods is sufficient for a task.

Nobody's prayer can do that. No matter how much we want to, if we want to save our own necks, we want to save our families, it's only the gods. Only God can do what you're asking.

[11:58] And although we hate to admit it, king, we don't have access to him. We don't have access to them. They are not accessible. And you remember what happens.

As a result, the king is enraged and decides to kill them all. He's done with all their shallow, powerless, worthless prayers, their empty counsel, all of their collective experience and supposed wisdom.

That power, that counsel was worthless if they couldn't connect with the gods, if they couldn't effectively pray. But you remember what happens next.

Daniel finds out about the whole decree to kill all the wise men, which would include him and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. And in stark contrast to the other wise men, Daniel immediately schedules an appointment with the king to do the impossible, to do what only God can do.

Then Daniel goes and tells Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what's going on and he asks them to pray with him, to seek mercy from the God of heaven.

[13:06] So they pray. Then Daniel 2.19, it's almost shocking in its brevity where it says, Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night.

Did you get that? They prayed. God answered. Daniel 2.25-28 continues, Then Ariok brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him, I have found among the exiles of Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.

The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation? Daniel answered the king and said, No.

No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked. But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.

And he's made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. So Daniel goes in and says the same thing the Chaldeans said. Only God can do this.

[14:16] But have no fear, king. There is a God in heaven and he is accessible. He reveals mysteries. And he's made known to the king what will happen. And then as you remember, they all live happily ever after.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, tons of magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, Chaldeans, all of their families. They live happily ever after because Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah prayed asking the God of heaven for mercy.

Now, I don't know about you, but that's the kind of praying I want. Prayers that reach to heaven that show there is a God in heaven, that he is accessible, that he hears my prayers, that he responds to prayer.

That's the encouragement I need for my prayer life. Now, if you're at all like me, you might do what I did. Begin scouring the book of Daniel, looking for things that distinguish Daniel's praying from the praying of others.

So I worked my way through Daniel numerous times, and I've compiled a list of the key characteristics of Daniel's prayers. And because I love you all, I'm going to save you so much time, and I'm going to share it with you this morning.

[ 15 : 32 ] So here we go. Daniel's method of prayer. Daniel's method of prayer. The first thing, Daniel's prayer is in response to God's word.

Daniel's prayer is in response to God's word. Now, we'll see it most clearly in a few weeks when we get to Daniel 9, verse 2, where it says, In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely 70 years.

Now, I cannot prove to you what was going through Daniel's mind in his other prayers because God's word does not explicitly tell us. But I can tell you that when you look at Daniel's prayers and you notice how they line up, they're consistently aligned with scripture that was available to Daniel. So, for example, in the situation in Daniel chapter 2 that we were looking at, we see Daniel boldly go in and claim before the king that he's going to do the impossible and interpret the dream before praying about it.

Now, is he being presumptuous? Well, I think based on verse 28 where he says, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, that it's quite possible that Daniel already has scripture in mind.

[ 17 : 04 ] Maybe some of these verses, maybe Deuteronomy 29, 29, when after Moses has called the Israelites to recommit to God and reminded them that if they're disobedient, that they will face curses and ultimately be cast out of the land.

And then Moses ends with this statement, the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of the law.

Or maybe Psalm 25, verse 14 is in mind, where it says, the secret counsel of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he reveals his covenant to them.

But maybe it's Amos, Amos 3, 7 says, and for the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants, the prophets. Or Amos 4, 13, that says, for behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness and treads on the heights of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name.

Now, I can't prove any of that, but I think when we look at Daniel's life, as we see how Daniel's life is centered in God's word, it's reasonable to think he's not being presumptuous, but that his prayer flows out of God's word.

[ 18 : 30 ] So that's the first thing we see. Second, we see Daniel's prayer comes from a heart of humility. Daniel's prayer comes from a heart of humility.

And we'll see this time and time again in Daniel's prayers, but here in Daniel 2, in verse 17, we see Daniel's humility because he goes immediately to his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and says, guys, I don't know how to tell you this, but I just promised to do the impossible to the king, and if I don't get it right, we're going to die.

So, I really need you to pray. We have to pray together that God will show mercy. Right? There's a humility. He doesn't feel like he has the answers. He knows who has the answers, so he asks them to pray with him.

Then we see the humility in Daniel when in verse 23, immediately, after God's answered their prayer, he begins to praise God, make much of God, and in verse 23, Daniel says, to you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter.

We see his humility in verses 26 through 28 when Daniel goes into the king and says, no, I can't do this, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.

[ 19 : 54 ] And as the next few weeks go by, as we look at Daniel and you see in his prayers, you'll see time and time again that his prayer flows out of the heart of humility. And then, out of his prayers, that humility pours out on those around him.

The third thing, Daniel's prayer is bold and faith-filled. Daniel's prayer is bold and faith-filled. Now, as we see Daniel's prayers in the weeks ahead, the boldness will be pretty clear, but just consider where we are in Daniel chapter 2, okay?

The Chaldeans have just said that this is so bold that no king has ever asked. No king expects this. It's not even possible. But Daniel boldly goes in and says, God, will you show me another man's dreams and tell me what they mean?

I mean, what a bold request. And we're going to see later in Daniel, he asks for even more bold things. But again, it's not presumption. He's not being presumptuous.

He just believes the truth of God's word. And so in faith, he's boldly asking God to act. The fourth thing we see, Daniel's prayer is seeking God's glory.

[ 21 : 18 ] Daniel's prayer is seeking God's glory. Again, we see it here in chapter 2. Once God answers their prayers in verses 20 through 22, we see Daniel say, blessed be the name of God forever and ever to whom belong wisdom and might.

He changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and hidden things.

He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him. We see Daniel exalting God in his glory. We see it when he answers the king again and says, no, but there is a God in heaven.

And ultimately, we see it in chapter 2, verse 47, because the outcome of what happens is the king bringing glory to God.

It says, the king answered and said to Daniel, truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries for you have been able to reveal this mystery.

[ 22 : 25 ] And so we see this consistent commitment in Daniel's prayers and in his life for God's glory to be central, for God's glory to be the focus of it all.

The fifth thing, Daniel's prayer is asking God to do what God has already promised to do, which really brings us full circle.

Because Daniel starts with the word of God, because his prayer flows out of God's word, his understanding of who God has revealed himself to be, revealed what he will do, we see God, we'll see Daniel continually asking God to do the things that he's already promised, that he's already said he would do.

Now, we can take all of those steps and I'm going to sum it up for you here in Daniel's method of prayer. In response to God's word, Daniel comes humbly but boldly in faith, seeking God's glory by asking him to do what he has already promised to do.

So we have a good biblical method for prayer. We can see it here, we're going to see it again and again in Daniel. Not only is it a good biblical method for prayer, I would contend that if any prayer doesn't clearly reflect these pieces of this method that from a biblical perspective it's not prayer.

[ 23 : 56 ] Let me say that again a different way. If you look at your own prayers and they're not flowing from God's word, if they're not being presented humbly but boldly in faith, if they're not seeking God's glory, if you're not asking God to do what he's already promised to do, it's not really prayer.

Not from the Bible's perspective. The world may call it prayer, but the Bible doesn't. So I would say it's essential for us to pursue using this method or something that embodies these principles if our desire is to truly pray.

In the biblical sense, if we desire for God to hear our prayers and respond. But there's a problem. You see, the problem is all of these essential components, everything in this method, are not things we can do in our own strength.

As a matter of fact, in our own power, the Bible says we cannot know God or understand his word. We cannot come with truly humble hearts.

We cannot have radically bold faith. We cannot truly seek God's glory. And if we can't do those things, then we won't sincerely ask God to do what he's already promised to do.

[ 25 : 26 ] So, having found a good biblical method for prayer, we find ourselves having to at least admit or understand that the method itself is of little use without the power to pray rightly.

Now, I have good news. I believe the book of Daniel makes it abundantly clear where to find that power. So, let's look at Daniel's power in prayer.

We're going to look at six verses from Daniel. And I think it will be as clear to you as I think it is there. We're going to start with Daniel 4, verse 8. Daniel 4, verse 8.

It says, At last, Daniel came in before me, he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my God, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods.

Now, just a little footnote here. That word God, there's some discussion among people that know Aramaic and are smarter than me. And if you're using the ESV, you'll actually find you have a footnote.

[ 26 : 33 ] They're not sure if it's plural or singular. Now, the truth is, I think, whatever the Babylonians thought, I can't say. But we know that ultimately what it's saying is singular.

The spirit of the holy God. Anyway, end footnote. Look at verse, chapter 4, verse 9. It says, O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream.

Daniel 4, 18. This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw, and you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men in my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.

Daniel 5, 10, and 11. The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall and the queen declared, O king, live forever. Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change.

There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. Daniel 5, 14. I have heard of you, that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.

[ 27 : 52 ] Daniel 6, 3. Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other officials and satraps because an excellent spirit was in him and the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

Do you see it? The spirit of God or the holy spirit is Daniel's power for prayer. Now, honestly, there can be no true, authentic, powerful, biblical prayer without us having the spirit of God in us. Now, we can offer invocations that seek to activate a rapport with an object of worship through deliberate communication. We can practice abstract forms of meditation or seek to produce charms or spells.

We can offer a set liturgy or a ritual, recite an incantation, rehearse a formal creedal statement, or have a spontaneous utterance. We can wish, we can hope, we can manifest, but we cannot pray. Not in any biblical sense of the word without the Holy Spirit within us. And as a matter of fact, I'll go a step further and say at least 84% of those trying to connect with their higher power through prayer are doing no such thing because what you believe makes all the difference in whether or not your prayers are heard.

[ 29 : 22 ] A few verses. Psalm 66, 18. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. Proverbs 28, 9.

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination. Isaiah 59, 2. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

And then Jesus in John 14, 6 says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Now, maybe that seems harsh to you to say that God doesn't listen to the prayers of those who do not have the Holy Spirit. But, if you stop and consider how the Bible describes every one of us that does not have the Holy Spirit indwelling them, it makes sense.

Look at these verses. Ephesians 2, 1-3. It describes us as being dead in trespasses and sins, sons of disobedience, by nature, children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

[ 30 : 35 ] Colossians 1, 21 says, we're alienated from God and hostile in mind. Romans 1, 21-25 says, we're without excuse because although we know God, we do not honor him as God or give thanks to him.

As a result, we become futile in our thinking. Our foolish hearts are darkened. We claim to be wise but we're fools. We exchange the glory of the immortal God for images. We exchange the truth about God for a lie and worship and serve the creature rather than the creator.

Romans 3, 9-12 says, we're all under sin. There are none righteous. No one understands. No one seeks God. All have turned aside. No one does good.

Not even one. Romans 5, 10 says, we are enemies of God. Romans 8, 7 and 8 says, we are hostile to God and cannot please God.

So, since that's our condition without the Holy Spirit, I think it makes perfect sense to say that God does not hear our prayers. Or to say it another way, without the Holy Spirit, God is not accessible to any of us.

[ 31 : 49 ] So true prayer is impossible. Now hopefully, that leads you to the next question. And I would say, in some ways, the most important foundational question on the topic of prayer, how do I know for sure I have the Holy Spirit?

Well, the Apostle Peter answers that question so simply and clearly to the people of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Let's look at it.

Acts 2, 36 through 39. Peter says, Let all the house of Israel, therefore, know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

So, when we respond in faith, believing what the Bible says, that Jesus is both our Lord and Savior, when we seek forgiveness for our sin by admitting them and turning away from them, desiring to be united to Jesus Christ, we are filled with the Holy Spirit and become a child of God.

[ 33 : 32 ] Now, if that hasn't happened in your life yet today, it can. It can. Let me just encourage you, don't leave without coming and talking to me or talking to one of the people around you because it can happen today.

And once, once you are united to Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit, that changes everything. That makes God accessible.

That makes prayer truly possible. Look at what Ephesians 2, 13 through 22 says. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Verse 18. For through him we both have access in one spirit to the Father.

[ 35 : 01 ] So then you're no longer strangers and aliens, but you're fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. We can only have access to God and have the privilege and the delight of praying because of Jesus and our union to him through the Holy Spirit.

Remember, Jesus himself said in John 14, 6, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. But he goes on in John 15, 7 through 9, and he says, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples as the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

You see, Jesus, as the perfect Son of God, being fully God and fully man, has the innate ability and access to talk to God, the Father.

[ 36 : 33 ] They've been in intimate communion and conversation for all of eternity past and will be for all of eternity future. And so, it's in being united to Jesus that his ability and access to commune and converse with God the Father becomes ours.

There is really only one method of true prayer, only one power for true prayer. It's Jesus. Even Daniel's prayer, though he didn't as fully understand it as we can from this point in history, was prayer through Jesus.

And I don't think it will stretch you at all if we take and look at the fact that we talked about Daniel's method for prayer being this. In response to God's word, Daniel comes humbly but boldly in faith seeking God's glory by asking him to do what he has already promised to do.

And see it even more clearly in Jesus' life. In response to the Father's word, Jesus comes humbly but boldly in faith seeking the Father's glory by asking him to do what he's already promised to do. And as we always find, Jesus is the better, perfect version of all of our heroes of the faith. Jesus is the better Adam, the better Abraham, the better Moses, the better Joshua, the better David, the better Elijah.

[ 38 : 00 ] And as we work our way through Daniel and see the extraordinary ways that God's love and faithfulness to Daniel and his friends shows through in lives that are worthy of learning from and imitating, we must not forget Jesus is the better Daniel.

So as we take Daniel's method of prayer and his power in prayer and look at them in light of the central figure and hero of the Bible, really the central figure and hero of all history, Jesus Christ, I think we can end with this definition of prayer.

Prayer is the privilege and delight we receive from our union with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to respond to God's word by coming in worship to commune with him and humbly but boldly in faith seeking the Father's glory by asking him to do what he's already promised to do.

Now, I don't know where you are in your prayer life but if like me, you find yourself realizing that it's not what it should be, that it's not what it can be, then I just want to end with four simple steps that will help move you in the right direction and these are taken from the writings of Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a godly pastor and a man of prayer, but it will just start to move you in the right direction.

The first is, daily, admit your failings to God and your inability to pray as you should without his empowering through the Holy Spirit and ask him to do that.

[ 40 : 00 ] Ask him to empower you through the Holy Spirit for a life of authentic prayer. Two, create time and space to enjoy drawing near to God.

Start by reading his word with an expectation that he desires to speak to you through it. Listen first. Step three, as the Holy Spirit begins to direct your thoughts to God's revealed character, to his plan, to his promises.

Begin pleading the promises of God with holy boldness, liberty, and assurance. And that word, plead, is important because it embodies that humility.

We have to be careful. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says it well when he says this, do not claim, do not demand. Let your requests be made known.

Let them come from your heart. God will understand. But we have no right to demand, not even revival. Some Christians are tending to do so at the present time.

[ 41 : 20 ] Yes, pray urgently, plead, use all of the arguments, use all of the promises, but do not demand, do not claim. Never put yourself into the position of saying, if we but do this, then that must happen.

God is a sovereign Lord, and these things are beyond our understanding. So never let the terminology of claiming or demanding be used.

So we plead his word. Step four, practice being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Obeying it as quickly as you can, being willing to stop what you're doing and prioritize praying whenever you feel like that comes to mind.

You see, if we are willing to invest the time and the effort to pursue communion with God through this type of prayer, no matter how many times we have to commit ourselves to start again and again, you will find in time that we're growing more and more intimate with our Heavenly Father and with our loving Lord, and we'll see it flowing out into every area of our life.

Now, in closing, we have one final commercial. Someone last week asked me, does the church still have a weekly prayer bulletin?

[ 42 : 49 ] Just in case any of you are not aware, we have a channel on Telegram called The Powerhouse. It's our prayer channel. We share weekly prompts on a number of different areas and topics that try to assist you in thinking through and praying through things.

Right now, we're working through praying the fruit of the Spirit. If you want more information about it, you can check the Maranatha Minute or you can come and talk to me, but hopefully it can be an avenue to help you as you seek to grow in your life of prayer.

So as we end, let's do the thing that we have been talking about. Would you join me as we pray? Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you that you've not left us to ourselves. Father, we confess that if it was up to us, our vain imaginations would never rightly conceive of who you are, of your heart, of your desire, of your plan, but you have given it to us in your word.

So Father, help us to cherish your word. Help us to pursue listening to you through your word, desiring to hear you for your spirit to speak to us and apply your word in our lives.

[ 44 : 06 ] Father, we confess that we know we cannot pray as we should, that it's beyond our ability, that we are not diligent enough, our faith is weak, our inabilities and the struggles with our flesh just continue to mount against us as we seek to pray.

But Father, we know that you desire for us to draw near. We know that you've invited us to come boldly to your throne because of our connection in Christ. So we ask that by your spirit, you would do what you have said, that you would empower us for lives of prayer, that our prayer would be authentic, that it would flow from your word, that we would seek your glory by asking you to do the things that you have promised to do.

Forgive us for all of the times that we treat prayer so lightly with such contempt. Father, help us, help us to desire and to delight in communing with you.

help us to prioritize it, to make space for it. Help us to be a praying church that in all of these things you might receive the greater glory, that our lives would be conformed to the image of your Son, and that the world would know that there is a God in heaven, and that he is accessible through Jesus.

It's in his name we pray, Amen.