

Our Prayer Life and Relationship

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0:00] I'm curious, how many of you, I'm going to go ahead and ask the question and we'll see! what happens. I may find out afterwards that I shouldn't have asked it, but I'll start that way.

How many of you pray for me on Sunday? You pray for your pastor on Sunday and you say things like, oh, help him, Lord. I mean that. Thank you.

Here's what it should look like to biblically informed and obedient people. Should I ask that question again next Sunday, how many of you pray for me, guess what I should see?

Truthfully. Remember the little phrases I said, biblically informed? What does that mean? In other words, you know what the Bible says. And then what's the little second part I stuck on the end?

I know, that was a long time ago. I said biblically informed and, does anybody remember the last little part? Help me now. Steve, what did I say?

[1:15] Obedient. Obedient. Obedient. Okay. So, biblically informed means you got the memo from God and obedient means, yes, you're doing it. So, next Sunday, should I say, how many of you are praying for me? I am, I am, I am. Everybody get their hand up, right? Okay. Except people maybe don't know Christ.

I understand that. But I would plead with you that you pray for me, being the person who's been appointed in the providence of God to open the book and teach you what God has to say, right? Is that what I'm here to do? I wonder whether or not you also pray for the musicians, the instrumentalists, for John in particular, for those who commit to serve us in encouraging us in corporate worship. By the way, do you know who the most important musicians are in this fellowship?

They're you. They're you. John, Jeff, Joy, Stephanie. I'll forget someone, so I'll stop while I'm ahead. But, you know, all of them are just helpers to the main instrument of corporate worship. That's you. And so, I would ask that you pray in advance. You pray and say, Lord, please help John. Help him this morning that you would give him a heart that is moved by the Spirit and encouraged by the glory of Christ. And, boy, help, you know, name him. Name him. And by the way, Lord, help me. Because sometimes I walk in on Sunday and my heart is just kind of like, I stayed up and watched too much basketball and I'm really not into this worship thing. Forgive me, but let's kind of saddle up and do it right.

[3:13] Do you follow that? I love what it says in Zechariah, not by might nor by power, but by my, what's the next word? Spirit, saith the Lord. I appreciate the fact you pray for me. And by the way, there's nothing wrong with praying for me in the middle of a sermon. If you feel I need a little bit of help, go ahead and fire one off.

He can hear you. It won't throw me off at all, just so long as you don't do it real loud. In fact, I've said this before. If you want to go ahead and launch out and say, help him, Lord. I'm with that.

I am not offended. Get right after it. Tim Knoyer is very aware of his absolute dependence on consistent, persistent prayer. You better be doing it. Ephesians chapter 3, verse 14.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.

Father, for us to stop in prayer is not just a habit, but it's an incredible privilege, something we're thankful for, something that we ask that today you would give us a greater affection and interest in, that one of the things that would happen as a result of our attention to the Word of God is that our prayer lives would increase and grow. Not that we go around in the lobby next week kind of talking about, well, I up my prayer by 17 minutes, Lord, but that our heart would find pleasure in communion so that what Paul writes would be true. Pray without ceasing.

[5 : 03] And Lord, I ask your Spirit's help in my preaching of your Word. And I ask your Spirit's help in the reception of your Word in the hearts of your dear people here who know Christ.

And I ask conviction in the heart of those that are here today that do not know Christ and have no certainty of where they will spend eternity should they die today.

And we're going to give you the glory for what you do among us. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Well, if you were to go back to the first sermon that I preached on the book of Ephesians, and I don't remember exactly when that was, but it was a while ago, you may remember that I commented on the fact that the book of Ephesians is a book that is full of foundational theological truths.

In fact, we don't think about it that way. We think about Ephesians as predominantly being a book that is written about the supremacy and the significance of the local church, and that is entirely true. But one of the things that makes Ephesians so prized in Christian circles is that it does a great job of putting together doctrine in a very practical fashion. There are actually 27 different doctrines that are mentioned in the book of Ephesians. And as you work your way through the book of Ephesians, you're going to find yourself covering that grand swath of a wide variety of principles and truths in the Bible that you don't find packed in that kind of fashion anywhere else.

At the same time, one of the interesting things that we mark about Ephesians is that while it is a deeply theological book, it is also one that is profoundly practical. And one of the areas of a great interest or need in our lives is the area of prayer. And Ephesians is a book that teaches on the subject of prayer. We tend to think about lessons on prayer as being something kind of put together in a systematic fashion. There's a point here and a point there, and we get kind of the practical details on how to do it. In other words, be sure you're pointing in this direction or you have your hands raised in a certain way and you're doing it the right way, right? And the truth of the matter is that the vast majority of information we find in the Bible about prayer, are you following me, is given to us in the form of an example. Even in Matthew chapter 6, repeated over in Luke chapter 11, where Jesus was asked a question by his disciples, hey Lord, why don't you teach us to pray like John taught his disciples? What does Jesus say? Well, okay, I'll help you. Here, pray like this. I do not understand that prayer in Matthew 6 or over in Luke 11 to be a prayer that we are to recite ad nauseum or repetitiously without thoughtfulness. It is given to us as an outline, as a model, as an overarching picture of what we should think about in the flow of prayer. And as we look at this passage this morning, beginning here in verse 14, we're looking at one of the number of instructions in the book of Ephesians on the matter of prayer. We find that we learn, first of all, the place of prayer in the believer's life.

[8 : 39] Here is Paul working his way through the book, and as we come to this verse 14, we recognize that he stops, it would seem, on an interesting moment in the flow of his lesson, and he says, all right, and for this reason, I bow my knees to the Father. And when you hear that kind of statement, it's very obvious that he's saying, and I'm going to pray. None of us would miss that.

And so I want you to recognize that here Paul is, as a good teacher, he is moving his way through the lesson, and yet, for some curious reason, he stops in the flow of that lesson. He says, all right, and let me pray about this. Stop and think with me just for a moment of how it would affect you if probably about 10 minutes from now, I just stopped in the flow of the sermon and said, hey, let's pray.

Now, I hope you wouldn't be completely unsettled by that, but you'd think, and why are you doing that? And Paul does that because of the value and the significance of prayer, and we're going to learn some very important things as we kind of follow the logic that Paul has here in this passage. As he advances his theme on the significance of the church, and as he brings the beauty of this truth forward to the believer, in the midst of all that, he stops, he stops, and he prays.

And the apostles' actions teach us several things about prayer. For one, prayer is a foundational expression of our faith and our relationship with the triune God. And I want you to recognize that.

[10 : 12] Prayer is a foundational expression of our faith and our relationship with the triune God. Let's recognize, for one, that prayer brings salvation. How is it that you got saved?

I want to tell you, no one, no one, no one gets saved without personal prayer. It wasn't like you're kind of sitting in the bedroom one night and just kind of decide, well, you know what? I think I'll try Jesus. And kind of an arbitrary decision that you make, it tells us in Scripture, whosoever, what? Calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And there is a sense in which, apart from prayer, there is no salvation. If you look over in your Bible, in Romans chapter 10, verse 9, it says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart. Well, how do you confess with

your mouth? What does the mouth do besides eating? Well, let's try breathing. I wasn't thinking about that one, but it also kind of talks. And what it's saying here is that in the flow of salvation, there comes a time in a person's life where they say, Jesus, I confess, I realize I'm a sinner. I admit my hopelessness, and I ask you to save me from the horrible, miserable, wretched life that I have, and I realize apart from you, I have no hope. I want you to understand that prayer brings salvation. Prayer also follows conversion, much like breath follows birth. I still remember the birth of our first child. I was in college at the time, and Judith and I had been married for all of three months, and she comes to me and says, honey, guess what? And I thought, yeah, like what? And she says, well, you're going to be a daddy. I said, what? Yeah, I kind of woke up to the fact. And this was in the Stone Age. This was way, way back before they had birthing rooms and all that kind of stuff, and the family could be around with a video camera. I mean, I had to get special permission from the administrator of the hospital to show up in the delivery room.

Had to go to classes, Lamaze. That was a real joke. But I'm sorry. Someone's going to talk to me afterwards, I'm sure. But it was just kind of funny, all these husbands and wives sitting around and practicing breathing exercises. Now, I was just a little too full of myself, but you know how that went over with me? It's like, give me a break. I'm going to stand there and coach, and she's going to push them out. And here's what happened. We're adults, right? It's all right. But I remember a very tense moment, Heather, that was our first child, had come out through the birth canal, and I was impressed.

[13:08] I mean, this was amazing. It was just beyond. And I had seen births before. My dad doesn't know this, but I peeked through the crack in the operating room. I saw what was happening. It was like, yeah! That was about six years old when I saw the first one.

But when it was my baby, I remember when that baby came out, and there was still a long cord dangling on it, you know, and there was a nurse buzzing around ready to cut that thing, clamps and all that kind of stuff. But you know what I was waiting for? I was waiting for the first breath.

And when the first breath was taken, guess what followed after that? Heather announced to the world that she was present, and there were some concerns on her agenda. Okay. My point is this, is that prayer follows conversion like breath follows birth. Believers pray. And when they get started with the blessing of their relationship with Christ, one of the things that happens is that they pray.

If you look over in Acts chapter 9, verse 11, and you don't need to look at it now, but maybe save it for your personal devotions and your study with the Word, you'll find there that Saul, who was a persecutor of the church, was converted by the grace of God. By the way, he was not seeking after God, in case you wonder. He was going on a journey to beat Christians senseless and persecute them, and the Spirit of God got a hold of him and converted him. He now is in a city, and a man is sent to him to touch his eyes and to bring sight to him. And in that text, what we find is that this man is told, listen, I want you to know about Saul, now Paul, he is praying.

The thing that new believers do is pray. I want you to now look at another passage in relationship to this, and I want you to turn over there to Romans chapter 8, verse 15. We'll look at this passage just for a moment. And in Romans chapter 8, it is talking about particularly the ministry of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer. So when the Spirit is working in us, in verse 15, one of the things that we have, we understand that the Spirit does, is he leads us in prayer. Verse 15, for you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry. What's the next two words? Abba, Father. The Spirit who indwells the believer is actively engaged in encouraging the prayer life of the child of God.

[15:57] I want you to recognize that prayer is essentially communion with our Father, and it is an ongoing blessing and a means of grace. Over in James chapter 4, verse 2, it says this, you have not because you ask not. I think there are some things that you and I sometimes find ourselves missing and deficient on, and one of the reasons that we're still kind of floundering around not having those things is because we haven't asked. Father, I need your help. And some of you are sitting there kind of grumbling and unhappy with the current state of your spiritual journey, and you recognize your soul is a little void or it's kind of dry, and yet, you know what? You have not because you ask not. I want you to understand another thing that goes with communion with our Father is that not only is our prayer a means of receiving things, but also it is protective. It's protective. Over in Mark chapter 14, verse 38, it says, pray that you may not enter into temptation. And a curiosity that I would ask you in your life to kind of evaluate is this, how often do you consciously, deliberately pray, Lord, keep me from falling into sin? Is sin a bad thing? Sin's a very bad thing. Does sin cause

heartache to the believer?

Yes. And my question to you, if sin's all that bad, and you recognize that it's an ongoing difficulty in your life, when was the last time that you consciously, deliberately said, Lord, I need your help that I don't fall into sin?

If you cannot identify a regular and recurring pattern of praying about sin, it may be, A, that you are not genuinely a convert, a person who knows Christ as your Savior, or it may be, B, that you've kind of become brain dead about the significance of the battle, and you have been deeply affected. Third, prayer is a means whereby we understand spiritual things and are strengthened.

Turn back just a little bit while you're in Romans, but go back to the book of Ephesians. I want you to look at Ephesians chapter 1, verse 17 through 19. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 17 through 19. Here is Paul. We get started into the prayer. It begins there in verse 16. I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us, who believe according to the working of his great might. Here's Paul praying for people that he loved and asking that God would give to them understanding and insight. So if you're kind of sitting there saying, you know what, I'm not getting much out of this, talking about the Bible, one of the things might be that you're not a believer. You're not a believer because I'll tell you what, apart from the work of the Spirit of God and bringing to us salvation, the book doesn't make that much sense.

[19 : 17] But it also may be that you are a believer and yet you do not bathe your understanding and your study of the Word of God with consistent prayer. And here is Paul saying, listen, I am asking that the Spirit of God would give insight and understanding to these people that I love. Let's talk a little bit more about some other aspect of prayer. Prayer is also the language of dependence and a powerful remedy to pride. Show me a person that doesn't pray much and I will show you a person that is either completely unaware of his deficiencies or so arrogant that he really thinks he doesn't need much help from God.

Let me say that again slowly so you follow me. Show me a person who doesn't pray much and I'll show you a person who really may be completely ignorant of his deficiencies and his real need. Or you're dealing with a person who's so arrogant and full of themselves that they really don't think they need something at all. When we recognize we have a need, we ask for help. Isn't that right? Once it's beyond us, we ask for help. Let me add one other point to this issue regarding prayer. I want you to understand that prayer is one of the harder disciplines in our faith. Greed?

Prayer is hard. Prayer is hard. And I'll talk more about that later but I want you to recognize that when we think about the fact that prayer is right at the very core of our faith, recognize that their challenge is related to it. Well going back to the passage in Ephesians chapter 3, let's mark something else that we see here. And if you just kind of mark the passage, you see there it says, for this reason I bow my knees before the Father. And some of you are looking at that and noticing that Paul prayed on his knees. And you may be thinking, well, okay, what that's telling us is that any prayer that God's going to hear needs to be down on your knees. And if we would get on our knees more consistently, we'd be more effective in our prayer life. Actually, if you read through the Scriptures, you will find that the most common posture of praying in the Scriptures seems to be standing.

[21 : 38] We still see that posture today. If you were to look at pictures of Jews praying before the wailing wall, what are they doing? How many of you can tell me? They're sitting there and they have a little hat on and they're bobbing back and forth in front of the wailing wall and they're praying.

They're praying. And so I got to tell you that when you think about this issue of the way in which prayer is being expressed in this case, I would suggest that it probably matches a point of intensity. Because if you were to look through the Scriptures, you will find in particular that when individuals were on their knees, they were on their knees because of a desperate moment or a deep, deep concern. And I've been on my knees many times.

I want to remind you that over in the book of Ezra, when Ezra found out the sin that had crept into the nation of Israel, and these were people who had come back from the Babylonian captivity. And after having come back and enjoying the blessing of God, they'd fallen right back into sin. And when Ezra finds out about that, he tore his clothes and he fell on his knees and he poured his heart out to

God. That was passion. Jesus, when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, do you know how he was praying? He was praying on his knees. And so I would have to say that there's nothing clear in Scripture that indicates, well, here's the one way you pray. You point your mat towards Jerusalem and then you do it in this fashion. And it's a good aerobic exercise.

And you kind of get points for two things, for doing the prayer and a little bit of cardio too. You know, so I want you to understand that there are times to be on our knees. That's okay. But being on your knees does not make your prayer more inclined to be heard by God.

I do want you to understand that our prayer life should be marked by a glad reverence for God and a careful avoidance of one of two extremes. And I think that when we look at the subject of prayer in Scriptures, we recognize that the issue of posture is not the biggie. The issue of the heart is the critical issue. It's the thing that God is paying attention to. Remember what God said to Isaiah the prophet and Jesus recited it? These people draw near to me with their mouth, but their heart is...where?

[23 : 59] Their heart's not in it. Have you ever sung the words to a song and then immediately afterwards in the lobby acted like the song didn't mean a thing to you? I've had people, I've watched them.

I've watched them singing and I thought, man, that person's heart is really connected with that theological truth. And then later on as I'm standing out in the lobby, they light into me about something and I'm thinking, oh, song no difference, right? And it doesn't touch them. I want you to understand that the thing God pays attention to is what our heart is like, what our heart is like. And so recognize that when we pray, we are not to get caught up in rigid legalism over words or posture. At the same time, we are not to be caught up in carelessness and in reverence for his glory.

The next thing I want you to recognize here in this passage is I bow my knees before the Father. Prayer is speaking with our Father. While it's true that God is the Father of all mankind, in the sense that all life draw their existence from God. On the other hand, it tells us clearly in Scripture that salvation delivers us from Satan's kingdom and being his slave and his subject to being the children of God. And I can't get over what it says in 1 John 3, verse 2, where Paul says this, And I've got to tell you, if you are here today as a child of God, your heart should never, never get used to that fact. It should overwhelm you every time.

The blessing of being able to call him our God and our Father is one that really communicates the intimacy of our communion and affection. And we cannot miss the sweet privilege that we have because of the Lord Jesus Christ of coming into his presence and addressing him who is the creator and the God of this universe in a very personal way.

[26 : 15] We can rightly address God as Abba, Father. Jesus used this term when he was in the garden. When he was on his face, pleading with the Father regarding the cup.

And if you were to look over in Mark chapter 14, verse 36, you'll see him say, Abba, Father. We read that it is the Spirit of God that prompts the believer over there in that passage that I recited in Romans chapter 8, verse 15. And again, it appears over in Galatians chapter 4, verse 6, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

How many of you know what a transliterated word is? Translation takes a word from one language and then moves it over in a reasonably accurate pattern over into another language so that the word hit in English could be translated by its companion word in Spanish or Hindi or whatever the language is. Do you follow what I'm saying?

A transliterated word is a word that you move directly from one language over into another with more or less phonetic similarity. A perfect illustration would be the word baptism.

Baptism, okay? Baptism is not a translated word. It is a transliterated word. It is a word in which the Greek word baptizo was transliterated over into the English, and it came out to be baptism.

[27 : 45] Now, one of the problems with transliteration is that the meaning then gets a little fuzzy. I'm not certain, and I did some research and didn't find out all the details of why this word is translated or transliterated. But the word Abba, Father, is a very interesting word that communicates more than He is our Father. It's a word that communicates, are you ready for this? Daddy. Daddy.

I have to tell you that I pulled it this morning. This morning as I was praying, I was struck in studies. One of the things that happens when you study, you're convicted. You know, Tim, why don't you go ahead and pray, Daddy in heaven? And I got to tell you, it was hard for me to do. Can I say, Daddy

in heaven, without compromising my reverence and holiness for God? And I think I can do that. But I got to tell you, this morning when I did it in my prayer life, it was a little edgy for me. Okay? And I have gone back and forth. I was actually thinking when it came to the pastoral prayer that I would go ahead and start it out. Hey, Daddy, we want to thank you this morning. And I thought probably some of you would just probably roll over and die on the spot. So I thought, and I thought, I'll do it first and then teach the lesson later and they'll all be all right with it. And I thought, no, don't want to be catching hymn books early on. And so I thought, we'll just kind of teach the lesson and play forward on it. I don't want to make light of this. That word communicates affection. It communicates intimacy. It communicates a right and a privilege that is beyond our imagination. And it tells us that the Spirit is the one that helps us say it. Abba, Father. I don't know for sure. But I would venture to guess that one of the reasons why you have Abba here as a transliterated word is very similar to the reason you have baptism instead of immerse. Immerse is the literal rendition of the Greek word baptizo. But the word immerse would be very problematic for many, many churches in which, guess how they baptize? With a little bit of sprinkling. So when people said, what is baptism?

[30 : 21] Baptism, they said, well, that's what we do. What is that? It's sprinkle. Transliterated to avoid the consequences. And I think probably the word daddy was just a little edgy. And so the translator said, well, why don't we play that trump card called transliteration? But I want to encourage you this morning when you think about the privilege you have, recognize that God has given you through His Spirit the right of calling Him Daddy. Now, I want you to understand that honorable prayer must begin with the right thought of Him. And so I would never this morning encourage you to be careless and kind of disrespectful. And I think one of the things that kind of goes with what I see happening sometimes in contemporary evangelical circles is they're so familiar with God that they really have no reverence and fear for Him. It's kind of like the Bubba upstairs that's taking care of things. And, you know, he and I are good buds. And, you know, I don't get that picture. In the Scriptures, every time anybody had any kind of indication of who God was, do you know how they responded? Face down in the dirt, kind of shaking and losing it. And so we must, with reverence, call Him as He has prompted us to.

Let me close with some practical pointers on nurturing our prayer life. You look here at that passage in Ephesians chapter 3, and you find that Paul speaks about the fact, for this reason I bow my knees before the Father. And I want you to understand that as we look at that, we probably should recognize that prayer is something we need to grow in. And I would say this, that understand that while prayer is essential, it's harder to do than we might think. I mean, I made the statement earlier that the Spirit of God works in us to pray from the very moment of our conversion. Nevertheless, it becomes something that is a challenge to us. And I think one of the reasons for that is that there are a couple things that work against that inclination to pray in the life of the believer. Number one, it is our flesh. And by that I mean our flesh is very easy encumbered and kind of burdened with all kinds of little details. Do you follow that? Prayer seems to be a profoundly impractical discipline in the fact that you've got to get to work at 7 o'clock.

Can you pray while your eyes are closed and you're sleeping and you're brain dead? And the answer is no. No. No. Prayer is a conscious, deliberate communication with the Father. Father. So it means you have to be awake. And some of you stay up late for whatever reasons you do. And that means that you get up as late as possible. And when you do get up, what you do is you throw on some clothes and maybe you do brush your teeth. I hope you do. But then you buzz out the door and you are driving to work. Right? Where does prayer fit into all that time? It gets pushed over to the side.

And I want you to understand that just the challenges of life have a tendency to kind of push against the matter of prayer. But there's something else that pushes against prayer and that's our pride. Our pride. Hey, if we're pretty full of ourself and we're pretty convinced that we can pull it off, then we don't need to ask. The reason we pray is because we can't do things.

[33 : 47] And beloved, I would encourage you to recognize that if you're going to grow in your prayer life, then I would encourage you to recognize that it's something you're going to have to work at. Furthermore, in relationship to that, and I talked about two things that we contribute, but there's also something else that I'm convinced of. Satan does all that he can to discourage pride or a prayer. Satan works to discourage prayer. So if we're going to grow in our prayer life, let me suggest that what we must do is learn to be persistent in learning how to pray. Turn over in your

Bible, if you will, just for a moment to the passage that I cited early in Matthew 6.

Matthew 6. Matthew 6 is a very interesting part, beginning actually there in verse 5. Jesus says this. It's a lesson on prayer. He says, And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners that they may be seen by others. How many of you have prayed in public and been just a little embarrassed or nervous as you were praying? Come on. Everybody. Do you know why we're embarrassed or nervous? Just because we're concerned about who's passing judgment on us or whether our prayer passes muster.

We're thinking about God. That isn't a problem. When we're thinking about what other people are thinking, we're pretty apoplectic about it. Oh, I'm not sure how that prayer came off. Did I use enough King James words? You know, we get caught up in it. Here's Jesus saying, hey, don't be like those hypocrites. They're all in for being heard. He says, when you pray, do it in secret. And then he goes on and he says, listen, here's how to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Very interesting. The first part of this prayer is all about who?

[35 : 54] God. It is an interest in God's place and God's agenda and God's glory. And that is the foundation to God honoring prayer.

A lot of times our prayers are more or less like the kind of little orders we give at the fast food drive-up window. Do you follow what I'm saying? I mean, our only connection with the person in the booth is through this speakerphone and the person says, hi, welcome to McDonald's. May I help you?

And we say, yeah, I'd like a coffee with double cream and double Splenda. And I'd like a sausage McMuffin to go with that. Well, that'll be blah, blah, blah. And we drive to the window, we grab it, we're gone. And by the way, we never think about communicating with them until we're there. We're staring at the menu board and say, what did I need? You know, okay, I understand that.

And then you ask the other four people in the car, what do you need? I don't know. Let me look at the menu. It hasn't changed. You know, we go to God and we kind of like the order taker.

No, our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. You are worthy of all of our adoration and praise. And I get to call you Father. I get to call you Daddy.

[37 : 14] I want you to understand that if we're going to learn how to pray, we must be persistent in it. And I would suggest that one of the things that should characterize your life today as a believer, if you're here and you know Christ, one of the things that I would encourage you to begin praying about consistently is this, Lord, teach me how to pray. Teach me how to pray. Teach me how to pray.

Go ahead. Is it fair to pray about basic things like that? What's the answer? If Jesus's disciples, who were not rookies, came to him and said, would you help us with this little thing called prayer?

Yeah, go ahead, ask. And by the way, keep asking. Ask again and again and again. I am 64 and I got to tell you, I have been asking for a long time. I can tell you another thing, my prayer life's different than it used to be. But it's not where it needs to be yet. Furthermore, I would encourage you to set aside time to pray that is uninterrupted. That's what Jesus did. And I'm not here to tell you what your schedule should be, but I got to tell you, prayer is not something that you do while you're multitasking. Now, one of the nice things about electronic devices is you can hit the mute button and still play Angry Birds when you're talking with a friend on the phone.

Oh, none of you have ever done that. I can see it in your faces. Okay? Or you're watching TV, but what you have is that little text scrolling across, and you're watching while you're having this animated conversation with your dear friend in North Carolina they haven't seen for 17 years, and you're just acting like your buds, and you're watching the game. And here's the deal with God. He doesn't want to be treated that way.

Husband, have you ever had your wife say, turn that phone off? Okay? Or have you ever had your wife say, I want you to look at me when you're talking? Have you ever heard that one?

[39 : 23] You got to have time alone with God where you talk with Him directly, face to face, person to person. Furthermore, I would encourage you to spend time studying the rich variety of examples of prayer in the Scriptures. How do we learn how to pray? Well, we go to First Opinions, chapter 4. That's the chapter I know that deals with prayer. And there is an outline of how all of us ought to pray all the time. Okay?

Now, some of you are actually going to take me to heart and go there. It is not such a book. Listen to me. Interestingly enough, the lessons on prayer are given to us in the Scriptures through examples. We see people praying all over the place. Try a Nehemiah prayer the next time you're ready to have a wreck. About a month ago, I was sitting at a stoplight getting ready to turn left. It was that one snowy day back there early in March, and I'm just sitting there, and I'm watching a person turn, and they're sliding in the snow right towards my car. I was on the phone to my wife. I was saying, honey, I'm on the corner of West Henderson or something else, and I'll be home, and I'm going to have a wreck. And here's what came out. Lord, you know. I mean, was there a lot of theology in that?

There really was. Do you follow that? Examples are the way that God teaches us to pray. Oh, what does that mean? It means that you've got to get into the book if you're going to find where the examples are. Does that make sense? Don't grab one of those. I'm thinking of it. They have put books in hotels all over the world. What was it? You guys are great. Gideons. I was having a millisecond there.

I was just testing your memory, not mine. Okay. Gideon Bible. How many of you know that in the front or in the back, I can't remember which it is, there are sections about if you're having blah, blah, blah, blah, go to such and such a page, right? It doesn't work that way. Beloved, if you want to grow in prayer, you've got to get into the book. Here's another little thing I'll tell you in a close.

The characteristic of biblical prayer is that it's always scriptural. Always scriptural. Probably the best illustration of that is that as Jesus was on the cross, there are seven things he said, and every one of those seven things can be found explicitly in the scriptures.

[42 : 06] By the way, when Jesus was dealing with temptation, when Satan was messing with him, how did Jesus respond? I love what he said. It is written. It is written. It is written. That just gives me cold chills when I stop and think about it. Jesus who was what? He was the word.

And yet, Jesus, for my sake and for the example and absolute confidence in the supremacy of the already written word, he says, it is written. It is written. It is written. So if we're going to grow in prayer, one of the things that should begin to happen in our life is that we begin spending time in the book to grow. Let me close.

For you who are here today and know Christ, let me tell you something. Prayer is one of the sweetest privileges, but not something that you will gain blessing in without recurring and persistent lifelong pursuit. That's the way it is.

And so if you're here this morning as a brand new believer, you came to know Christ this week, I want to tell you that the beginning of your prayer life, which is blessed by salvation, is going to be nurtured over the years to come by you continuing to say, Father, I want you to help me learn how to pray.

And by a commitment to allow the word to God to inform you and encourage you. If you're here this morning and you do not know Christ, I want you to understand that the scriptures are explicit about this. The one prayer that God hears from a life of an unbeliever is a prayer of repentance and confession. And practically, prayer which presupposes or assumes that we have a personal relationship. That makes sense, doesn't it? Prayer assumes personal relationship. If you're here this morning and you do not have confidence that you know Christ as your personal Savior, if you're sitting here today and you are not certain of where you would spend eternity, I want to tell you that that lack of uncertainty is not because of a lack of Bible truth. Because it tells us in the scriptures, these things are written that you might know that you have everlasting life.

[44 : 41] And the Spirit of God may be using that emptiness and that uncertainty and that lack of communion to convict you right where you sit. Hey, listen, I may have said the prayer, I may have even showed up in Sunday school, but the truth of the matter is, is I don't have a personal relationship with Christ, and the remedy for that is to call upon the name of the Lord. And here's what it says in the Bible, whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Now, the purpose of preaching is to put you on the spot of saying yes or no to God. Lord, I want to grow in my prayer life.

Oh, here's a little addendum. Do you know what an addendum is? It's important. And you go ahead and do whatever you think's necessary, just tune it up. When you're a coward in your prayer life, you're going to get coward's wages. How many of you understand what I just said?

I'd like about a half teaspoon of God right now. No, go ahead. Bring it on. I want to grow. And if you're here today and do not know Christ, I want you to know I've been praying for you today.

And believers, as you join me in prayer, let's pray that God works to bring people to the cross. Let's close in prayer. Father, our hearts are overwhelmed that we can call you that.

We recognize that there was a day when we were enemies. We were rebels. We were miserable slaves. And you and your mercy found us in that predicament.

[46 : 31] And you drew us to the side in the cross. And you helped us to see our need. And you're the one that led us to cry out and confess our sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You humbled us and helped us to be humble.

And this morning, we who are believers ask that you would help us grow in our prayer. And we join together in praying that those who are here that do not know Christ would be drawn to the cross today.

That this would be the day of salvation. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand together as John leads us in our closing song.

And if there's someone here today that has a matter that they need to care for publicly, God may be speaking to you about being obedient to Him in the matter of baptism. I want you to understand that baptism doesn't save, but baptism is something that is a public identifying with Christ.

It may be that God is leading you to be part of our fellowship. It might be that you have some spiritual needs that you want someone to pray with you about. Or you might be sitting here and you're saying, Man, I need Jesus.

[47 : 39] I don't know Him. And I confess my sins and I ask Christ to save me. And you come forward and have somebody share the gospel and pray with you and welcome you into the family of God. Let's do that as we're singing this in closing.

What a friend we have in Jesus All our sins and grace to bear
What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer
Oh, what peace we often forfeit Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do God forfeit Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations Is there trouble any year?

We should never be discouraged Take it to the Lord again
Can we find a friend so faithful Who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness Take it to the Lord again
Well, I see that Mary knows where the Kleenex are.

[50 : 01] Those are up there for me. Mary Malumba has come forward this morning asking to be baptized in obedience to Christ.

She's come to Christ and wants to be baptized. And also Cassandra Bach has come forward. And I'm going to ask each of them just on the spur of the moment, Not at length.

See, Mary says... But just explain why you want to be baptized In just a couple sentences. Can you do that? I just want to be with God in every way possible.

From where God found me And brought me to him And all the miracles he's performing in my life I can only ask him to be baptized Because I want to wear him as a badge of honor In thankfulness for what he's doing in my life.

Jack, you're our member And Cassandra's asked for membership as well. So let's just close with a word of prayer and thanksgiving.

[51 : 15] And...