

The Father Who Wants Us to Pray

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[0 : 00] All right. Let me begin with a word of prayer here for our sermon for us as well and ask the Lord for guidance in his help. Father, we are grateful for not only the word that is being brought to our children, but the word that is being brought to us.

We ourselves confess that we do not always have eyes to hear, ears to hear, and a heart to understand. I'm asking this morning that you may give that to us. I know the things we're talking about this morning are not always easy, not always quick and simple for us to understand, but I'm asking, Lord God, that we may receive them well and that you may begin to plant seeds in our heart, that a harvest may come from that.

Lord, that you would do a transforming work among us, among the people of your church, that they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent, and they may know the power of the Spirit whom you have given.

Amen. All right. If you were here last week, you are about to experience a pop quiz. If you were not here last week, I don't know if I should reward that, but you're off the hook.

Okay. Here's the question for you today. All right. Pop quiz. How much prayer is enough? How much prayer is enough? Those who were here last week, what's the answer?

[1 : 31] 15 seconds. 15 seconds. Yeah. Sorry? What's that?

Pray without ceasing. Pray without ceasing. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So infinite, like 24-7. Anything short of that is not enough. No, no, we saw last week that, you know, when we talk about pray without ceasing, it's something different than what we think of.

How much prayer is enough in terms of quantity is the wrong question. It's a question the Bible never answers because it's not the right question. Last week we learned that God never commands a certain quantity of prayer in his word in the Bible.

And yet many Christians that I know growing up in church, and I would have included myself among them for most of my life, many Christians seem to carry that low-level sense of guilt about this, as though we failed to meet some sort of quota of prayer that God has given us.

Now, last week we learned that the problem of prayer, it is not the quantity of our prayer. The problem of prayer is the manner in which we are praying. When we pray as our Father wants, and last week we learned what that was, we pray with simplicity, we pray with need, we pray with nerve.

[2 : 58] When we pray this way, we saw last week that Jesus gave us this promise in Luke chapter 11, verses 9 and 10. I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you.

Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, it will be opened.

And then that promise leaves us, left us with three lingering questions, which we are now, if you were here last week, perhaps you carried with you into today.

Here's this first of three lingering questions. First, can't this promise be abused? Couldn't that be abused? Couldn't we start treating God as though he is the great big vending machine in the sky for all of our selfish requests?

And that problem is not eased when we look at all the other things Jesus says about prayer, all the other promises he makes. Consider all these other times that Jesus seems to hand us a blank check, boomer term, a blank check in which we can fill our, in which we can put our prayer requests into that line.

[4 : 12] He says in Matthew 17, truly I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.

Then in John 16, Jesus says, until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. So the problem is not eased when we look at what else Jesus says about the prayer of faith.

It certainly sounds like there is a danger of abuse, like there is some sort of magic power that someone has. Perhaps someone could go to God with a wrong request or a selfish request, and then God has to do whatever that person wants because he made that promise.

He made that promise. Here's a second lingering question. What about all those prayers of yours that have gone unanswered? What about all those prayers that have gone unanswered?

You've asked, and it wasn't given to you. It hasn't been. What do you do about that? What about all of those prayers?

[5 : 22] These sound like pretty strong promises from Jesus. Just ask. You'll get what you're asking for, and nothing will be impossible for you. And yet your experience with prayer doesn't seem to bear this out. Is Jesus making big promises that just don't come true?

Can he be trusted? Third lingering question. We read two of Jesus' parables last week, and those parables made it sound as though persistently requesting things from others can be annoying.

And let's just face it, you've had people in your life who've just persistently nagged you about things. How did you feel about that situation? Were you really happy, eager, to grant those requests?

Did you feel yourself just bursting with affection for the person who was nagging you? Maybe that's the way God feels about you, you're wondering.

Maybe it doesn't seem like a good idea to nag God about your problems. What if he's irritated? Do you want to risk being a nuisance to God? Maybe you have been dogged a lot of your life by a sense that God, you know, he sort of puts up with you.

[6 : 33] That God has this perpetual low-level disappointment in you. That when God thinks of you, it's like, ah, ah.

The ancient pagans, who did not believe that their gods had affection for them, they got around this with long, flowery, formulaic prayers in order to keep their gods happy and win their favor.

But if you pray, if you choose not to do that and instead pray with simplicity, with need, with nerve, now you're putting yourself at the mercy of this God. What if he is not willing to hear you?

So we've got three lingering questions. What about abused prayer? What about unanswered prayer? What about prayer to a potentially irritated God? What do we do with these doubts? Well, one thing we might do is we might start looking for other scripture which seems to answer these questions.

And there is much more about these things than what we're going to talk about today. So it's not, we can't cover it all in one sermon. But one passage I find that is pretty commonly quoted in response to some of these things is James chapter four, verse three.

[7 : 49] And this verse is commonly quoted to protect against the abuse of prayer. The abuse of prayer with selfish requests. Here's what James writes. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

Okay. So that certainly may go a long way to warning against the abuse of prayer. James confronts our selfish, foolish motivations. Some of our motivations that lie underneath that prayer for a raise or a spouse or a shiny red Ferrari.

You know, they may not be the best motivations. But James says something right before this that is pretty important as well. And in fact, is possibly more important. Let me read verse two, which comes right before this.

James says, you desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. Well, you do not have because you do not ask.

You do not have because you do not ask. That's the first thing that James says about prayer and about unanswered prayer. Yes, you might pray with selfish motives, but James thinks that it's actually even more likely that you won't pray at all.

[9 : 10] You won't go to the Father at all with your needs and desires. And based on the amount of, based on the teaching Jesus gives about prayer, he believes that that is also the most significant problem, that you won't go to the Father at all.

And I think this ties into those other two lingering questions. Perhaps you do not ask because you have become resigned, because you've become a bit cynical. Deep down, you're not really sure that prayer actually works.

It doesn't seem to actually work. You can do better, perhaps, by, you know, let's just set prayer aside. Let's just go out and work, just sort of gut it out, work for what you want, and, you know, honestly, tell other people they need to start getting to work too.

Why waste time praying about it first? Or, maybe you think that God has left you to yourself to handle life by yourself.

And then that ties into the final lingering question. Maybe you come away thinking, you know, I don't know. Does God actually like you? Is he just disappointed or annoyed by you? Perhaps you don't ask because you've lost confidence in the Father's disposition toward you.

[10 : 35] You've lost confidence that he truly has a fatherly heart toward you. So, would you like to know what Jesus Christ has to say to your heart?

Would you like to know what Jesus Christ has to say to our hearts that are filled with selfishness or resignation or doubt or despair? If so, we would do well to turn our Bibles to Luke chapter 11 once again.

I'm going to recap last week by reading from verse 1. But we're going to focus most of all today in verses 11 to 13, the final three verses of our reading.

If you've got one of the blue Bibles that were handed out, this is page 869. Page 869, Luke 11, verses 1 to 13. Last week, we learned how to pray as the Father wants.

Today, we'll learn about the Father who wants you to pray. Now, Jesus was praying in a certain place. And when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples.

[11 : 45] And he said to them, when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us and lead us not into temptation.

And he said to them, which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey and I have nothing to set before him.

And he will answer from within, Do not bother me. The door is now shut and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything. I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence, he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

And I tell you, ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find. Knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives and the one who seeks finds and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

[13 : 09] If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

This is the word of the Lord. And from this passage, here is the first word of good news, the first of two words of good news for you. The father wants what is truly good for you.

If you are his child, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the father wants what is truly good for you. That parable in verses five through eight, Jesus portrays a man who is knocking on the door, begging his friend for bread, and his friend only gives him bread because of his impudence, his audacity, his nerve.

And last week, again, we read another one of Jesus' parables about a widow who wore down an unjust judge through her persistence so that he finally answered her plea for justice.

And coming out of that, maybe Jesus' disciples, maybe we ourselves are starting to think, is that what God is like toward us? Is that?

[14 : 24] You know, we have to pray with nerve, we have to pray with persistence, we think, because, you know, that's the only way to get through to him, pound on the door of heaven, until finally we irritate him enough to give us what we need.

And lest we come away thinking, that's what our father is like. Jesus jumps in before we can go there, and he asks these questions in verses 11 through 12.

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

All right. Dad's out there. Would you ever do that for your kid? And I know, well, maybe Andy would. No. Sounds like a great prank, right?

But no, no, no. Like, we understand this is not just like funny, ha-ha stuff. Snakes and scorpions are dangerous. They could do harm. That's crazy.

[15 : 27] So I confess, I'm a little bit amused by Jesus' next line. You then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children. He essentially tells, I love this, he tells his little circle of disciples that they're all bad fathers.

You know, you're not good fathers, right? I wonder how well that went over among them. But Jesus is saying, you're bad fathers, but even still, you know how to give good gifts to your children.

You know how to do it. And I think all of you fathers out there, that is your heart for your children. You want to give them what is good. So, if a friend with boundaries will give bread to someone who asks with nerve, if an unrighteous judge will give justice to someone who asks with persistence, if a bad father will give good food to his children who ask, how much more will a good father give you what is good?

How much more? How much more eagerly will a good father give it? How much more wisdom will a heavenly father possess to give you what is good?

How much more power does our eternal father have to give you the good things that you ask for? The problem is not our father's disposition toward us.

[16 : 58] The problem is not our father's heart toward us. Consider what Jesus says about the father's heart toward you when you come to him in prayer. John 16, he says, in that day you will ask in my name, and I do not say that I will ask the father on your behalf, for the father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

The father himself loves you. You can go directly to him is what Jesus is saying. You can go in my name to him. He is attentive to what you need.

in Matthew 6, verse 8, Jesus tells us, your father knows what you need before you ask him, and yet he invites you to ask anyway because that's what a father does.

He wants his children to come to him. He wants his children to ask. He is cultivating dependence on him. The sort of dependence every needy child ought to have towards a good father.

The father wants this for you. He wants what is truly good for you. And so it is that the father actually wants something better for you than you even want for yourself.

[18 : 25] Parents, you know this. You know of times that your children wanted what they thought was good for them. You wanted something better. They wanted coffee at 11 o'clock at night, and you're like, I want something better for you.

A good night's sleep. You may want the father to save you from the distressing circumstances you find yourself in.

It is not that he doesn't want that. You think that he, because the father has not acted to save you from those distressing circumstances, that he therefore does not care for you. In fact, he does care more than you can know.

He wants very much to deliver you from those things. But your father wants more for you than just that. He wants to extend his salvation deeper than that, a deeper salvation than you want for yourself.

The father wants what is truly good for you. This is the father who wants you to pray. And when you pray as the father wants, he seeks your good in a way that may be different than what you expect.

[19 : 37] The second word of good news for you is this. The father gives his spirit for your good. The father gives his spirit for your good.

This is how he works for your good. In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus is speaking to his disciples and he uses this exact same teaching at that occasion too. And Matthew has Jesus say, this to them.

He says, if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? And you think, I like Matthew's version better.

You know, the father gives good things when we ask him. That's what we're wanting. And that's what troubles us when we ask for the good things and don't receive them. And then we compare it with Luke 11 verse 13 which we just read.

If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Now, if you don't understand what a good thing it is that the father would give his spirit to you, you might find Luke's version to be a little more disappointing.

[20 : 55] I wanted these good things. I needed these good things. I needed help. And now God says, well, tell you what, I'll just give you the Holy Spirit. And it sounds like a vaguely spiritual solution that you're supposed to be happy about as a good little Christian.

But deep down it feels like a bit of a dodge. Right? Think about it. Think about it. That sort of the way you'd feel if you were a server at a table, a server at a restaurant and you had a table with a large party that you worked hard for and at the end of the meal, instead of that \$50 tip you were waiting for, you had a pile of gospel tracts that they left out for you.

Here, have the gospel. And no tip. Thanks, but gospel tracts don't pay the bills. And that's what this can feel like.

Maybe you want a home that better suits your growing family and you're hearing God say, here, have the Holy Spirit instead. Or you're desperately longing for a spouse.

Have the Holy Spirit. Or you're overwhelmed by bullies from school and praying for help from God. Have the Holy Spirit. For many of us, this doesn't feel like the Father is giving what is truly good for us.

[22 : 11] Here's what I hope we come to realize today. The Holy Spirit is in fact, He is the only one who brings real change in your life for your good.

He's the only one who brings real change in your life for good. Because the Holy Spirit, He is fully God. Just like the Son, just like the Father.

and He has infinite power and infinite wisdom and holiness to do exactly what is good for you. Wherever you are powerless, wherever you lack wisdom, the Holy Spirit is able to work.

When Jesus promises that the Heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him, this is not something that should disappoint us. this is the best news possible.

This is something that ought to fill us with hope. Because the Spirit is the one who does what the flesh can never do. Let's talk about the flesh. The Bible talks about the flesh quite a bit.

[23 : 23] We think of that as, oh, that's just my physical body. But it means so much more in Scripture. What is meant by the flesh in Scripture is human beings trying to do life with human wisdom and power and choosing to do that instead of relying on the gracious power of God who gives His Holy Spirit.

The flesh is you doing you. The flesh is whatever strategies and tactics and survival skills that you have developed to handle life apart from the power of God, apart from the wisdom of God.

God. The flesh includes the wealth, the wisdom, the energy, the relationships that you bring into play that you use to keep yourself going or to get ahead in life.

The flesh is what you bring to the table. The flesh gives you the illusion that either you can make it on your own or with a little help from your friends.

And if not, the flesh tells you if you can't make it on your own or with the help of all the people supporting you, then all is lost. All hope is lost. To the flesh, prayer is plan B.

[24 : 38] Prayer is a Hail Mary pass that you do when all human efforts fail. Prayer is what you finally get to in the end when everything else you've been doing stops working.

And when life gets hard and when you're in a pressure cooker, if you live life according to the flesh, the flesh will run you straight into the ground.

It will burn you out. The flesh can only take so much. But your Father in Heaven, He isn't like that. He is a good Father.

And He wants something better for you than living life out of the flesh. You want to keep living life out of the flesh and just for your life to go better.

Your Father wants something better for you than that. Watch how this plays out in a story that Luke relates to us. And this comes immediately before this teaching on prayer and I don't think that's a coincidence.

[25 : 37] Look up at chapter 10 verses 38 to 42. This is a story that is familiar to many of us who have been in church for a while. Think about how this relates to living out of the flesh versus living from the Spirit.

Now as they went on their way Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house and she had a sister called Mary who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His teaching.

But Martha was distracted with much serving and she went up to Him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?

Tell her then to help me. But the Lord answered her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things but one thing is necessary.

Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her. So here we have two sisters. We have Martha.

[26 : 48] Martha. Martha is doing something good, right? She is welcoming Jesus and His disciples into her home. She is serving as an excellent hostess and we know from other scriptures Martha has genuine faith in Jesus.

She does believe in Him as God's chosen King. But despite that, Martha is doing all of her hosting duties in the flesh. and you can tell.

You can tell she's doing it in the flesh because, in Jesus' words, she's distracted with much serving. She's anxious and troubled about many things. She is overwhelmed and she becomes quite angry, quite prickly because her sister Mary is not stepping up to help her like she is supposed to be doing.

The irony here, and by the way, can we just stop for a moment and relate to Martha a little bit? Come on. You've been there.

Okay? Okay, don't you feel a little bit of sympathy here right now for Martha? I know I do. But here's the irony. Martha does everything that we talked about last week.

[28 : 00] She speaks to Jesus with simplicity. She speaks to Jesus with need. And yes, she absolutely speaks to him with nerve. Right? And yet, there's still a problem here.

There's still a problem. Notice what Martha says to Jesus. What are the first words out of her mouth? Lord, do you not care? Lord, do you not care?

Isn't that one of our lingering questions that we have about prayer? Lord, do you not care? Do you not care about the distress I'm in? Do you not care about the distress of the people that I love? Will you not come down from heaven and help us?

Notice how Jesus responds to Martha. He doesn't, he could, there are times when Jesus gets more confrontational. He doesn't take that tack here. He's gentle with her.

Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. Oof. That's the way of the flesh, isn't it?

[29 : 07] Overwhelmed by life when life becomes a pressure cooker. In the flesh, you can get by when life is going well. You can think things are going okay, but when life becomes a pressure cooker, you become anxious and troubled about many things.

And Jesus wants something better from Martha than that. So Jesus tells her this new way of living. What will become the way of the Spirit, walking by the Spirit?

One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her. Mary is sitting at the Lord's feet. Mary is listening to his teaching.

Mary knows that she needs this. She needs a Savior. She needs his words of wisdom. She needs his words of life before she can serve him, before she can do the hosting duties that she is called to do.

She can't serve out of her own strength. She can't serve out of the flesh. Mary knows her need. One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion.

[30 : 18] And then Jesus puts it another way later. How much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? You see, Mary gets it. You and I, we cannot now sit at our Savior's feet.

He has gone back in heaven. He is seated at the right hand of God. But we have something even better than that. We have his Spirit working in us, working among us.

It is his wisdom. It is his power. Those are the means through which God answers our prayers. The Holy Spirit works powerfully.

He empowers us, first of all, to walk the pathway that Jesus walked that may be through hardship, that may be through testing, to mature us. because the Father, Son, and Spirit long to save us from our distress, but they long even more to save us from ourselves.

Jesus wanted something better for Martha than she wanted for herself. And so it is with you. Let me tell you, from my own experience, I'm just going to talk about how does this actually work out in people's lives.

[31 : 36] So I'm going to have up on the screen here a famous cartoon panel that for the last nine years has been making its rounds on the internet. Got a room on fire here and a cute little dog person with a jaunty hat reassuring himself, this is fine.

The truth is, this is your life. This is you. I'm not saying this is some of you, I'm saying this is all of you. This is your life.

Many of you, all of us are in that room on fire. Many of you are that little dog saying, this is fine. Your life seems to be manageable if not perfect.

You're getting by okay or so you've convinced yourself. You know what to do. You know what others ought to do. Especially. Maybe you're not a perfect parent.

You're not a perfect student. You're not a perfect boss or a perfect employee. You may not have a perfectly healthy body. But you've kind of figured out a way to manage. Maybe even to feel good about how you're doing.

[32 : 49] Maybe even feel kind of positive about the future. This is life in denial. This is a form of living from the flesh and its power and its wisdom.

You are Martha before the dinner guests arrive. At some point, the dinner party is going to start and you are going to wake up to the realization that your sense of control is an illusion.

Life is no longer manageable. The world can quickly and easily spin out of control. All it takes is a car wreck. All it takes is a stock market crash. All it takes is bed bugs in your room.

Life and its problems are no longer manageable. You don't know what to do anymore and where you are, where you are isn't good. Where you are isn't working. And you realize you can't save yourself.

The little dog now says, this is not fine. Help me. That's what Martha is doing. Often, this is the point that people start looking around for help.

[34 : 02] They actually start looking to get help. Usually, when someone comes to me for counseling, that's where they are. Martha running to Jesus for help. Okay, great. Step one, good.

But just as Jesus knows what kind of help Martha needs, so the Heavenly Father knows what kind of help you truly need. You want to be saved.

You just want to be saved from your distressing circumstances. You want to be saved from where you are. But your Father gives His Spirit because He does want to save you from where you are.

He does want that. But He wants to save you from who you are. You see, just like Martha, we think who we are is also manageable.

You know, maybe not perfect, but manageable. Your way of relating to God, to other people, you know, it's working. It's okay. That's how you've convinced yourself. Yeah, you know, I've got sin in my life, but it's the respectable sort of sins that don't cause too many problems.

[35 : 08] You know, it's other people, them and their sins. That's what's the real problem. Or, if you do think, yes, there's real problems.

I have deep and shameful stuff in my life, but at least I can manage it. I can sort of hide it away so that others don't see it.

This is fine, you tell yourself, but the room's on fire. You're still living from the flesh and its power and wisdom.

That's where Martha is. Martha, Martha, someday you will wake up to who you are.

Someday you won't be able to say this is fine anymore. Who you are isn't working. who you are isn't good. And you wake up when you realize who you are is not on a good pathway.

[36 : 14] You cannot manage yourself. You cannot save yourself. You cannot pick yourself up with your own bootstraps to get you out of who you are. And at this point, you've got two meals that are set before you and you can choose which one you want to eat from.

The first is the bitter meal of despair. Abandon all hope. That is what the traitor Judas Iscariot did. He woke up, saw the room was on fire, saw who he was and turned to despair.

But there is another meal to eat from. Jesus says that Mary chose it, the good portion. which will not be taken away from her.

You become desperate for the salvation of God. You receive the Holy Spirit. You live by his power. You ask and he is given to you. You seek and you find him.

You knock and he is open to you. All of his power, all of his wisdom, all of his resources, all of his relationships, and he is only then it is that who you are begins to change and where you are also begins to change to some degree or other.

[37 : 40] I want to tell you this. When I am counseling people, this pattern holds true. No one ever makes real progress in their life until they open the door and stop hindering the Spirit's work by holding on to the flesh, by holding on to the futile ways we have always handled life and relationships.

change begins. Prayers begin to be answered once you stop saying, I am fine. And once you start saying, there is something wrong.

I am not fine. There is something wrong with who I am and how I am living and I need help. Change begins when you believe that God has your best in mind.

as your good Father. And then your attitude takes on the shape of these lines from Psalm 139. Search me, O God, and know my heart. You try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

Now, if you take this pathway, I do not promise that all of your problems are just going to go away. They don't.

[39 : 10] But they are transformed. Sometimes they do. Sometimes it all clears up. Sometimes it doesn't. Not all of our problems are solved in this present world.

There is much to look forward to in the world to come. In this life, we keep walking the pathway of hardship that Jesus walked. Where he goes, we go there too. And we wait for the kingdom of God that has not yet fully arrived.

But whatever good, whatever bad comes your way, as you look for all the good things to come true on that day, you no longer journey through this world alone.

And you no longer journey through it the way you always have. Now, you walk in daily dependence on the Holy Spirit. Now, you are daily drawing on his wisdom and his power, not your own.

The Father gives his spirit for your good. This is the Father who wants you to pray. And so, the Father who wants you to pray, he is summoning you to a new way of life through the words of his Son.

[40 : 20] This is a life in which prayer comes first. Prayer comes first. I don't just mean that, okay, prayer is your first priority in life. That's true too.

But I mean literally, prayer comes first in order. Maybe, and for most of us, that is very, very hard. We do not live that way. Maybe you're that entrepreneur kind of person who's, you know, you've got 50 new ideas before breakfast.

And you've got the energy to do all of them by the weekend. If so, you're going to have to learn a new way to live. You're going to have to slow down.

And you're going to have to start praying first. Pray first before you spring into action to handle the problems of your life. Stop doing and doing and doing out of your own power and wisdom, out of the flesh.

Begin with prayer before you get to work. Ask for wisdom. Ask for the Spirit's help. Say, this is not fine. I need help. Help me, Lord. That is where work begins.

[41 : 31] And maybe you're more like me. I'm not the entrepreneur sort. I'm a slow cooker. I maybe come up with one good idea a week. That's my upper limit. I've got the energy to do it by next month.

And if so, you need prayer too. You need prayer before you get lost in all your thinking. Before you toil away in your own mind. Pray for wisdom and power to do what you cannot do in the flesh.

Pray first. That is where you begin. Come needy. Last week, I mentioned that there's a legend about Martin Luther that he is supposed to have begun every day with three hours of prayer.

Now, we don't really know if it's true, but I like the quote that's attributed to him for why he did that. Because we think, you know, he must have been a busy man.

Why would he set aside three hours for prayer? And he's supposed to have said, I have so much to do that if I didn't spend at least three hours a day in prayer, I would never get it all done.

[42 : 40] I have so much to do. If I didn't spend three hours a day in prayer, I would never get it all done. I like what that communicates. It communicates that apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, you cannot do the Christian life.

You cannot live the Christian life. You know what? I would not want anyone to try to tackle the Christian life without the Spirit.

I would not wish on any of you to try to live the Christian life in the flesh. Oh, how awful. How soul-crushing. Try to walk the path Jesus walked without the Spirit.

But when you have the Spirit, he can do more than you can ever ask or imagine. Pray. Pray. Pray with simplicity.

Pray with need. Pray with nerve. Ask the Father to give his Spirit to you. and pray together. Get some other people around you.

[43 : 46] Ask. Have them pray for you as well, that the Spirit of power and wisdom may be with you. Pray together with your church, with the people of God. May 29th, Sunday, we're going to do that.

Mark your calendars. We are going to gather together to pray as a church family. We need his Spirit. We pray. That is where the Christian life begins.

That is where new life begins. Father, we have been like Martha trying to do the Christian life in the flesh.

We are anxious and troubled about many things. things. I think some of us have either overwhelmed ourselves with the duties of the Christian life.

Some of us have simply set aside the duties of the Christian life because it seems too much and we're just, we figured out a way to just manage. Lord, I am asking that we may see clearly that the room is on fire.

[44 : 50] Where we are is on fire. Who we are is on fire. This is not fine but we have this Spirit. Let us come to you in hope and let us find that there is a life of joy.

That your yoke is easy. Your burden is light. When we are living with the power and the wisdom of the Spirit of Christ, when we are trusting Him to do more than we could ever ask or imagine, let us come to you.

And I pray if there is anyone here who sees the Christian life sees the good in it but has not cried out to Jesus for salvation, may they turn and cry out and find that we have a Father who wants our good, who gives His Spirit for our good, and who is better than we have ever imagined.

Amen. Amen.