

# Desiring Prayer

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 02 February 2019

Preacher: James Barnett

[ 0 : 00 ] The movie Avatar came out, how amazing it was when it first came out. And I remember talking to one person, and I was waxing lyrical about how great it was.

But they said that they didn't think it was that good. And sure, it was a bit of a rehash of Pocahontas with aliens, but it looked amazing.

They disagreed again, they didn't think it was anything special. I said, I can't believe it, it was cutting edge. The 3D was phenomenal. Ah, I saw it in 2D.

I didn't want to pay the extra for 3D. Ah, that's why you missed out. You missed out on seeing the movie as it was supposed to be seen. It was so vibrant.

The animals, the aliens, the plants, they were jumping off the screen. It was like you could touch it. You really missed out. Today we're starting a new series on prayer as we seek awe and intimacy with God.

[ 1 : 04 ] And prayer is a delight. It's a privilege that we can pray to a God who listens to us. Prayer is where we come before our Heavenly Father and we talk to Him. We bring our requests and our pains and our griefs.

But the reality is that prayer is also hard. I'm sure all of us know the temptation not to pray. Whether we're tired or we're busy or maybe we don't know how.

Maybe we occasionally throw up an emergency prayer, like a flare to God. God, help me out with the job I've got coming up. Help me find this job.

Help me with the interview. Help me with money. It's a bit tight at the moment. But I'm sure that many of us don't really pray unless we're desperate. Because our human hearts don't naturally desire to pray.

It means we need to admit our weakness. And that God is in control and that we're not. Has the Christian God that many of us have put our faith in, has the relationship with Him been as good as we expected?

[ 2 : 12 ] I wonder, is it possible that we have a 2D relationship with God? You know, all the pieces are there. You can still see the same thing. You know, you've still got Jesus on the cross.

We can still read the Bible. But the relationship is just fine. It's just okay. Can you imagine having a 3D relationship with God?

Where you could say that it is just so vibrant. It is delightful. It's delightful. It's like you could touch Him. And it's life-changing. Can you imagine having a closer relationship with God?

One that is rich and satisfying and nourishes the soul. Is it possible that there is something amazing that we've missed out on? Is it possible that we've missed a trick on prayer out of a laziness or busyness or just misunderstanding?

And it's meant we've actually missed out on an intimate relationship with God Himself? Is it possible that the extra D to make it 3D is actually the D of devotion to prayer?

[ 3 : 18 ] One of our core values. Today we're going to begin to see the joy and delight of prayer. It's going to be a wake-up call. We're going to spend five weeks on prayer.

We're not going to hear everything about prayer tonight. This is just the start. But I hope it's going to be like placing those 3D glasses over our eyes so that we can see the joy of talking to our Heavenly Father.

And so today as we seek to desire prayer, we're going to want to go from a dry to a nourishing relationship with God. We're going to hope to go from duty to delight in prayer.

And I'm going to hope for us that we pray instead of wanting to get things from God so that we actually get God Himself. And so let me pray as we look at God's Word.

Heavenly Father, we want to know You better and we want to be in relationship with You. We want to be in a close relationship with You, Lord.

[ 4 : 20 ] Father, in particular today we ask that You would give us a desire to pray. Not just to read Your Word, but to talk to You.

Amen. We're going to start in that passage that Nick read for us as we seek to go from a dry relationship to a nourishing relationship. So please have your Bibles open at Ephesians 1. From verse 15. For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for You, remembering You in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give You the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that You may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of Your heart may be enlightened in order that You may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people.

This is Paul's prayer for the people of Ephesus. And what stands out is what he keeps asking God for. Verse 17. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give You the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that You may know Him better.

[ 5 : 43 ] He keeps asking God that they would know God better. It is the heart of this prayer. He's not asking that they would have new spiritual blessings, that they would have a better condition in life, that they would avoid suffering.

Although in this church, like many of the early churches, it would have been great for them to avoid suffering, but he is praying that they would know God better. This is a really important thing to be praying.

In the midst of whatever is going on for the Ephesians, whatever is going on for us, to pray that we would know God better, to know the God that has blessed us very richly.

You only have to glance over the first 14 verses of Ephesians to see how God has blessed them. He's a God who has blessed them with every spiritual blessing.

He's chosen and adopted them. They're redeemed through His blood. They're forgiven. They're marked with the Holy Spirit. And so this is who the God that they worship is, that we worship.

[ 6 : 51 ] We see Him through His actions. He is a generous and loving God, and Paul prays that they would know Him better. And Paul uses an expression.

He prays that they would have the eyes of their hearts enlightened. Now, our hearts don't have eyes, but the eyes is an expression used to describe a doorway.

So we would still use the saying, the eyes are a doorway to the soul. But here, the eyes are a doorway to the heart, which in the biblical sense, it's the seat of the body, the spirit, and even the mind.

The mind isn't in the head, it's in the heart. It's in here. We would still use a similar expression. What is the way to a man's heart? It is through his stomach.

That's right. And I can't wait for food next week. But the heart here is the affections. It's the desires. And so knowing God better is not just about knowing things about God.

[ 8 : 02 ] It is about the whole being, the whole physical life, the emotions and the inner life. Paul is praying that the way to their entire life, to their heart, might be opened to know this God better.

And so when we come to God in prayer, it is so important that we know the God that we're talking to. That's why we said the creed before. We're not just talking about some kind of vague God.

No, we have a description of who our God is. And so the better we know him, the better our prayer will be, the better our relationship with God will be.

We can know things about God. We can know things about him. But when we know who his character is, when it has gotten into our heart, it can turn a dry and formal relationship into one that nourishes the soul.

Now, I've used that word nourish a couple of times now. There are just some relationships that we have, some friendships that just, they're just really nourishing. Maybe you know people that, you know, drain you and make you feel exhausted.

[ 9 : 16 ] But there are just some people, some friendships that we have that just leave you feeling vibrant and excited and just pumped up. Do you have those kinds of friends? Yes? Some of you are nodding.

That's good. One of those people to me is my good wife, Alyssa. But as parents of a busy family, it's not always nourishing. Often it's task-focused.

Deal with this child, feed them, clean that. We talk about money. We talk about calendars. I don't get excited about calendars. It's not always nourishing.

But date day, date lunches, that's usually a Monday lunch for us, my day off. I could take Alyssa out, maybe eat some dumplings anywhere in Chatswood.

It doesn't bother me. And I could sit and stare into Alyssa's eyes. And we don't even need to talk. And it is just nourishing for the soul. But we don't need to talk because of our long, shared history.

[10:14] We can just spend time, and I can spend time with Alyssa because of our history together. And it's nourishing. But imagine if I did that on the first date.

I don't know if you've dated a person for the first time recently. Imagine on the first date, they're just sitting there, staring at you.

I don't think you'd get to a second date, do you? Thanks, Nick. Obviously, it's not what Sam did. I'm glad for you. Knowing God, like Paul prayed, for this church is so important.

Dwelling on what he has done, on how he has blessed us, on who our God is, it nourishes the soul. It takes us from talking to God, like a servant to a master, to a child talking to a God, who is a father. This is one of the real distinctives about Christianity. We don't have a master-servant relationship, but it's a child to a father. And yet, so often, prayer can feel like we're trying to twist God's arm into giving us things.

[11:27] You know, getting the parking spot, getting the job, getting the grades at school, getting mum and dad off your back, whatever it is. And God is a generous father, and he loves to give us things.

But if we only pray to God to get things, it's like that 2D movie picture. We can miss out on the 3D picture. That prayer is not just about getting things from God.

It's about getting more of God. Romans 8, verse 15. The Spirit you receive does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again.

Rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Now, if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ. Paul, again here in Romans, he's encouraging people, they're not slaves, but they're made children adopted into this family who can cry out, Father.

[12:33] But to be able to cry out, Father, means that we have to be sitting under His roof. Imagine the picture of, from many movies, of an unruly teenager adopted into a new family.

For that family to work, He's going to have to sit under that roof and under that authority. And so for us, as children before our Father, we need to submit to Him.

To draw near to God is to acknowledge that God is God with a big capital G, and that we are the child. And so it looks like not rebelling against our Heavenly Father, but choosing obedience, choosing to follow, to come before God in a posture of trust, like the chick under the chicken's wing, the hen's wing.

Because God is the one who is in control of all situations. And it's that posture we come to Him when we pray. And so when we know who God is, and dwell on that, it leads to trusting in God. And when we trust in Him, we can draw close, submitting to Him, and it leads to intimacy. And to be God's child, like Romans 8 says, means that we are His heirs, and the heir has an inheritance from the Father.

[14:02] So we don't just come to God to get things from God. We come to God in prayer because we trust Him to be God. And that way we get more of God Himself by submitting and drawing near.

We pray to get God. We pray to be close to Him, to be intimate, and in relationship with Him. And God loves to give us the things that we need. As I've gotten older, the more my preference for birthday presents and Christmas presents has changed.

They used to be about getting the things I want, but the best presents, it turns out, aren't things, although things are good, it's the people giving them.

It's the reason my kids' craft is so special and meaningful. And, you know, if you're a leader of my kids, thank you for doing craft with them this morning. If you go into my, into the church office and go to my desk, you will see my kids' art all around my desk.

Not because it's particularly good, but because my children are special and because they're important to me. When we just expect God to be a prayer-answering piñata, when we use prayer as a stick to get things from Him, we miss out on an intimate relationship with a Father who loves us.

[ 15 : 27 ] Prayer isn't just about getting things from God, it is about drawing near to Him in submission to His will, knowing that He is in control. Maybe you're thinking at this point, okay, okay, you've convinced me, sure, I need to pray more, that sounds good, drawing near to God through prayer, but I just don't want to.

Prayer is hard when it's not intimate, when it's not nourishing. It can just feel like a duty that we just have to do. Maybe even today, at the prayers that have been said up the front, you've just said amen at the end.

Maybe we just go through the motions at church, at me, even at home. How can prayer go from duty to delight? Jesus has a warning for us when it comes to prayer from Matthew 6.

When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others.

Truly, I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what He's done in secret, will reward you.

[ 16 : 45 ] And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them if your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

The hypocrites, most likely the Pharisees, they saw it as something they had to do to pray to God. And so they would do it so that they could get a reward. They would do it out in public.

And people would see them and go, oh, these are Pharisees. They're praying for us. Aren't they so pious and wonderful? And they would get their reward. They weren't praying out of relationship.

They were praying out of duty. The pagans, well, they prayed for long periods of time to try to get their God to hear them. Maybe God will hear me if I pray for long periods of time.

But that's not an intimate relationship. Jesus says something radically different. Go and pray in secret. Don't babble. Your Father sees you.

[ 17 : 43 ] He hears you. He knows what you're going to pray for. And so Jesus shows that the test of a person's spiritual life is not what we do in public.

It's not how we go and how we look on a Sunday, whether we can say amen or whether we sing in church, but it is about whether we are praying in private.

It's in those hidden moments that will show whether we have a nourishing, intimate relationship with God or not. You might be feeling guilty right now. That's not my intention.

And over the five weeks of this series, we hope to grow in prayer together. But right now, I just want to show that we can delight in prayer in all seasons.

In the Old Testament prophetic book, Habakkuk, they were under a lot of stress. There was a lot of heartache going on.

[ 18 : 42 ] Let me read from Habakkuk 3. Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls.

That paints a terrible picture of famine and starvation. Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Because Habakkuk knows who his God is, that he is a God of salvation, even though everything around him looks terrible, he can still rejoice in his God and delight in him.

And so when we know every blessing that we have received, because God loves us, we can rejoice. We can come to God as his child because we know that he has saved us through his son's death and resurrection.

It means our prayers can go from duty to delight. We don't have to pray to twist God's arm. We don't have to pray long prayers just so he'll hear us. Take something like the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6.

[ 20 : 01 ] Has anybody ever prayed this prayer before the Lord's Prayer? How many times do you think he would have prayed this prayer? A lot? I wonder how many times it's been prayed in the church.

Did anybody that was here this morning try and crunch those numbers for how many times we've prayed the Lord's Prayer in this church? Steve's just doing some quick calculations in his mind. I wonder how many times has the Lord's Prayer been prayed here?

How many times has it just been done by rote by the people in the church? When we have a dry relationship with God when we don't have his blessings in Christ in front of our eyes saying the Lord's Prayer can just be something we do from memory something we just read off the screen and it can have no meaning no joy and no delight in God.

But when you're holding on to God's promises it means this simple prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray can be a delight. Knowing how much God loves us and his graciousness to us even though we sin makes his forgiveness so much more delightful.

And so it can take some simple words forgive us our sins have so much more meaning and significance when we know how depraved we are.

[ 21 : 28 ] Even when I'm well fed and I'm physically nourished I can rejoice and delight in the God who provides not just my food but all things for me.

And so I can pray give us today our daily bread and these words can have so much more meaning and delight. Again I'm talking a lot about my wife tonight that's okay.

In my relationship with Alyssa I can walk out the door and just say I love you goodbye and it can just be something I say. I've said that a thousand times before and it can just be something I say.

I can even say it in the midst of conflict you know if we if we went to bed fighting you know just say those words. I can say it half-heartedly but I can also say those three little words with all of the weight of our nearly 12 years of marriage behind them.

Our prayer can be something we just do out of duty or it can be a delight to rejoice with a God who delights in us that despite our sin despite our depravity he has showed us grace and love.

[ 22 : 46 ] I wonder how differently we would be as a church if we prayed like this. If we were people who delighted to pray not just to get things from God but because we've already got him because we've got every blessing and we are his children and we want to draw near to him.

What would we be like as a church if we had that third D the devotion to prayer? Would we delight in the people that God places around us because of us delighting in God?

Would we extend the hand of friendship to others because we have an intimate friendship with God? Would we just pray prayers appreciating the things around us and not always thinking about how much better life could be?

Would we pray prayers appreciating who God is instead of to get things from God? You may not feel particularly equipped for prayer at this point but my desire is that we would just want to talk to God.

And so I've just recently started reading through the Psalms and I've been summarizing them and praying them every night. I think I've done five days in a row and they have been wonderful.

[ 24 : 09 ] I'm not sure if you've ever tried to read the Bible at night. I've always failed at reading the Bible at night. I don't know why. I get into bed and I fall asleep. I go to bed regardless of the time and I go, great!

Time to read the Psalms and pray. It has been wonderful. And so I'm going to be doing something for the next four weeks, the next four Wednesdays. I'm going to be down at a cafe that looks like this.

It's called Pichon. Does anybody know where Pichon is? Yes? Where is it? Near the station. Just down that way, near the train station, next to Woolworths.

You've got the train station, you go up the escalator, you turn left, you kind of go around a little bit and it's right there. I don't know if it's the best coffee. It's got a good cafe, a good coffee machine, a Lamazocca, so it's good.

But I like it because there's space inside. And so I'm going to be there every Wednesday for the next four weeks from 7am till 8am. I'm going to probably go to the gym after that, you can join me for that too. Please come and pray with me.

[ 25 : 09 ] If you don't feel particularly equipped to pray, come and let's figure it out together. I'm going to be reading my Bible, praying every Wednesday for the next four weeks at this cafe.

If you don't have anything to do because uni hasn't started, you can get up early and come and pray and then go home and go back to sleep. That's okay. And so what we're going to do now is Sarah is going to click through the Lord's Prayer slowly for us.

And what I want to do as a church is just to spend some time praying through the Lord's Prayer individually. And so as these different slides come up, instead of just praying it, spend a moment delighting in the truth that this has for us.

We'll spend a couple of minutes doing this and then I'm going to pray through the Lord's Prayer for us together. So please take a couple of moments to pray and I'll pray for us in a couple of minutes. to pray in calcs.

[ 26 : 45 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Lord, help us to not miss out on the privilege of being able to come to the foot of your throne and to talk to you. Help us to delight in you, Lord.

Hallowed be your name. Father, we ask that we would praise and glorify you. That we would treasure Jesus above all other things in our lives.

[ 28 : 43 ] And that all the glory would go to you, Lord. Your kingdom come. Heavenly Father, we ask that we would see your kingdom come into our lives.

That we personally would seek to see the gospel expressed in our lives so that people around us would see it.

So that it would spread forth from this church into Chatswood and all across Sydney. So that your kingdom would spread here and across the world, Lord.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Heavenly Father, we ask that you would help us to come before you in submission.

That we would choose to do your will so that we could draw close to you, Lord. Father, we thank you that we call you Father.

[ 29 : 43 ] Help us to come before you and not to flee and run away. Give us today our daily bread. God, I thank you again so much for how you have richly provided for us.

Physically, spiritually, emotionally, through our Lord Jesus. Father, but it is easy to take the things we have for granted. To take the food for granted that we have.

And to take our financial wealth for granted. Father, again I ask that we would not treasure anything above Jesus. But help us to come before you daily in dependence upon you, Lord.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lord, that you would forgive even people like us.

Just speaks to your graciousness to us, Lord. Father, help us to be like you. To forgive others, Lord. And we ask that we would not be led into temptation.

[ 30 : 55 ] Deliver us from evil, Lord. Deliver us from the world and from the devil. Help us not make you sad or grieved by the things we do. But we ask that you would help us to bring honor and glory to you.

Lord, the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours. Now and forever. Amen. Amen. Amen.