

Equip: "Pray Then Like This"

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[0 : 01] Amen. Please, if you would, take your Bibles and open them up to the Gospel of Matthew. We're walking through our mission and vision as a church family this month with an eye towards the theme of prayer.

Our mission, as we've said, is to magnify the glory of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And the three ways that we've identified that we do that is by enjoying the Lord, by equipping the saints, and by evangelizing the lost.

So last week we saw that we enjoy God in prayer. And this week, our aim, as we look to the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6, verses 5-13, is that we might equip the saints to pray.

So if you would, follow along with me as I read our passage, Matthew 6, verses 5-13. Pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

[1 : 34] Pray then like this. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for the gift of prayer. Father, we praise you for the wonderful privilege that it is that we can speak to you, the God of gods.

And that you hear us. That you answer our prayers according to your infinite wisdom. And so we pray now, we ask, Father, as your disciples asked, would you teach us to pray?

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. In 1535, a simple question from a German barber inspired what I have found to be one of the most helpful and insightful works on prayer that I've ever read.

Peter the barber. He probably saw plenty of customers come in and out of his shop, but he had the privilege of serving as barber to at least one name that most of you would probably recognize.

[2 : 57] He was barber to the great reformer Martin Luther. At this time, Martin Luther was not popular. In fact, many wanted him dead for his teachings against the false doctrines of the Catholic Church.

In fact, I would not be surprised if many would have loved for Barber Pete to make a strategic slip of the razor and put an end to Luther's teachings once and for all.

But instead, as Luther sat himself down in the chair and placed himself at Pete the barber's mercy, Peter the barber made a confession. He said, I am struggling to pray.

I don't know where to start. I don't know how to begin. I am worried about the coldness of my heart towards God. I am worried about the distance, the weakness of my prayers. And knowing that Luther was a man of prayer, he asked him for some help.

And as a result, Luther wrote the simple short treatise. It is called A Simple Way to Pray, subtitled for Master Peter the barber. In this little work, what Luther does is he recommends taking several key texts and Christian documents.

[4 : 09] The Apostles' Creed is one. The Lord's Prayer, our passage this morning, is another. The Ten Commandments is another. And he recommends that you take one line at a time, one phrase at a time, and use each line as a launching pad, as a starting point for prayer.

It is very helpful. In fact, I would recommend that each one of you, if you go home and look it up, it'll be easy to find. It's called A Simple Way to Pray. I would recommend each of you find it and put it into practice.

Very helpful. Because Master Peter's problem, I believe, is not uncommon. I think that if you and I were honest, we would say that prayer does not always come naturally to us.

We often struggle, as Pete the barber did, with prayer. And we wonder why. Well, prayer is a little bit, our discipline of prayer is a little bit like a muscle.

Where if we train it, if we use it, if we strengthen that muscle, then we get used to it, we become stronger in it. But if we don't use that muscle, if we don't use that discipline, what happens?

[5 : 18] It begins to weaken. It begins to atrophy. If we use this muscle of prayer, one hour in prayer with the Lord can feel like just a moment. And when we don't, one moment of prayer can seem to feel like a lifetime.

On top of this, as we know, of course, our enemy does not want us to pray. He loves our self-sufficiency. He loves our independence.

He loves for us to go throughout our day with little to no thought of God. He loves our plans, our decisions, our autonomy, our self-sufficiency. And on top of this, the age that we live in does not make it easy to be a man or a woman committed to prayer.

Our digital addictions make moments of quiet and solitude almost impossible to get. And when we do get them, it makes them almost unbearable because we're so dependent on distraction.

We live in an age where we're accustomed to fast results. Everything is microwaved. And the pace of information that we receive day in and day out harms the patience that's required for prayer.

[6 : 30] And if we're honest, I think we would say that many of us, when we go to pray, have a hard time shaking the nagging feeling that we really ought to be doing something a little more productive.

What we need, like Master Peter, like the Lord's disciples in our passage this morning, is once again to be taught, to be equipped, how to pray.

And so following Luther's wisdom this morning, I want us to consider what Jesus teaches us and what he says about how we ought to pray by looking to the Lord's prayer.

So let's ask the question along with Pete, how do we pray? How do we pray? Well, first, very briefly here, Jesus tells us first how not to pray.

He gives us two ways not to pray here in verses 5 through 8. He says, when you pray, don't pray hypocritically and don't pray ritualistically. He says, don't pray hypocritically.

[7 : 35] Look there to verse 5. He says, 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.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. We saw last week, didn't we, that the aim of prayer is delight in the Lord himself.

The aim of prayer is the enjoyment of God. It's not a tool to be used to draw attention to yourself. In fact, this whole chapter, Matthew chapter 6, with all of its instructions for giving to the poor, for praying, for fasting, these practices of Christianity, he starts it off with this preface here in verse 1.

He says, beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them. For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

In other words, if all you want is man's approval and man's attention, then you can have it. And that's all that you will have.

[8 : 46] But he says, if your aim in prayer is to seek God's approval, if your aim in prayer is to seek God's wisdom, God's will, he says, when you pray, go into your room and shut the door.

And pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who is in secret will reward you. Now, of course, I think I need to say this.

This means, of course, that you shouldn't ever, it does not mean that you shouldn't ever pray in public. It does not mean that you shouldn't ever read your Bible in public, that you shouldn't practice Christianity out in public.

I think it's a word of caution, especially for people like myself who have a very public ministry of the word and prayer. It's a word of caution that we have to constantly make sure that the aim of our hearts in doing these things is not the approval of man, but the approval of God.

Don't pray hypocritically. But he also says, don't pray ritualistically. What do I mean? Look there to verse 7. He says, If praying hypocritically is using prayer to get other people to like you, then praying ritualistically is using prayer to get God to like you.

[10 : 14] If I just use the right words, if I just have the right turn of phrase, if I say the right words in the right combination, then maybe, just maybe, God will listen to my prayers, pay attention to my request, and I will get what I want.

But he says, he makes it clear, God isn't moved by the length of our prayers. God isn't moved by the sum total of our words. What's he moved by? He's moved by the genuineness of our heart. And he gives an excellent reason here to pray simply and directly to the Lord, doesn't he? He says, Do not pray like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. I've heard people ask before in objecting to God's sovereignty, meaning His complete knowledge of all things and His complete control of all things, that He is totally sovereign.

They say, well, if that's true, if God is totally sovereign, why pray? If God is in total control, why would I offer up any request to Him at all? Well, Jesus says, well, you've got that all backwards. [11:30] He says, because God already knows what you need, pray. And pray then like this, not ritualistically, but confidently and simply and clearly with the confidence that our prayers are not breaking news for God.

We aren't telling Him anything that He doesn't already know. We aren't tasked with coming up with the right words and the right order and the right combination to make Him pay attention to our problems. That's not the aim of our prayer.

It's not a ritual. Don't pray hypocritically. Don't pray ritualistically. So then how are we to pray? He tells us, starting in verse 9.

Here's where we'll spend the majority of our time together this morning. Second, He says, pray then like this. Verses 5 through 8 were how not to pray.

Now in verses 9 through 13, Jesus instructs us how to pray. The theologians have traditionally divided these requests up into six petitions.

[12:37] This morning, what I want us to do is I want us to think in terms of two categories here. The posture of our prayers and the provision of our prayers.

These two categories here, how to pray, the posture, how we are to go about prayer, and the provision, what we are to pray for.

First, let's think about the posture of our prayers because how we posture ourselves in prayer matters, doesn't it? The posture of our heart matters just as much, if not more, than the words that come out of our mouth when we come to pray.

Jesus, of course, He knows this and so He tells us here in verse 9 that we ought to pray first in the posture of a relationship. The posture of a relationship of a child to a father.

Look there with me. He says, Pray then like this. Our Father in heaven. Our Father in heaven. You know, we should marvel at this.

[13:48] The grace, the gift that we can call God our own Father. You know, that's exactly the privilege that we've been given through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is right at the core, at the essence of what it means to be a Christian. Now, whether or not you've been coming to church all your life or maybe this is new information to you, I want you to know this is at the very center of what we believe means to be a Christian.

To be a Christian is to be an adopted son or daughter of God Himself through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Galatians chapter 4, it tells us, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive the adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son.

And if a son, then an heir through God. Do you pray with the posture of a child? With the freedom and the privilege and the joy of a child coming to speak with His Father?

[15:13] J.I. Packer in his wonderful book, it's called Knowing God, he says this, he says, You hear that?

He goes on, he says, if this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. The simple posture of a child speaking with his Father in Heaven, that ought to be our posture in prayer. And yet, even so, I want to caution you for a moment that even though we pray as children of God, we should not ever mistake the familiarity of prayer with flippancy, with irreverence to the Lord in prayer.

This is our second posture in prayer. We must pray with a posture of reverence, the reverence of a sinner, in the presence of a holy God.

And that's why he tells us here to pray to our Father in Heaven, high and exalted, far above our greatest imaginations, far above any earthly father that we may have had here in this life.

[16:52] He says, pray our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name. Now your Bible might have a note there that explains the meaning of that phrase, hallowed be your name.

That's not a word or a term that we tend to use in our everyday life. And my Bible has a note there that defines it. It says, let your name be kept holy or let your name be treated with reverence.

So we ought to pray with the relationship of a child to a father and we pray with the reverence of a sinner to a holy God. There has to be a balance here of both.

See, God is not so far from us that sinners can't speak with him. Christ solved that problem for us and yet he is not so like us that we ought to speak with him carelessly or irreverently.

He's still God. That's what makes the access that we have to him in the name of Christ so incredible. We have free access to speak with God himself in Christ but we shouldn't speak with him and treat him so casually that we forget the reverence and awe that he's owed.

[18:06] I had a seminary professor who was speaking on prayer and he said one thing that helped him as a busy man with a family, a busy man with a wife, with children, a busy man with responsibilities at the seminary as a professor, a busy man as a pastor of a church, he made appointments and he kept them.

He had to be very strategic with his time and when he had an appointment on his calendar he made sure that in that hour in that 30 minutes whatever it may be whoever he was sitting across the table with had his full attention for that moment.

He said it's helpful for me even in planning out my prayers with the Lord to imagine and to pretend as if this is a holy appointment with God himself and the respect that I would give you if you were in my office sitting across from me speaking with me listening to me interacting with me I wouldn't be checking my phone I wouldn't be aimlessly wondering in my mind you would have my full attention for the hour of that appointment he said it's helpful for me to schedule appointed times with the Lord in prayer and to know that this holy appointment is to be treated with reverence pray with a posture of respect and reverence to the Lord not only this one more posture here he says pray with the posture of release pray with the posture of release look there at verse 10 this is what he tells us he says we are to pray your kingdom come your will be done not my kingdom come not my will be done your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven that's a prayer of release isn't it release from our desires our wants our world our kingdom our plans our hopes in our way and in our time and instead submitting it into the hands of a good and holy God we are called to pray submitting all of our requests whatever they may be all of the requests for provision that we will see here in just a moment whatever they may be with open hands and not controlling them tightly like we tend to want to do and not gripping them controlling them not demanding that they be answered the way we want in our way but submitting them to a good and sovereign God handing them back over to your father in heaven who loves you and cares for you who always knows best your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven here in all and all as it is in heaven here at Seaweed Bay as our church family here in this place among us as it is in heaven in my life in my family in the lives of my children in the plans that I have as it is in heaven do you pray with an open grip on all of your plans easier said than done isn't it

I don't think we have a better example anywhere than the prayer of our Lord himself in the garden of Gethsemane at the moment of his death was drawing near Jesus being fully God and fully man he prayed Lord if it is possible take this cup from me yet nevertheless not my will but yours be done in his divinity as God Jesus of course he knew full well what he signed up for he knew full well the plan of redemption that had been conceived before the foundations of the earth he was in on the plan as God yet as man he's prayed and taught us how to pray with a posture of release to the sovereign good will of God yet not my will he said but yours be done that's release do you pray like this that ought to be the posture of our prayers in blessed relationship in holy reverence and in submissive release to the will of God and now with that posture now we can begin to pray for God's provision let's look to the rest of our passage here in verses 11 through 13 and here

I want us to see he models for us three prayers of provision three prayers of provision here Jesus tells us that we ought to first pray for the physical provision of God now this one comes naturally to us doesn't it this one if I had to guess I would say this one probably dominates most of our prayer lives most of our prayer life is spent requesting physical provision from the Lord look there with me to verse 11 he says you ought to pray give us this day our daily bread give us this day our daily

bread we're used to praying this sort of prayer Lord meet our needs meet our physical needs but if we're honest I would say most of us don't really know what it's like to pray actually needing daily bread the Israelites in the wilderness did now this is a pointer it's a reference it's a call back to the experience of Israel wandering through the wilderness for 40 years and do you know what they ate for 40 years every single day do you remember what it was daily bread truly daily bread that came from them out of heaven from the hand of God dropped down onto the ground they ate it every day for 40 years they were satisfied not one of them went hungry they were provided for with daily bread 40 years in the wilderness this miraculous provision of God but what we fail to understand is that

[24 : 31] God has not stopped miraculously providing for any of us and each of us are just as dependent on the Lord's daily provision as the Israelites were in the wilderness that wilderness wandering is meant to be a lesson for us as God's people wandering through the wilderness wandering on the way to the promised land that we are dependent on the hand of God to provide for our every need church we don't feel dependent do we we feel so self-sufficient we're lured into this deception that we we don't really need God's hand to provide for us as much as he actually does this is a reminder for us that we need God to provide for our every need your home is a gift from God your food is a gift from God if God does not provide you lunch this afternoon you don't eat your clothing is a gift from God

I don't care how rich and successful you are how big of a business you've built for yourself all of it from beginning to end is a gift of God's provision we're dependent on him so he says pray give us this day our daily bread not only this he says second we are to pray for the forgiveness of God this is a transition from the physical to the spiritual isn't it pray for the forgiveness of God he says forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors now if I had to guess I would probably guess that most of us have an easier time praying the first half of that phrase than the second half don't we we're much more inclined to say God forgive us our debts than we are to say forgive us as we have forgiven others aren't we but there's a correlation here these things are connected do you see he says forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors this is a prayer for forgiveness that would come to us yes but that would also come through us to others

Matthew tells a parable just a few chapters later in Matthew chapter 18 you can turn there if you'd like it's called the parable of the unforgiving servant and in it Peter he asks the Lord Lord how many times am I to forgive my brother seven that sounds like a lot for us right if somebody wrongs you seven times and you forgive them seven times I feel like we're doing pretty good seven Lord what does Jesus say he says not seven how about 77 Peter and then he tells them this parable of a servant who owed his master 10,000 talents now we don't deal in talents so I'll just tell you 10,000 talents just so you know one talent is equal to about 20 years labor just one so if you work your whole life from cradle to the grave you might maybe if you're doing pretty good you might can earn yourself five talents this man was indebted 10,000 talents his more than 2,000 lifetimes could ever pay back to his master and his master was fed up he was ready to sell him off with his wife and his children but the servant came and he begged and he pleaded with his master please master have mercy on me please master have mercy on me

I'll pay back every cent that I owe and so Jesus says his master shockingly he did two things first he released him no punishment but second even more shocking he forgave him his debt he wiped it away he forgave it totally 10,000 talents wiped away like that in an instant and if the story were to stop there it would be a beautiful picture of the heart of God towards sinners like us sinners like us who have earned ourselves an infinite debt before a holy God a debt that none of us could ever begin to climb out of in our own strength a debt that a thousand lifetimes could never repay yet by the mercy of a good and gracious God he has wiped away our debt by the blood of Christ and yet the story continues the story continues look what happens next as the servant goes and finds one of his fellow servants who owes him a hundred denarii it's not a small amount a hundred denarii is about a hundred days worth of work less than a year a much smaller debt that was owed to him than what he was just forgiven by his master and he grabbed the man that owed him the money and he grabbed him by the throat and began to choke him and he threw him into prison until he could pay the money back and Jesus says the master heard of this and said you wicked servant I forgave you all of your debt because you pleaded with me I was merciful to you I forgave you should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you and he took the

servant and threw him to the jailer until he paid off everything he owed here's the point when Jesus says so also my heavenly father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart to this parable it's a lesson of forgiveness again that comes to us but does not stop there it goes through us to others see the sure sign of someone who has grasped and understood the forgiveness that we've been given in Christ is that we are quick to extend forgiveness to others you know that's in fact the commitment that we've made to one another here as a church as brothers and sisters that are committed and covenant to one another in this church family as members of Seaweed Bay

[31 : 10] Baptist Church every one of us agrees to what's called a church covenant that lists out our commitments to one another and here's what one of the articles says it says we will walk together in Christian love as we care for and watch over one another seeking one another's spiritual good at all times we will pray for encourage warn rebuke and admonish one another as occasion may require we will be slow to take offense and will eagerly seek reconciliation without delay forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven us church do you have any debtors do you have anyone who has wronged you do you have anyone from whom you are withholding forgiveness holding a grudge withholding mercy because they have wronged you seven times even 77 times this prayer is an encouragement for you to remember the debt that you have been forgiven of by Christ and then to extend that forgiveness to others 1 John 1 9 tells us that if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness so pray for the forgiveness of God to come to you and through you and then finally last one here he says pray for the spiritual protection of God pray for the spiritual protection of God he says in verse 13 and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

I wonder how often do you pray for your spiritual protection not physical protection I know we pray for that I know we pray for our physical health I know we pray for traveling mercies I know we pray for safety and all those things are well and good that's valuable to pray and to ask the Lord but I wonder how often we pray for our spiritual protection because the truth is the spiritual dangers that we face are 1000 times worse than any physical threat against us and Jesus wants us to pray with this perspective in mind if you think it's dangerous for you to get in your car and drive down the road drive down highway 17 and I realize it is how much more dangerous is it for you to be a child of God living in enemy territory how much more dangerous is it for you to be in exile here in a fallen world to be facing the powers at work against us of spiritual darkness powers that we can't see to be in the crosshairs of a spiritual enemy that prowls around like a roaring lion just seeking somebody to devour are we aware of the spiritual dangers that face us every single day he says pray Lord lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil church temptation is common to us all every one of us is tempted to sin every single day the question is is your armor up are you prayed up and ready before you walk out the door to head to work in the morning are you aware of the inclinations of your own heart are you aware of the ways the enemy has succeeded in tempting you in the past are you aware of the ways that you have fallen into temptation even this week are you crying out to Christ daily for help in the face of temptation the good news of the gospel the book of Hebrews tells us that if you are tempted take heart that we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are he understands the struggles that we face with one key exception yet without sin he won the battle and Christ took the enemy's best shot and so he says in verse 16 let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need church are we praying for spiritual protection for protection from the temptations of the enemy and for the deliverance of the Lord from this domain of darkness we ought to pray these things with confidence knowing with full confidence that the day of the Lord will soon come when the Lord will return he will finally and totally deliver us from all evil church is that your hope is that your prayer see all of our prayers all of these prayers that the Lord teaches us and equips us to pray all of our prayers for protection all of our prayers for deliverance for the kingdom of God to come all of these will ultimately and finally be answered at the return of King Jesus when he comes to put an end finally to our enemy and to finally put an end to sin and temptation once and for all to finally deliver all of his people from this domain of darkness to finally bring his kingdom to earth is that your hope is that your prayer as we aim to grow in prayer this month church my encouragement for you this morning is to listen to Martin Luther's advice to Peter the barber take the Lord's prayer as we've just done and as we'll do in just a moment and take it even this afternoon take it daily this week would be my encouragement

for you take it into your place of prayer and walk slowly through each line calling out to the Lord using this as a springboard for your prayers and let the Lord teach you how to pray we're going to go to a time of prayer now as we close I'll pray and then we'll have an opportunity for us to pray silently right where we are and then I will lead us in a prayer through this text through the Lord's prayer as we respond to God's word together let's bow and pray Father thank you for listening to our prayers we thank you Jesus for teaching us to pray we thank you Jesus for modeling prayer for us we thank you

[38 : 36] Jesus for interceding for us as our great high priest we thank you for the spirit who intercedes for the will for the saints according to the will of God and we pray Lord that you would continue to teach us to pray that you might be honored that you might move in powerful ways among us we pray in Christ's name amen let's pray silently where we are you want to go nonprofits to to