

Every day is a school day- Lord teach us to pray!

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: 07 September 2025

Preacher: John Winter

[0 : 00] Well, they say that every day is a school day. And I was thinking, sorry Andy, Andy's a teacher.! And I was thinking about the sermon series for the autumn to begin September,! which always for me seems to be the start of my year.

I can't see all school teacher in me. And I thought, oh, let's do something on prayer. Because prayer is something that we never cease to learn about, or we ought never to.

I think if I asked the question, who here is an expert in praying, I doubt very much I would see many hands raised. And if hands were raised, I would be somewhat suspicious.

Because praying is not easy, not at all easy. And yet it comes very naturally to us. They used to say that you would never find an atheist, that is, somebody who doesn't believe in God, you would never find an atheist in a foxhole.

They meant in a trench during the First World War. I think when bombs and bullets are flying up around you, I think you'd hedge your bets a little bit that there was no God.

[1 : 22] Just in case. And we find ourselves sometimes involuntarily praying. We don't always realize it's prayer, of course.

But when we get lost and we say, help me. Find me a car parking space. Get me off this road. Or when we're in a hospital and they're diagnosing some illness that we have, we might find ourselves involuntary praying, much to our surprise.

Prayer is something I did from being a very small child. And yet I was not brought up in a Christian home. I can't remember anybody saying, this is how you pray.

But I was, when I was kind of conscious of world news in the 1970s, I was very conscious of the Cold War. And aware, because we were told pretty much every day on the news, that the Soviet Union and the West could mutually destroy each other.

Mutually assure destruction. It's a kind of technical phrase for what happens if people decide to set off nuclear weapons. And when you live in the shadow of that, you kind of think, I could die any day.

[2 : 34] We could all die any day. And I used to pray, God bless mom and dad. Went through the whole list of my family members. And I always ended my prayer in the same way. And I did this until I was 18 years of age.

Until I became a Christian. But I did this the same every, as long as I wasn't drunk. When I didn't pray. This was my prayer.

And God, please, if there's a nuclear war, please keep me alive. That would have been a horrible prayer if it had ever been answered. If I was the only one alive.

Imagine that. But I was so terrified of death, you see. So very, very scared of it. So I had to pray. The disciples came to Jesus.

And they wanted to enter into his school of prayer. To make every day a school day. And they asked the question, Lord, teach us to pray.

[3 : 33] So let's read together from Luke chapter 11. Luke chapter 11. It will be on the screen. You can follow along. One day Jesus was praying in a certain place.

When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray. Just as John taught his disciples. He said to them, When you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins. For we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.

Then he said to them, Suppose one of you has a friend. And he goes to him at midnight and says, Friend, lend me three loaves of bread. Because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me.

And I have nothing to set before him. Then the one inside answers, Don't bother me. The door is already locked. And my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.

[4 : 33] I tell you, Though he will not get up and give him the bread, Because he is his friend, Yet because of the man's boldness, He will get up and give him as much as he needs.

So I say to you, Ask, And it will be given to you. Seek, And you will find. Knock, And the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, Receives.

He who seeks, Finds. And to him who knocks, The door will be opened. Which of you fathers, If you ask, If your son asks for a fish, Will give him a snake instead?

Or if he asks for an egg, Will give him a scorpion? If you then, Though you are evil, Know how to give good gifts to your children, How much more will your Father in heaven, Give the Holy Spirit, To those who ask him.

Amen. And the Lord will bless to us The reading of his word. There's a book entitled, The Christian Atheist. It was written by a man called Craig Groeschel, An American pastor.

[5 : 36] It's an unusual title, Christian Atheist. It's a kind of contradiction in terms. But he's talking about people who Tain to believe in God, But evidently don't, Because of the way they behave.

And it's a problem, Particularly in prayer meetings, This. Because very often, We find ourselves praying, Don't we? But then, We're not even sure if we believe, We will receive what we ask for.

So, This is apparently a true story. There was a church that were praying In a neighborhood, Because there was a den of iniquity. It's an old phrase.

Nearby, It was a public house. What the Americans call a bar. And it wasn't just a court. It was a place where people met to Do deals with drugs, And drink lots of alcohol, And get involved in lots of fights, And all kinds of bad things Were going on in this pub.

And so they, The church decided they were going to pray That the pub would close. They were praying for a few weeks. The bar owner got news that the pub was, The church were praying that the pub would close.

[6 : 50] And then one day there was a storm, And lightning struck the pub and burnt it down. The bar owner wasn't very happy about this, Understandably.

So he decided he was going to sue the church, And take them to court. So when he gets to court, And he's called as a witness, His claim is, That the reason the bar burned down, Was because of the church's prayers.

God was responsible for it, And therefore he was suing for damages. The pastor was called to witness, And he backtracked. He brushed off the accusations, And he said, The church did pray for the bar to break down, But nobody really believed that it would happen.

The judge leaned back in his chair, A mix of amusement and perplexity, And finally spoke up. I can't believe what I'm hearing, He said.

Right in front of me is a bar owner, Who believes in the power of prayer, And a pastor who doesn't. Sadly, that is so often true, Of pastors and churches.

[8 : 10] I'm not advocating, by the way, That we should pray that pubs burn down. How different this is to, The end of the 19th century, When C.H. Spurgeon was preaching, At Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.

And there were five American visitors, Who came to hear him preach, On a hot July evening. And in no state, Because there were thousands in attendance, You had to queue very early to get in.

These five were waiting, They'd got there early, They were in front of the queue, And just then, A very smartly dressed gentleman came in, And said, Gentlemen, Let me show you around, Would you like to see the heating plant of this church?

They weren't particularly interested, It was after all, A hot July evening. But they didn't want to offend this nice stranger, And so they consented. So he took them into the building, He took them down some stairs, And then he opened the door, And said, This is our heating plant.

When they looked through the door, They saw around about, They reported 700 people praying, In advance of the service. The man then closed the door, And introduced himself as Charles Spurgeon.

[9 : 29] And Spurgeon said, The condition of the church, May be very accurately gauged, By its prayer meetings. So is the prayer meeting, A graceometer.

And from it, We may judge of the amount, Of divine working among a people. If God be near a church, It must pray. And if he be not there, One of the die first tokens, Of his absence, Slowness in prayer.

Jesus said, Teach us to pray. There is nothing more important, That we learn how to do it. Because we're so very fragile, And vulnerable in this world.

And prayer makes a difference, To how we live our lives. Prayer also shows us, Who we're trusting in each day. Prayer connects us, With almighty God, In whom we live and move, And have our being.

Lord, teach us to pray. Next slide. Now the disciples had been with Christ, An awful long time, When they asked this question. But do you notice, That chapter 11 actually says, When it opens, One day Jesus was praying, In a certain place, And when he was finished, One of his disciples said, Lord, teach us to pray.

[10:54] In other words, This wasn't an academic question, That they were asking. They hadn't been reading books on prayer, And decided, That they would get Jesus' take on it. No, no, They were watching him praying, And they were thinking to themselves, I wish I could pray like that.

There was something about this praying man, That was attractive. And just an interesting piece of information, Luke is very interested in prayer.

Luke tells us again and again, About the life of Jesus, And particularly his secret prayer life. Seven of the nine gospel records, Of Jesus praying, Are found in Luke's gospel.

And so he's very interested in, The way Jesus prayed, But also what Jesus prayed, And how he prayed, And what he taught us about prayer. This is important to him.

Lord, teach us to pray. I want to learn to pray like you. So how did Jesus pray? Next slide. How did he pray? Well, Luke tells us, He prayed in lonely places, Secluded places, And he prayed at different times of the day.

[12:07] So for example, In Luke chapter 6, It says, One of those days, Jesus went out to a mountainside, To pray, And spent the night, Praying to God. So this wasn't kind of a little thing.

There's nothing wrong with short prayers, You know, Please help me God. Nothing wrong with that at all. They work very, very well. But sometimes we're called to pray long prayers, And we're called to pray for a long time.

And particularly when we're, We're keen to get something. When we're anxious about something, When we're struggling with something, And it's on our minds and hearts, Perhaps we'll pray for it for a long time.

Perhaps we will pray, When we are so anxious about a thing, That we can't sleep at night. It's a good way to pray. It was a good piece of advice, I once got when I was a young man, When I was first becoming a Christian, And I used to struggle to sleep.

And somebody said, Why don't you pray, The devil will make sure you fall asleep. I'm not suggesting you should pray for that reason. But it is a good thing to do, Rather than toss and turn, And think, Oh, why can't I get to sleep?

[13:15] Just pray. Jesus spent whole nights in prayer. Mark 1.35 says, Very early in the morning, While it was still dark, Jesus got up, Left the house, And went to a solitary place, Where he prayed.

So he prayed at both ends of the day, The beginning of the day, And the end of the day. That's good practice. The beginning of the day, Is when our day starts. We don't know what's ahead of us. How many difficulties and troubles might be there. And so we commit the day to God, And we end the day with God. We say to God, How has my day been? What can I thank God for?

What is worrying me? What is troubling me? What is still unresolved? What can I give to God at the end of the day? We kind of circumvent our day with prayer.

Just as Jesus did. And Jesus adopted different postures. He stood to pray. He lifted his eyes to heaven to pray. He looked down on the ground. He fell down, Face down on the ground, When he was in anguish, And prayed.

[14:14] And his sweat was like drops of blood, Luke says. And he also prayed, With strong crying and tears.

I love this passage in, Luke chapter 20, Sorry, Hebrews chapter 5 in verse 7. It's profound, And it's very moving. During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions, With loud cries and tears, To the one who could save him from death.

And he was heard, Because of his reverent submission. I want you to ask yourself, How does your prayer life compare with that? What place does strong emotion have?

What place does reverent submission have? Not just a list, A shopping list, If please God bless me with this and that. But actually God, Let me be so aligned to your will, That I will commit to your will,

And struggle with the challenges that I face.

Let me not be so anxious, That I will just worry about something. But let me give it to you. And let me, Lord, When I cannot change my life, And the course of my life, Operate to you in reverent submission.

[15 : 36] And he taught his disciples, The content of prayer. Like the Lord's prayer. But in the Lord's prayer, We're told, Aren't we, To honour God, Hallowed be your name.

To commit to him our daily needs, And to ask him for forgiveness of our sins, And pray that we might have the grace to forgive others, And ask him to keep us from testing, And from temptation every day.

He taught us, To pray for others, Like Simon Peter, Simon, He said, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat, But I have prayed for you, That your faith may not fail.

How often do I pray, God, Please keep that person, From failing faith. And then, What about praying at Lazarus' tomb, When everybody is upset, And weeping, And questioning, And he prayed. Even though he knew the Father always heard him, And would hear him now. And when he prayed, Thy will be done, He taught us to pray, Thy will be done.

[16 : 41] Remember, That when he faced the great agony of Gethsemane, And faced the cross, He said, Nevertheless, Not what I will, But what you will.

Now my heart is troubled, And what shall I say? Father, Save me from this hour. No, It was for this very reason, I came to this hour. Father, Glorify your name. That's what I want my life to be.

I can't avoid the struggles, And the difficulties, And the trials of life. We all must share in them. Not because God hates us. Not because God is punishing us.

But because God has something to teach us, And others through our suffering. And as we cannot change our circumstance, What we can change is ourself, And the way we face our circumstances. We can say, Nevertheless, Lord, Not what I will, But as you will. Give me the grace To cope well with this anguish, And this agony, And this pain, And these difficulties, That I may honor you with my life.

[17 : 51] And Jesus prayed, Father. He used a beautiful word, Abba. It's a Hebrew word, An Aramaic word, And it means daddy.

And it was unique to Jesus in his day. Jeremiah, The famous commentator, He did a real study of this word, Abba, And all of the Jewish literature of prayer, And he said he never found a single example of it.

It wasn't commonplace. The Jews were reverent about God. They knew God as Yahweh, And they wouldn't even pronounce his name. Such was their respect for the name of God.

But it made them fearful, And it kept them at a distance. And Jesus was, When you pray, Pray, Father. Pray, Abba, Just like me. Tell God, God, I love you.

You're my daddy. The Jews used to love the words, Abba and Emma. Emma is mommy. Abba is daddy.

[18 : 52] And they learned that, It's their earliest words, When they were given something to eat. And they made a noise, That sounded like Emma. And when they uttered their first guttural sound, It said, Abba.

It's a cry to your creator. Abba, My father. That's how we should pray. When we're in difficulties, We say, Abba.

It's a remarkable thing about little children, Isn't it? They might be told off of their father, And yet, They will go for a hug. Straight after. They may feel afraid.

Afraid of somebody, Or something that might harm them. So they run to their father. It is an instinctive, A natural thing, For us to cry out to God.

It is our created privilege. And Paul says, Because you are sons, God sent the spirit of his son, Into your hearts, So that you might call out to him, What?

[19 : 55] Abba. Father. Father. I am facing illness. I am facing serious difficulties in my life. I am facing death.

Abba. I cannot, Cannot live in this world without you. I cannot die without you. Abba.

When I struggle with my sin, And when it gets the better of me, And when it weighs me down, And it makes me feel wretched, And I just want to run and hide, My heart says, Abba, Have mercy on me, A sinner.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, The hymn used to say, The Christian's native air, His watchword at the gates of death, He enters heaven with prayer.

Abba, Father. Lord, teach us to pray. We so need it. We so need it. The disciples were acknowledging to God, That they could not manage this life without it.

[21 : 04] Now think about Alcoholics Anonymous. If you have been an alcoholic, You will know this really well. And may I say, If you have been an alcoholic, And you're struggling with it, You're very welcome here.

Hi, My name is John Winter, And I am a sinner. And I need the grace of God every day, Just like you do. My sins may be different, And they may hold me in a different way, But they're just the same.

And I need to take steps every day, To make sure, That I keep in company with God, So that I may not fall.

But if you're aware of the 12-step program, And the big book, You will know that you begin your day with a prayer, God grant me the serenity, To accept the things I cannot change, The courage to change the things I can, And wisdom to know the difference.

And God gives us a means, By which this is possible. Prayer. Prayer is the means, By which this is possible. Lord, teach me to pray, Because I need it.

[22 : 16] Enjoying one moment at a time, The prayer goes on. Accepting hardships is the pathway to peace. Taking as he did, This sinful world as it is, Not as I would have it.

Trusting that he will make all things right, If I surrender to his will, That I may be reasonably happy in this life, Only reasonably happy. And supremely happy in the next, With him forever.

Now when you take the 12-step program, And you go through the big book, You know you go through a robust spiritual inventory. One of the things you have to do is make amends, For the people you've harmed, And the things you've done.

We call that repentance. But what you must do, Is every day, Commit, To these steps, Which begin with this.

Number one, Admitted we were powerless over alcohol, That our lives had become unmanageable. Now hi, I'm John, I'm a sinner.

[23 : 23] My life, My life, Has taught me, Over many years, That I am powerless, Over sin. And my life became unmanageable, Except for the grace of God.

In 1981, When I surrendered my life to Jesus, Not knowing what that would mean, I have never been the same again. Not because I became something special, But because something special happened to me.

Jesus entered my heart, And he began to work in me, So that sin could become manageable, By the grace of God. Every day I need to pray, God keep me from temptation.

Every day I need to pray, God forgive me. But sin has become manageable, By the grace of God. Number two, Came to believe, That a power greater than ourselves, Could restore us to sanity.

Sanity, That's what it is you see. It's insanity, To deny the power of sin in your life. But it is, Sane and honest to admit to it, And own it.

[24 : 36] Because it is killing us. Number three, Made a decision to turn our will, And our lives over, To the care and direction of God. Number four, Made a searching and fearless, Moral inventory of ourselves.

Number five, Admitted to God, And to ourselves, And to another human being, The exact nature of our wrongs. I like the other human being. Because we're very proud, We don't mind telling God about our sins, But we don't tell others, That's much harder.

But it keeps us accountable. And accountability is very important, In AA, In their meetings, They acknowledge to one another, That they're sinners, And they pray for each other. And this, Number six, We're entirely willing, That God should remove, All of these defects of character.

Entirely willing, That God should change me. Number seven, Humbly on our knees, Ask him to remove our shortcomings, Holding nothing back.

Humbly on our knees, That's prayer. Number eight, Make a list of all persons we had harmed, And became willing to make complete amends, To them all. Number nine, Made direct amends to such people, Wherever possible, Except when to do so, Would injure them or others.

[25 : 54] You have to consider them, Of course, And how they will respond. Number ten, Continue to take personal inventory, And when we were wrong, Promptly admit it.

That's humility. I'm wrong. I'm a sinner. Number eleven, Sought through prayer and meditation, To improve our contact with God, Praying only for knowledge of his will, For us, And the power to carry this out.

Always seeking communication with God. Every day, Dependent prayer, Humbly on my knees. And number twelve, Having had a spiritual experience, As a result of this course of action, We try to carry this message to others, Especially alcoholics, And to practice these principles, In all our affairs.

And that's why we carry the gospel message too. Because we can tell you, Of one who can deliver you, From your sin. Did you notice the emphasis on prayer?

Humbly on our knees, Asking him to remove our shortcomings, Sought through prayer and meditation, To improve our contact with God. This never stops. Every day is a school day.

[27 : 10] Why do we need to do it? Well, I'm going to tell you an Old Testament story, About Cain and Abel. You think you know the story. It's a really good story, Isn't it?

The first murder in the Bible. And tragically, It's brothers. Cain kills Abel, Because he's jealous, And envious of him, And feels resentful toward God. So he takes it out on his brother, And he kills him. And as a result, Things begin to go wrong in the world. Cain is cursed, And he's sent to the land of Nod. He's sent to wander, In a place of desolation.

And yet it's not just that he's sent away. His family line, We're told in Genesis 4, Now remain hidden from the presence of God.

Whereas Abel's family line continues, Adam and Eve bear another son, And they call him Seth. And his family live in the presence, Of Adam and Eve.

[28 : 08] In the family, Where God still communicates. So you have two types of people, Already developing in the world. Those who worship and love God, Who follow in the line of Seth.

And those who ignore, And rebel against God, Who follow in the line of Cain. And some interesting little features, Are told in Genesis 4. We're told, For example, That men discover metal work.

And they discover poetry. And they sing songs. They actually sing songs about taking revenge, On somebody who murdered one of their lot. So they're going to take revenge. The kind of first mafia type song.

All kinds of good things are arising in this world. They discover metal work, As I say, But then one of them, Who wants to take revenge, Turns his metal work, Into a sword.

To kill somebody else. So in this cultured world, Where humans are developing, They're also developing weaponry, That will kill other people.

[29 : 14] That's the story, Of our world, Isn't it? John Appenheimer, Created nuclear fusion, And then created an atomic bomb, And said, I have become death.

Humans are capable of great good, But great evil. And as a result, Seth has a little baby boy. Well done Seth, You've got a baby boy. He's going to give him a great name.

So he calls him Enosh. This is a bit like Johnny Cash's song, A boy named Sue. He calls him Enosh. What does that mean? It means frailty. Why does he call him frailty?

Because he's seen what bad things can happen in a world. He'd learned about his great uncle, That had been murdered by his brother. And he saw the revenge, That was carried out in the lines of Cain, And heard about it.

And he was terrified of this weaponry, And this selfishness, That was revealed in human beings. And so he calls his son, Enosh, You are frail.

[30 : 17] And you live in a world of frailty, A world of fragility and vulnerability. And guess what happens next? At that time, Men begin to call upon the name of the Lord.

They discover prayer. Prayer is the answer to their frailty. If you're afraid, If you worry about this world, And what it can do to you, If you worry about the fragility of your own life, This is what you should do.

Call upon the name of the Lord. And that name, Lord, Means Yahweh. And the revelation of that name, Was given in Exodus 3.14, When Moses said, What is your name?

When I go to the Egyptians, And they say to me, What is his name? What will you tell them? What shall I tell them? And he says, Tell them this, I am who I am. The Hebrew verb means, I am a person.

I am a being. I am here. Now, It's not so much the revelation of a name That the Jews wouldn't give. It is the revelation of an attitude of faith.

[31 : 19] I am who I am, Will be demonstrated in the works, And things that I do. When you are in slavery, And you go to Pharaoh, And you say, Let my people go. And you think, Nobody's going to listen to me, Because I can't even speak properly.

Then I will do amazing things, And people will know, That there is a God in heaven. When God changes your life, When he does a powerful work, That changes you, And in a way that is just amazing, That gets you to this place, Where you can manage sin, And you can manage your life, Because you trust in his power.

Then people will see, That faith is real, And that I am is with you. Show people who I am. You don't just need a name.

You need a life changed. Show people who I am. By your actions. And you discover this as you pray.

When you feel fragile, When you feel empty, When you feel weak, When you feel like you're dying, Call out to the Lord, And he will come through for you.

[32 : 29] I was talking to a man, The other day, Whose situation is hopeless. Really is hopeless. And I said to him, Are you a praying man?

Because when things are hopeless, And when doctors tell you, There's nothing more they can do for you. All you've got left is God. Are you a praying man?

Today I'm going to ask you, Are you a praying person? Do you recognize that what you need, Is not so much to know more stuff, More information, Even more information from the Bible, You need to put it into practice.

I am who I am. Come and prove me by your praying. That's how we connect. It's a vital weapon.

Paul said, Prayer is mighty through God, To the pulling down of strongholds. Why do I need to pray? Because I can't manage this world without it.

[33 : 41] Karl Barth says, To clasp the hands in prayer, Is the beginning of an uprising, Against the world. And Billy Graham said, If you want to change the nations, You begin on your knees, You begin with prayer.

Lord, teach us to pray. Is that something you ask? There is a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson, There is a place where thou canst touch the eyes, Of blinded men to instant perfect sight.

There is a place where thou canst say, Arise to die in captives bound in chains of night. There is a place where thou canst reach the store, Of hoarded gold and free it for the Lord.

There is a place upon some distant shore, Where thou canst send the worker and the word. Where is that secret place? Dost thou ask where?

Or soul. It is the secret place of prayer. Please can I ask you to stand.

[34 : 51] Stand. I want you for a moment to bring before your mind, Something that you really want God to do for you.

Jesus once said to somebody who asked him a request, What would you have me do for you?

It was through a blind man. What would you have me do for you? And of course he said, Oh Lord, that I may see. God who is the I am, Who holds everything in his hands, Invites you today, To bring to him the thing that you would have him do for you.

I want you to picture now Jesus saying to you, What would you have me do for you? You might answer, I would like you to heal me.

You might answer, I would like you to take away my sadness. You might answer, I would like you to forgive me. You might answer, I need you.

[36 : 29] I need you. Reach out. Reach out. And say, Lord Jesus, Son of David, Have mercy on me.

Shall we say that together? Lord Jesus, Son of David, Have mercy on me. Let's say it again. Lord Jesus, Son of David, Have mercy on me.

Can I ask the worship group please to come, And to Lead us in singing.

Can I invite you to stay in an attitude of prayer, And as you do so, If you feel led, If you would like prayer, To come to the front, I'll be here, There'll be others here who will pray with you.

Lord Jesus, Son of David, Have mercy on me. You