

The Disciples' Prayer

by Pat Kenney

The sermon explores the importance of genuine heart motivation in the practices of giving and prayer as taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

Duration: 54:37

Scripture: Matthew 6:1-18, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Disciples' Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the topic of approaching the future with anxiety and worry versus peace and trust. He emphasizes the importance of not stressing over retirement or the future, but instead trusting in God's guidance and provision. The speaker also discusses the practice of giving and prayer, highlighting the need to please God rather than seeking approval from others. He encourages humility in giving and prayer, reminding listeners that God knows their hearts and language, and there is no need to impress Him or others with elaborate words or actions.

Transcript

Would you open your Bibles, please, to the Gospel of Matthew? As we... We're going to be continuing our study through the Gospel of Matthew this morning. We're going to be looking at some very practical applications of the things that the Lord's been teaching us in the Beatitudes and the examination of the heart and how all of that works out in our daily life. Really, we're talking about the outward practice of one whose heart is right.

Practical righteousness. And it's really basic training for the disciple of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount.

Sometimes we think the Sermon on the Mount was Jesus sitting on the side of the hill talking to the multitudes. But it wasn't. The Sermon on the Mount was further up on the mountain after they were ministering to the multitudes and then he took his disciples away and began to personally instruct them.

Contrasting particularly in... We saw in chapter 5 the righteousness of the Pharisees, the righteousness of the religious leaders of the land with what God's view of real righteousness is. And there was a marked contrast because the righteousness of the Pharisees was what people saw on the outside. But the righteousness God was desiring was what's going on on the inside.

Where's your heart? So in the first part of Matthew chapter 6, Jesus deals with the important practices of giving, of prayer, and of fasting. These were three things that the Pharisees were very noticeable in their behaviors. But in all three, Jesus points out the danger of doing them for the attention of men.

Giving, praying, fasting, so that others will be impressed with your spirituality. If we give or pray or fast to be noticed by others, Jesus makes it very clear that it means nothing to God. It doesn't mean anything to God.

Oh, but I've been fasting for five days. And everybody knows it. Then you've got your reward.

So what's Jesus dealing with? Well, he's dealing with his disciples and us, cautioning us about the lusts of the flesh and the dangers of spiritual pride. And sometimes the lusts of the flesh are manifested in spiritual pride more than anything else. It's in the realm of religious expression that some of our greatest struggles with the flesh occur.

So I'd say since we're all at church this morning, that's an important thing to look at, to talk about. Most of you here are believers. I hope all of you are.

If you're not, we hope you get saved today and give your life to the Lord. But as Christians, we gather together. We carry our Bibles in.

We have our fishes on the back or our doves on the car. You know, a while back, everybody had the WWJD bracelets. You know, what would Jesus do? We want people to know that we're Christians.

Problem is, it's easy for our flesh to attach an idea of spirituality to our outward expression. And because we're doing the Christian things, we're doing the religious things, therefore we're okay. But God is looking, God has a completely different standard.

Oh yeah, there are good things we should be doing, but the Lord wants our heart. He wants to know that what is coming isn't just for the, to look good in front of people, but it's to be pleasing him. So the first thing, we're going to look at the first two of those three areas this morning.

The practice of giving and prayer. And in the first one, we're talking about really pleasing God and not man. He says in verse one of chapter six, take heed.

Now whenever Jesus says take heed or beware, you know, it ought to, our radar ought to lock on. Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men. And then chapter two, it talks about when you do a charitable deed, don't blow a trumpet ahead.

Well, actually there's two different Greek phrases there. It's not the same. In verse one, it's actually a term that speaks of your overall righteousness.

Take heed that you don't do or perform your righteousness before men to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. And this would be playing off of verse 20 of chapter five, where we read, for Jesus said, I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

So obviously the righteousness of the Pharisees was not pleasing to God because it was outward and the heart wasn't right. So now here he's saying, take care of that. Make sure that your motivation isn't to be seen by men.

So when you do a charitable deed, now this is specifically showing an act of kindness or mercy or benevolence. Do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may have glory from men. And this was a practice of many of the leaders of that day.

They'd send somebody out before them when they were about to give. Dun-da-da-da-dun-dun-dun. Everybody watches.

I put my money in the treasury. Boo! Ooh, they're so spiritual. And there's modern day equivalents to that too.

You know, oftentimes you'll see in some of these telethons and stuff that the folks that give the big, big bucks, their names are up on the screen. It's been sadly church practice oftentimes to, and it's not, I hope it never becomes within Calvary, but oftentimes when people give large amounts of money, that they dedicate something to them and they put a plaque on the wall that this hall was given by this person or this chair was given by that person. You know, to bring glory.

And the Lord says, be careful of that. It's better for it to be quiet. Because if you do it to get glory from men, assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

A lot of times when people give particularly significant amounts, they want to have control over their gift. And the Lord is saying, when you give it, forget it. Don't put strings on your giving.

If you want to have control, create your own foundation. You know, and be in charge of it that way. But when you give, give it as unto the Lord.

And trust God to give those who have the responsibility of dispersing that the wisdom that they need to do it properly. Just good counsel. When you give or help others in need, do it quietly, without fanfare and advertising.

This warning also deals with just the general thing of self-promotion and boasting. Wanting others to know how kind and generous you are. The Lord says, don't do that.

Because your reward, if you do, will be the temporary fleeting attention and praise from men, which has no spiritual or eternal benefit. People may give you an attaboy for it, but that's it. There's nothing of eternal substance that goes with that.

Verse 3. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Now that might be kind of hard when you're writing a check. Amen? Or you're reaching into your wallet and you have to hold one in one hand.

Is that what he's talking about? No, he's talking about, again, this attitude of the heart. Remember, all of these are the outward expression of what's going on in the heart. Basically, what he's saying is don't congratulate yourself on how generous you are.

Hey, I've written a big one this week. Aw, you're so generous. Maybe nobody else knows about it, but you're boasting in your heart about it.

The Lord says be careful of that. That's not an attitude that's going to give me glory. So he does this for the reason that your charitable deed, verse 4, may be in secret, and your father who sees in secret will himself reward you openly.

And that's sweet. When you trust the Lord and you're giving as unto him and you're helping others as unto him, there's benefit that the Lord pours out upon you. And he's able to pour it out upon you because he knows your head isn't all puffed up.

And as you walk in his blessings, there's just that simple gratitude to the Lord for his kindness, not a boasting. So again, this speaks of more of motive than of method. If I give so no one else knows, but boast in myself, then I forfeit my reward from God.

But if I give for God's glory, it doesn't matter who finds out because my reward will remain. Do you understand? Some people have said, well, we're not going to give in any way that the church has record of our giving. And if you do that, it's unbiblical.

And they quote this verse. Again, God's not talking about a methodology again. He's talking about your heart.

And if you give as unto the Lord and somebody else finds out about it, the recording secretary, the IRS, whatever, God knows your heart. That's what you have to be guarding. That's when he says, you know, take heed.

Just make sure your heart is right before you do it. So you might say, well, Pat, are you saying if I don't have a right heart that I shouldn't give? Exactly. That's exactly what I'm saying because it's not going to do you any good.

It's not going to help you grow. Well, doesn't the church need it? That's not the point. The point is that your heart is in the right place.

That's what God blesses. And I believe he blesses it not only you personally, but that gift has even greater fruit when it's a gift of faith, when it's given as unto the Lord. And so we need to continually just examine our hearts in our giving.

Are we called to give? The Bible has so much to say about giving, yes. But how important it is that our hearts be right in it, that we're able to do it with joy to the Lord. Remember, it says the Lord loves a cheerful giver.

That doesn't mean when the plate is passed, you go whoopee, you know, real loud, and you jump up and you put your offering in. But rather there's just a joy in your heart. And that's the way it should be because my Father sees the motives of my heart.

And if my desire is to please him, then my reward will be from God. And that's the way the Lord set it up. And then he moves on into prayer with basically the same model as we're looking.

And he says, when you pray... Now, hey, Christians pray a lot, right? We pray in church. We pray at home. We get in little groups and pray.

We're taught to pray. But he says, when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. And the hypocrites were... The name for the hypocrite was a name where we get kind of our English concept of an actor.

One who wears the mask is literally what it means. So, you know, you're playing a role. For they love to pray, standing, again, in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets that they may be seen by men.

That's their motive. Look how spiritual I am. I'm praying.

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. Now, when we pray, do we do it to be seen by men or to be heard by God? Hope so. Who do we care more about hearing from? If your motive is to be noticed and praised by men, Jesus makes it clear, you'll have no reward from God.

Only the ooh and the ah of the people. That's it. In fact, when it says you shall have no reward, the word have there implies that is the totality and the fullness of your reward.

That's it. There's nothing beyond that. There's no spiritual benefit to it.

I read a little story about a rather pompous-looking deacon who was endeavoring to impress upon a class of boys the importance of living the Christian life. And so he asked the boys, why do people call me a Christian? And after a moment's pause, one youngster said, maybe it's because they don't know you. So how should I pray? What should my attitude in prayer be? What should I be praying for? The disciples had many of these same questions.

So Jesus is going to instruct them and us. He says in verse 6, but you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you've shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Now this tells me that the most important place for prayer is really away from the attention of others.

That does not forbid praying in small groups or in the church meetings such as we have here today. Rather, it tells us that we need to cultivate our private prayer life. Do you only pray when you come to church? Or do you have that regular quiet time at home, alone, before the Lord, where it's just you and Him? Maybe you've been reading the Word, and you just want to take some quiet time and talk to the Lord, and then be quiet and listen to Him, and open up the Word again, and let Him speak to the needs of your heart, the concerns of your heart.

Give you that time to just give God honor and glory, because if you're doing it in the quiet place in prayer, you're going to be doing it in your public life outside. If you only do it at church, it's likely that you're going to be playing a role. You're going to have a mask on.

You put your church mask on on Sunday morning, but then when you get out, it's your regular face. If we just pray to be seen or heard of men, then it has no benefit. Are my public prayers more for the people to hear than for God to hear? We need to ask that.

Jesus is telling us, search our hearts. He says, take heed to these things. That means take a look inside.

Take the time to examine your motives and to be careful what spiritual things we do in public, to be careful that our spiritual life is not just a show for others to see. I think that's why perhaps in the book of James, the Lord says, be not many masters, be not many teachers, for greater is the judgment on that. And you need to be praying for your leaders.

It's a tough place to be standing up in front and leading you in public prayer, because it's a role that can be stepped into. You might sit there and go, oh, Pat is so spiritual. Pastor Pat, Reverend Kenny, you know? I'm a sinner saved by grace.

And sometimes I'd rather even not pray, just thank you, Lord, let's get on with what we have to do today. I don't want to impress, I don't want you to think that just because I can pray flowing prayers, that that's the indication of my spirituality. When you see the Sunday school teachers and the home group leaders and the Bible study leaders, you know, you got to understand, that's a serious place.

And God is really doing a hyper-examination of their hearts, as he is mine, that our hearts would be right before him. You might say, good sermon, Pat, you know, great message. But you see, I have to answer to the Lord, and I have to really be seeking, well, Lord, were you glorified in this? Or do I walk out and go, yeah, this is a good one today, huh? Darn right it was good, you know? Keep them cards and letters coming, you know? But sign your name.

So he's getting into the, he's laying the prelude for what we know as to be the Lord's Prayer. But it really isn't the Lord's Prayer, it was the disciples' prayer, because the disciples were the ones that were asking him, Lord, teach us to pray. How do we pray? We want to do it right.

We don't want to do it just for show. Lord, what's most important in prayer? So he starts off in verse 7, and he says, when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Now, the word for vain repetition is a word, batologeo, which means to stammer or to repeat the same thing over and over.

You know, to use just religious-sounding words to make us seem spiritual, or to repeat a mantra or a phrase over and over again, and if I say it enough times, maybe God will hear. Some of us may have been raised in religious traditions where we learned a particular prayer, and we were told to repeat it over and over and over again. And with the repeating of it over and over and over again, that would bring some kind of a bonus, some kind of a blessing.

But that's a heathen practice, the Lord says here. No matter how religious it might look, no matter what Christian organization might promote it, the Lord says it's heathen. There was some graffiti found on the wall of St. John's University in New York.

Old university, started in the 1800s. At one time, was more of a theological school. Now, like many of the Oxford, Harvard, and so forth, have become pretty much secular.

But a while back, somebody had scribbled something on one of the walls there. And here's what they wrote. And Jesus said to them, who do you say that I am? And they replied, you are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the kerygma on which we find the ultimate meaning of our interpersonal relationships.

And Jesus said, what? I like that. Consider this. The Lord's Prayer contains 56 words.

The Gettysburg Address, 266. The Ten Commandments, 297. And a recent U.S. government order setting the price of cabbage, 26,911 words.

It's not how long we talk, amen, folks? It's what we say that's important. What's flowing from our heart. The length of the prayer doesn't impress God.

The volume, kutztawotstaffthalmitest, you know, sort of thing. That doesn't impress God. Some people, you know, when they pray, they shift into King James English.

You know, as if that's the special prayer, you know. The volume of it. If you're speaking in tongues, you know, if you're in a little group and you're using your prayer language, and the moment you start doing it, all of a sudden, the height of it, the volume of it is elevated.

That doesn't impress God. It's not the volume. You don't have to shout to hear God or for God to hear you.

Or emotion. Hold on, please. You know, and some, you know, sometimes some professional prayers can really turn it on.

You know, prayers. But it's not emotion. It's not mindless repetition.

Those things, length, volume, emotion, mindless repetition, have nothing to do with effective prayer. To illustrate, there was a guy who, very famous man, made free use of Christian vocabulary. He talked about the blessing of the Almighty and the Christian confessions, which would become the pillars of the new government.

He assumed the earnestness of a man weighed down by historic responsibility. He handed out pious stories to the press, especially to the church papers. He showed his tattered Bible and declared that he drew the strength for his great work from it, as scores of pious people welcomed him as a man sent from God.

Indeed, Adolf Hitler was a master of outward religiosity with no inward reality. David Guzik noted that the right kind of prayer doesn't use vain repetitions, which in any and all prayer is words with no meaning. All words, no meaning.

All lips, but no mind or heart. When we try to impress God with our many words, we deny that God is loving, a loving yet holy Father. Instead, we should follow the counsel of Ecclesiastes 5.2. You are God in heaven.

Here am I on earth. Let my words be few. I like the song, Jesus, I'm so in love with you.

We don't need to impress God with the length of our words, and we need to be cautious about impressing others with our spiritual-sounding words. You know what? God knows your language. God knows your language.

He knows the language of your thoughts. You can converse with Him. You don't have to put on some facade when you come before God.

You don't have to light candles and bow down and assume a particular position. You can talk to God just as you talk with one another. And you can talk to God just as you dream, just as you think.

And the Lord wants to be the center of your thinking, of your dreaming, of your quiet time. You can have sweet communion with Him, and that's the kind of prayer that benefits the most. So the Lord says, do not be like them.

Verse 8. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. That's an interesting verse, isn't it? God knows your need before you ask Him. Well, then why pray if God already knows? It begs the question, doesn't it? Because God waits to move until we recognize Him and His will.

You see, prayer is relationship, not just asking for things. Prayer is fellowship, not just trying to impress. Prayer is opening one's life to God and inviting Him to act in our lives as He so desires.

That's real prayer. And how many of you know that's a dangerous kind of prayer? Oh, Lord, would You work in my life as You desire? Oh, man, what's going to happen next? But if you're serious about that, God will begin responding to that. And there's nothing greater, there's no greater experience than having God at work in your life.

And He so wants to. And He wants to bless. He wants to heal.

He wants to make you whole. And it's a wonderful, though often intense struggle of yielding our will to His will. But it's really how we grow.

We don't grow just by, you know, going to church and receiving a commendation for our good church attendance. We go because we know we need to grow. We need to grow in the Lord.

We need to grow in our, if you will, looking more like Jesus. Not with necessary flowing robes and a beard and so forth, but the character of Jesus being more and more evident in us. And I would hope that each one of us this morning, even as we prepare to come to the communion table, would be saying, Lord, I do open my life to You.

And I do want You to work. And, Lord, I want Your will. I give You permission, Lord, to work in my life, even on those things that I don't want to let go of.

But if they're not pleasing You, if they have no eternal benefit, if, in fact, they have a real danger, expose them, Lord, that I might be the person You want me to be. And so the following prayer, prayed and applied word for word, can be very potent and powerful and wonderful if you pray it with your mind engaged and your heart yielded to the Lord. Now, most of us who have any Christian exposure, we know the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our trespasses, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. Amen. You know, we know it.

Oftentimes, if we came from a Roman Catholic background, we've prayed it thousands of times, tens of thousands of times. It's ingrained in there. We've sung it.

We've recited it at funerals. It's just part of culture, almost, the Lord's Prayer. But it can be mindless repetition if there's not that heart to learn from it and to do what it says.

So let's look at it. In this manner, therefore, pray, Jesus says. Now, again, when he says, in this manner, he is not speaking of, recite this prayer in this manner.

In this manner refers back to everything he's already talked about, with dealing with the attitude of your heart, with the willingness to please God, with not to try to impress men. And he says, here's the specifics of it. You start, our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

The first element of prayer is the person of God. He's described as Father. And not just any Father, but our Father in heaven.

And that speaks of relationship. If I say, our Father, I'm talking about a relationship. I'm implying a relationship.

So prayer begins with relationship. If he isn't your Father, your prayer is meaningless. It's the privilege of the children to come to the Father.

Remember in John 1.12, Jesus said, at the beginning of the Gospel of John, John recorded, as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in his name. Now there's a popular feeling in modern society today that says, well, we're all God's children. We're all God's children.

No matter what faith you're in, you're all God's children. That's not what the Scripture says. Those who are children are those specifically who believe in his name.

If you don't believe in his name, if you haven't submitted your life to his lordship, he's not your father and you're not his child. You can pray till you're blue in the face, but he's not gonna hear it. Because the hearing requires that relationship.

But there is one prayer he does hear. Lord, forgive my sins. I need you in my life.

Take over in my life. That's the beginning point where you're acknowledging that you're a sinner and you need his saving grace. Come into my life, Lord.

Make me a new person. Create in me a new heart. That's the beginning point.

If you don't know the lord, that's the beginning point. We have access to the father on the basis of relationship with the son, Jesus. Many people pray when they want something or they're in trouble.

But as we see from the scriptures, God doesn't necessarily hear or regard those prayers. For example, in Psalm 66, verse 18, the psalmist said, If I regard iniquity in my heart, the lord will not hear. In other words, if I'm playing a double game here, you know, I've got a sinful thing going on inside.

And then I'm faced with a situation where I need help and I cry out. He said, you know, your heart's not right. How can we have communion if your heart's not right? Communion implies a right relationship.

Isaiah 59, verse 2, says, But your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear. My cries, Lord, search my heart. If there's anything, anything at all that's coming between me and you, I lay it before you, Lord.

Create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit in me. Man, that's something we need to pray continually.

James 4, 3 says, You ask and you do not receive because you ask amiss that you may spend it on your pleasures, on your lusts. And 1 Peter 3, 7 says, Husbands, likewise, dwell with your wives with understanding. Give honor to your wife as to the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may be not hindered.

So husbands, are you honoring your wife? Are you lifting her up? Are you being kind to her? Are you treasuring her? Or are you just abusing her verbally? Or otherwise, are you insulting her? Are you belittling her? And then you go to church or you do your Sunday school class or whatever. How does God view that? I'll tell you what, He doesn't hear your prayer. Your prayers are hindered.

You may as well just hit the ceiling and bounce right back down. That's why it's so important for us to examine our hearts continually. And the Lord's prayer is a good place to start.

Our Father, let me think about that. Let me think about my relationship between me and you, Lord. That you are my Father.

And I'm your child because I've given my life to Jesus. I've surrendered my life to you. I've received you as my Lord and my Savior.

You are my God. You are my King. Therefore, I'm not in a position to stand before you and say, you can be my God on Sunday, but the rest of the time I'm going to be my own God.

That's inconsistent. That's false. So do you have a personal relationship with the one true God today? Do you recognize your need for that relationship? You can call on the Lord today and He'll forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Call on Him. The second thing, actually part of the first, Our Father, hallowed be your name. Holy is your name.

How holy is the name of God? The only name the Bible says is holy or reverend is God. Not my name. Everything about me is tainted by sin.

You know, it's a travesty to call ministers Father or Reverend. Holy Father. We've heard a lot about that recently.

Holy Father can only apply to God. Never to mere man. And I'm not trying to judge Pope Benedict's heart or Pope John Paul's heart, but the tradition of the church has called them the Holy See, the Holy Father.

And as I read this passage, it makes it clear and throughout the scripture that there is only one who is called holy, and that's God. And as fine and wonderful men as they may be, they are not God. And I'll tell you, if you start coming up to me and go, hello reverend, good morning reverend, what does the term reverend imply? Holiness.

Set apart to God. God's person. That's what it means to you.

Now if I were to come up to you and say, good morning reverend, what would you think? Boy, they don't really know. But you know what? When somebody says that to me, that's what I think. They don't really know.

They don't know what's going on in my heart. Why are they calling me reverend? The second element of prayer is focusing on God's purpose. And we've already talked about that a little bit.

Look at verse 10. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. What's that mean? Your kingdom come.

That means your rule in my life come. The kingdom is the rule of God. Your rule in my daily life come.

Our first desire or interest should be God's rule in our lives. Later on in this chapter, seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Seek it first and all these things will be added unto you.

Your will be done. It's been said there's only two kinds of people. Those who are in harmony with God's purposes saying, thy will be done and those living for themselves saying, my will be done.

Only two kinds. Now as Christians, what speaks to us? Does the majority of our life say, my will be done or does it say, thy will be done? If the Father rules in my life, then I will subject all my wants and desires to His will. I choose God's will.

Thy will be done in me, Lord. God's not forcing His will to be done in me. Oh, you're my kid? Put His foot on my neck? You will do it! Now He lays out His word.

He says, this is how you're going to grow. This is my purposes, my best for you. But it is still our choice to yield.

And are we going to yield to His will or are we going to insist on our own will? How life changing is it to live your life for the will of God? If I took Jesus seriously, if you took Jesus seriously and truly asked, Lord, let me do your will. I want to do your will in my life. Would you be where you are today? Just got to think about it.

If I really let God just do whatever you want in my life, would I be in the same circumstances that I am now? Would I be doing the same thing that I'm doing now? Carrying the same weights or attitudes that I have now? How would my life be different? You know, when we speak of search my heart, oh Lord. Examine me, oh Lord. That's what we're talking about.

That's what we're talking about. Not impressing God and saying, well, I did this, this, this, and this pretty good. Oh, and I blew it over here, here, and here, and here.

Well, the Lord says, well, let's talk about what you blew it over here, here, and here, and here. How much of that are you surrendering to me? Or do you really just sort of like confessing so that you can kind of get it cleaned up so that you can go back with a clean slate and do it again and not feel so guilty? Does that just speak to me or does that speak to anybody else? I've found that untrue in my life. I don't want that.

The third element of prayer, of our prayer, is focusing on God's provision. Now notice it says in verse 11, give us this day our daily bread. And you'll notice that it doesn't say give me this day my daily bread.

It says give us our daily bread. There's no singular pronouns in the Lord's prayer, which tells us that there's constant intercession. Give us this day.

When I pray that, I'm really praying for all of us, for all of our community, for all of our family. Give us this day, Lord, our daily bread. And it's daily because prayer in and of itself is our greatest need.

We need to daily be in communion with the Lord. Constantly be in his heart and have him on our mind. That's the most important.

Making provision for the future, which what most of us are involved in quite a bit, making provision for the future is not condemned, but rather anxiety about the future, as if there were no Heavenly Father. Oh, I

don't know what I'm going to do. You are God in Heaven.

Here am I on Earth. I don't have to worry. I need to follow you.

I need to love you. You promised to take care of me. You promised to meet the needs that I have.

Not necessarily the wants that I have, but you're going to take care of me. You're going to work in my life. When we ask God for our daily provisions, it's humbling, but it leads us to cultivating trust in him.

Are you trusting him each and every day? Or do you have an anxious heart? Man, I got to get another job. I don't know how I'm going to pay the mortgage. I don't know how I'm going to do this.

How am I going to do that? And much less retirement. And a lot of times, folks my age, we're starting to think about that kind of stuff. Some of you who are a little older already been thinking about it.

But how do we approach it? How do we approach the future with anxiety and worry and fear or peace and trust? That doesn't mean we don't do anything, but we don't stress over it. We don't have this constant anxiety and worry over it because, Lord, you're going to guide and you're going to take care. And the fourth element of prayer, which I think plays on all of the others, is forgiveness.

Because a lot of times, the reason we have anxiety over things is because we have a bitter heart. Here he says, forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. As we've been pardoned by God for all our sins, may we pardon those who have hurt us.

Have any of you ever been hurt by the words or actions of others? Let me see your hands. Have you ever been hurt? It's almost a human thing, isn't it? If you're around people, you're going to get hurt at one time or another. But what do you do with the hurt? Do you just not trust anybody anymore? Or I'm not going to get involved in anything because as soon as I do, I know I'll get hurt.

You know, I'm just going to do my own. And you just grow up and you become older and you just get bitter. Is that God's plan? No, it's not.

Forgiveness is crucial. It's vital that we forgive. And you know what? I think it's real important not to argue the philosophy or the theology of it.

Just do it. Just do it. Verse 14 tells us, if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But then he warns them, hey, if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And why is that? That's because you're still in sin. There's still iniquity in your heart.

Listen, forgiveness is required for those who have been forgiven. Have you been forgiven? Has the Lord forgiven you of all of your sin? Then forgiveness is required of you. Somebody has hurt you, harmed you.

You're called to forgive. We are not given the luxury of holding on to our bitterness towards other people. And that's especially important as we come up to the communion table.

The Lord searched that in me. Peter said, how often should I forgive my brother? The same offense. Seven times? He thought he was really being generous.

The same offense. Seven times? What did the Lord say? He said, no, Peter. Seventy times seven.

We call that concept 490. Because if you keep forgiving the same offense, you lose track. How many of you are going to count? Okay, well that was 489.

One more. And you pull out your list, you know, of all the times that you forgave. It's not the spirit of what Jesus was saying.

He said, continually do it. Continually forgive. Because that's the way of a Christian.

Forgiveness is not a matter of mathematics, but of spirit. And then the fifth element. Depending upon God's protection and deliverance.

Verse 13. Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Lead us not into temptation.

Lead us not into testings. And again, we see humility here. I think if we heard someone praying, God, bring on the testings and the trials.

Because I need to flex my spiritual muscles. I'm ready. I can handle the enemy.

Let him rip. And we'd think, what a boastful fool. Just draw a big target on yourself right there.

But if we've prayed in humility, Lord, lead us not into temptation. Then should God take me through testing, I can embrace it joyfully, knowing He will not test me above what I am able. 1 Corinthians 10.13. A lot of you know it.

No temptation has overtaken you, except such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. But with the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it.

And, you know, when Joyce got sick, I just had no idea of how I was going to handle it, how she was going to handle it. But I'll be honest, I was petrified as to what am I going to do? How do you live with cancer? How do you deal with all this? She's going to have to have surgery. I've got to give her injections.

I've got to dress wounds, dressings, and administer medications, and see her go through all of this. How am I going to... And there were a couple times where I'd say, it's too much, Lord. And then I'd go to the Word, and I'd think back on Him.

I'd come to church, and listen to Jeff, or Mark, or Miles, you know, teaching. Or listen to a tape of Pastor Chuck or Skip, and God would just speak to my heart. Say, I haven't left you.

I haven't forsaken you. Rest in me. And I'd realize that that's where my strength is.

It's in your faithfulness, Lord. And God got us through. And He's still taking us through.

And we're not bitter. We're tired. But we're not bitter.

And thankful. And God has taken us through. And He'll take you through as well.

The final element of prayer is focusing on God's preeminence. And it's really an explosion of worship. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen. So after all is said and done, after you take all these things to the Lord, Lord, yours is the kingdom. Yours is the power.

Yours is the glory forever. And so when I fix my heart on the person of God, and the purpose of God, and the provision of God, and the pardon of God, and the protection of God, I have no other choice but to worship Him. And oh how that lifts us above our own cares and our own worries.

Do you know our wonderful Lord today? If you haven't opened your heart to Him, do you want to open it right now? You can. And God will meet you right now. And the first prayer that you begin to learn can be the one we've studied this morning.

Piece by piece. You've got a good primer this morning on the beginning of your Christian walk. Would you take those steps today and call on the Lord? Well, how do I do that? Right now, say, Lord, I'm a sinner.

And I believe You're my Savior. That You died on the cross, that my sins would be forgiven. You rose from the dead that I might have everlasting life.

You took my place so that I might have fellowship with God. That God would be my Father. That I would be His child.

Oh, take over in my life, Lord. I give it to You. And you know, at that moment, the Holy Spirit will come and take over in your life.

You don't need a degree in theology to get saved. But I do believe to really understand theology, you need to be saved first. And really know the Lord and begin walking with Him.

Theology is purposeless if it's not translated into your daily living. A life that says, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.

Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

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