

God Centred Praying

by Zac Poonen

God-centered praying involves evaluating our life spiritually, praying with humility and faith, and recognizing God's sovereignty and love, allowing us to experience His guidance and direction in our lives.

Duration: 28:53

Scripture: Matthew 6:9

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of evaluating our spiritual progress annually, similar to how we celebrate birthdays or companies review finances. It encourages Christians to assess their growth, fellowship with others, and gratitude towards God's provisions. The teaching delves into the significance of praying the Lord's Prayer, focusing on God-centered praying, seeking forgiveness, and asking for strength to face temptations. The message underscores the need to acknowledge our weaknesses, seek deliverance from evil, and give all glory to God for victories and provisions.

Transcript

God arranged the planets and the solar system for the earth to go around the sun in 365 and a quarter days and you come back to the same place. So, I believe that that one year is a good period in which to evaluate our life. That in that one rotation of the earth around the sun, how far have we progressed spiritually? You know, just like we celebrate our birthday once a year, our children go from one class to the next class once a year and companies evaluate their income and expenditure once a year.

In the same way as Christians, it's good for us to evaluate at least once a year. It doesn't have to be December. It can be on your birthday.

But at least once in a year, it's good for us to take stock of our life and see whether we have made any progress. If we don't do that, we can go year after year after year after year without making any progress and live in a delusion, thinking that everything is okay when it is not. And also, like I said earlier, it's good to evaluate to what degree we have built fellowship with others in the church during this one year.

So, we've come almost to the last month of the year and it's a good time to look back and evaluate. And also, like we just heard, a good time to look back and thank the Lord for all that He has done for us. Personally, I have disciplined myself not to rejoice in earthly things like this building.

A lot of people come here and upstairs and say, wow, what a fantastic building you guys have got. I say, Lord, that will not move me even a little bit. It doesn't mean a thing.

Somebody said that to me and I said, to me the most wonderful thing is not this building. To me the wonderful thing is how this was built without our asking anybody for money, without taking an offering, without sending a prayer letter, and how God provided by the sacrificial giving of people and how everything went smoothly. That to me, what God did is that, not the building itself.

And I say, a building can be a shell inside which there are people whose fellowship is not deep. There are people who live in rich homes where the husband and wife don't have fellowship with each other. And they are fighting and quarreling.

Much rather go to a hut where they fellowship with one another. So, when we look back over the year, I'm not particularly thinking about the building. I'm thinking of how God provided our needs as a testimony to others.

For 41 years, we have consistently never taken one offering even once in all these 41 years, all the Sundays. And not only here, in all our 75 churches, never taken offering. All our 120 elders in all these churches never take a gift, never take money for their services.

This is the testimony of God that we have tried to follow the apostles and the teaching of Jesus and Paul and seek to be different from, we don't say better, better is for God to decide, but different from the way other Christians do God's work. We say we try to follow the way Jesus walked and we try to serve God the way Paul did and how he planted churches and not just preach servants. So, we are very thankful for that.

We are also thankful for the very happy marriages that have taken place in this church. Not perfect, no marriage is perfect, but where husbands and wives live together, willing to ask forgiveness from one another and move forward to little better, better, better. And I'm thankful that almost all our children who are growing up born in this church, most of them anyway, are born again and then they come to the right age and taken baptism.

These are the things we rejoice in and many other things that the Lord has done for us. I'm not saying the physical things are unimportant, but when Jesus taught us to pray, you know the Lord's prayer. Do you all know it by heart? Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

It's good to know that prayer by heart. I used to repeat it as a child. Every morning when I got up, I used to pray that from my childhood.

Let's look at it in Matthew chapter 6. Matthew 6, Jesus said, pray then in this way, verse 9. He didn't say we must repeat this, but he said pray then in this way. And the fact that we are not supposed to repeat it is in verse 7. When you pray, don't use meaningless repetition. So I found, I'll tell you honestly, whenever I got up, when I was a little boy, I grew up in my home.

My parents taught me to kneel down on my bed and pray before I got out of bed. And it became a habit with me. From the time I was maybe 9, 10, whenever I remember, I would not get out of bed without first kneeling down and praying this prayer.

That's all I knew. Our Father who art in heaven. I went through the whole thing, then I got out of bed.

Sometimes I'd read the Bible. But I never knew at that time what a deep prayer this is. And as I grew up and I was born again and I began to meditate on it, I realized the Lord was saying all your prayers must be in this way.

That's what it says in verse 9. That means this is the pattern with which you must always pray. Our Father who art in heaven. That means you must begin by believing that you have a loving Father.

If you don't believe that, it's no use praying. If you don't believe that the one you're talking to loves you more than any earthly father. Jesus said, if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your heavenly Father will give good gifts to those who ask Him.

That means that the best father on earth is evil. Because that's what he said, you being evil. He didn't say some of you.

All of you fathers are evil compared to God. Not that all fathers are evil by themselves. There are many fathers in the world who are excellent, sacrificial fathers.

But compared to God, the best is evil. That's like saying when the sun rises, you can't see the stars. The stars have some light.

You can't see them. God's love is so great compared to the love of the best earthly father that the love of the father disappears like the star when the sun rises. That's the way to look at it.

So that teaches me something that I have somebody in heaven who loves me so much, more than anybody on earth loved me. I remember my dad was a very, very loving father. He did so much for me.

He provided for me. Even after his death, he provided for me and took care of me in so many ways. He would sacrifice anything for me, but even he is nothing compared to my heavenly father.

This has brought great security in my life. That is how we must begin our prayer. You are not praying to a stranger.

You are not praying to some government executive who is reluctant to hear you. You must be absolutely convinced that the one you are praying to is your father. If you don't begin there, my advice is don't pray.

You are wasting your time. Because you are just going to repeat something meaninglessly. You must know God is my father.

He loves me more than any earthly father. Think of the person on earth who loved you the most. God loves you more than that.

And the second thing is this father is in heaven, which is the second truth we must believe when we pray. There are only two truths you need as a foundation when you pray. One is you are praying to a loving father, and second, one who is in heaven who runs this universe.

All loving and all powerful. If you don't believe these two things, what Jesus meant is don't pray. You will be just repeating words.

If we can begin all our prayers like this, I am praying to someone who loves me intensely. And I am praying to one who is in heaven who can do anything he wants. Nobody can question him.

Anything. Anything means anything. But he doesn't do it because some of that may not be for my good.

Because he is a father. You know good fathers don't give everything their children ask. I have often said that you can pray for anything you want, provided your last sentence is, But father, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

If that can be your last sentence, you can ask for anything. So this is where we must begin, and I want to repeat that because many of us when we pray, I found, maybe we started off well, but as time goes on there are some things we didn't get, and gradually we begin to pray without any belief that God will do anything. I heard of some type of religious group, I don't remember which religious group it was, that worshipped an idol, and they would go to the place where this idol was, and the idol would be some distance away, where these devotees could only come to a wall, a little small wall, and the idol would be some ten feet away or something, and they were told to write their prayer in a piece of paper and roll it up in a piece of mud, you know, a wet mud, put the prayer inside that, and fling it at the idol.

If it sticks, your prayer is answered. If it doesn't stick, sorry. And we laugh at that, but you know, many Christians pray exactly like that.

They fling something up. By the way, was your prayer heard? I don't know, maybe. What's the difference between you and those fellows who pray like that? Absolutely no difference.

We are not supposed to pray like that. Was my prayer heard? Of course. The only prayer God will not hear is if there is sin in your heart, which is not confessed.

Psalm 66, verse 18. Then he does not even hear your prayer. It says if you've got sin in your heart, Psalm 66, verse 18 says, the Lord will not hear you.

But if your heart is clear, I believe every single prayer of mine is heard. But when it comes to answer, the answer may be like the traffic lights. Red, yellow, green.

Red means God says no. Yellow or orange, whichever way you look at it. God says wait.

Green means yes. So nobody can say a prayer is not answered. Not granted yes, but you can't say it was not answered.

Traffic lights are always working. The thing is when God puts a red light, you think he didn't hear your prayer. He heard your prayer and the answer was no.

I mean if my little son came and asked me something, and I said no son, you can't have it. He can't go to mummy and say daddy didn't listen to my prayer. Of course he listened to it.

And the answer was no. We misunderstand. Don't ever say God didn't hear your prayer.

He heard it. But his answer was no. So, we have a Father who is in heaven, who is wise, almighty, loving, who hears every single prayer if our conscience is clear.

That's all. You can be a newly born believer, believer of many years. You come in the name of Jesus, in the merit of Jesus Christ, saying I've got no merit of my own.

You come in prayer and he hears every single time. He will hear. But I must be humble enough to say Lord, I'm willing to accept a red light, an orange light or a green light.

Whichever you decide. So our Father who art in heaven, and then follows these requests, of which the first three concern God, thy name, thy kingdom, thy will. Then concerning us, that is our bread, our sins, and our victory over sin.

It's also in that prayer. So, we see six requests really. Three concerning God, and three concerning ourselves.

And the interesting thing we see here is that Jesus said pray in this way, means you begin with God, not with you. In other words, when I come to pray, I must first think of God's glory, God's will, God's kingdom. If I begin to think like that, I'm not saying that every time I must pray, I must pray like this, but I can begin a prayer by saying, Lord, my child is sick, will you please heal me? I'm not going through a ritual of saying, okay, Father, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, and thy name be hallowed.

Okay, I got through that. Now Lord, please heal my son. No, God is not interested in a ritual.

It's a way of life, where I say, Lord, your will is more important to me than my will. What people think of your name is much more important than what they think about my name. Unimportant.

And your kingdom is more important than anything of mine. If that is my way of life, then I'm always thinking that God's name must be glorified in my life, I must seek God's kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and I must seek with all my heart to do his will. If that's my way of life, then I am praying that prayer by my life, those first three things, and I can pray for anything.

So if you understand that, the Lord is not saying that I have to go through a formula, but a way of life. So what Jesus was teaching here is, the prayer of the average person who is a child of Adam, who is religious, is always man-centered, whereas this prayer is God-centered. If you want to read more about it, there's a book of mine called God-Centered Praying, you can read it.

The main thing you see here is, your life must be centered in God, God's glory, God's kingdom, God's name, and if that is the passion of my life, many earthly things, I can pray and ask, and he'll do amazing things, not always the way I want it, but always for his glory in a wonderful way, he'll fulfill his purpose throughout life. So that is how we come to God in faith. So, for example, do you have a burden that the name of Jesus, hallowed be your name, do you have a burden that the name of Jesus should be honored in India? I've had that burden for at least 40 years.

Lord, your name is so dishonored in this country, by Christians. If you heard me preach, that is my constant burden, that people who call themselves Christians, people who call themselves spirit-filled Christians, they don't behave like Christ. That's my concern.

You see, the Hindus and Muslims cannot dishonor the name of Christ. Your wife could not dishonor your name until she got married to you. When she got married to you, she got your name.

Then she can dishonor your name. Before that, how could she dishonor your name? Impossible. So the people who don't claim to be married to Christ, how can they dishonor his name? No Hindu or Muslim can ever dishonor Christ's name.

It is those who take the name of Christ and say, I'm a Christian. They are the ones who dishonor God's name, and that should be a burden to us. Something like, and the people are scandalizing her, saying all types of false stories about her, that she's living in sin, or living in adultery, and it's not true.

It's spreading stories about her. How would you feel? Her name being spoiled, your own child's name being spoiled, and then ask yourself, am I as concerned that the name of Jesus is being spoiled in this land by Christians? That's been my burden in my preaching, and all my preaching has come out of one thing, that the name of Jesus is so dishonored by Christians in this land. That's why most of my preaching is to Christians.

It comes out of, Hallowed be thy name, and Lord, I want your kingdom to come, and I will it to be done. That kingdom of Jesus, so many things happening around in the world today, make me pray, come soon Lord Jesus. The world is getting evil, and so many poor people getting exploited and suffering.

Come soon Lord Jesus. I mean, even right now in our country, I hear that so many poor people, because they're not able to get work, daily work, they don't have money, because the currency notes are not available. I really feel sorry, maybe it's not affecting us, but it's affecting a lot of poor people in this country who live on daily wages.

And I say, Lord have mercy on us. Please come soon and solve this problem of this wretched world. So many things I read in the newspapers, and I read the newspapers saying, come soon, thy kingdom come.

That's a prayer of my heart, it should be the prayer of your heart too. Lord your name is dishonored, we want your name to be honored in the church, kingdom come, and thy will be done. Lord I want to live a life where your will is being done in my life every day.

Every single day there are three important things. The first three concern God's name, kingdom, and will. The next three concerning us.

And when we think of our needs, we may say first of all, let's be spiritual, and let's ask for forgiveness of sins. I like Jesus. He says let's start with food.

It's a very unspiritual thing to start with food and material things first. But God cares for our material needs, that's what he teaches me. You won't be able to pray for the forgiveness of sins if you're not alive.

So God wants us to pray that we'll be healthy. I'm not afraid to pray for healing. I'm not afraid, give us this day our daily bread means Lord help me to get a job so that I can earn my daily bread.

He doesn't want me to be a beggar. Give me a house to live in Lord so that my children and my family can get daily bread in some place to eat. There's so much in that one prayer.

Give us this day our daily bread and Lord help me to get my children educated well so that they don't become beggars so that they can get their daily bread. You know how much is involved in that little prayer? Give us this our daily bread. We are asking for food, clothing, shelter, education of our children, all in that one little prayer.

And that applies to all the material things we can pray for. Health, Lord I want health so that I can earn my daily bread. Give us this day our daily bread is a very inclusive prayer that includes every material necessity of ours and of our children and for our church.

And I think it was right for us to pray that we'd have a hall, first of all, be able to buy a ground here because we need someplace for people to meet. We can't meet out in the sun and the other place we were meeting was so crowded the old people had to climb two floors to get up to the top. So it is right to pray for a material thing like this or when we saw the way the place upstairs and downstairs was packed during the conference and we're thankful that God gave us a place where we don't have to spend millions of rupees paying other people to get their name, their kingdom come and your will be done.

If we pray like that we can pray for material things. Not only for the church, for your family. Don't ever be ashamed to ask God for material things.

All of that is included in give us this day our daily bread. All the needs we have as a church, earthly needs. And then we ask for forgiveness of sins.

That we have forgiven others. Only one condition. Forgive us in exactly the same way.

I want to paraphrase it. Lord, my father, you have seen my attitude. Some people have done harm to me.

You've seen how I've treated some people who are very bad to me. Please treat me like that. Is that what you want? Be honest.

You really want people to treat you, God to treat you, the way you have treated somebody who behaved badly to you? That's his prayer. Let me repeat it. Lord, you know those people who have cheated me and treated me very badly and spoiled my name and my children's names.

And Lord, you know how I reacted to them. Please treat me like that. That is the way Jesus taught us to pray for the forgiveness of our sins.

Take it seriously. Most of the churches, they just tell you, pray, forgive. No, he said, forgive me exactly like I have forgiven others.

Am I saying anything more than what Jesus said? I have taken it seriously. And that's why it has changed my life. Changed my life years ago because I took these words very seriously.

Take it seriously, at least from now. Many of your prayers will be answered, which are not answered till now. And then, Lord, forgiveness alone is not enough.

Allow me to face temptation which is too strong for me. He has promised that he will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability. But it's good for us to pray also, to recognize, Lord, what I'm saying there is, Lord, I am very weak, Lord.

I'm not a strong person. Strong person will say, Lord, lead me into any temptation. I can handle it.

No, no, no. I'm saying in that prayer, Lord, I'm not like others. Please, Lord, don't lead me there into some temptation where I'll fall.

I don't want to fall and dishonor your name. So don't lead me into any temptation that is strong for me. And always deliver me from anything that is evil, anything that dishonors you.

Please deliver me immediately. If something is too strong for me, don't let me go there. Don't let me hang around the computer if I'm being tempted to watch pornography.

Let me run away from that. Lord, please don't allow me. When I'm in a tight spot and I may sin, get me out of there.

Please get me out of there before I sin. Deliver me from evil. There I'm saying, Lord, I cannot deliver myself from sin.

You know what a fantastic prayer this is? I cannot deliver myself from sin. So I'm humbly asking you to deliver me. And when you do all these things for me, I will give you all the glory.

That's the last sentence. Power and the glory. I will not touch that glory myself.

I will not take credit that I got victory over sin. I will not take credit that God met my financial needs or God took care of me or God healed me. I will testify to it.

I will not take credit for it. I will say, Lord, Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. I'll tell you something.

You have to be a very, and in that spirit, I hope you'll remember what you heard today all your life. And in that spirit, we want to pray for a number of things now.

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