

The Right way to Pray (Video)

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and seeking God's will above our own desires. It highlights the need to trust in God's answers, whether they are 'yes,' 'no,' or 'wait,' and to prioritize glorifying God's name, seeking His kingdom, and doing His will. The sermon also stresses the significance of forgiving others and seeking victory over sin in our lives.

Scripture: Matthew 6:9, Matthew 6:10, Matthew 6:11, Matthew 6:12, Matthew 6:13, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 14:17, Romans 12:18

Topics: "Prayer", "Trusting God's Will"

Description

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Transcript

You'll have to admit that many of your prayers are never answered. My attitude is this, that even if one prayer of mine is not answered, I go to God and I ask, why? I'm not saying that God should grant all my requests. But he must answer all of them.

That answer may sometimes be, no. Or it may be, wait. But he will always answer.

See, God's answers are like the traffic lights. Traffic lights. Sometimes it is red, no, I will not grant that request.

Sometimes it is orange or yellow, I'm saying, wait, I can't give it now. And if it's green, God says, I'll give it to you right now. But we must get an answer, either no or wait or yes.

There must never be a prayer for which there is no answer. If there is no answer, it means there is sin in my heart. If my heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.

And if he keeps his commandments, whatever we ask, we receive from him. Turn with me to Matthew chapter 6 and verse 9. Matthew 6 and verse 9. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he taught them to pray like this. We don't need to repeat these words, but we are called to pray like this.

Because when we pray in our life, we are called to say this prayer. As we saw on Monday, we learned to call our Father in heaven. And if you were not here, you can listen to that message later on.

We must know him as our father who loves us. Who loves us more than any earthly father loves his child. You who are parents must believe that million times more than you love your child, your father loves you.

Much more. And secondly, he is in heaven, means he can solve every problem and do anything. Whenever we pray, we must keep these two things in mind when we pray.

I am praying to my father who loves me more than anybody else in the world. And I am praying to one who is in heaven, who rules this world and can do everything. So, I have faith in his love and his power.

If I don't have that faith, it's no use going to the next sentence in prayer. That is why Jesus said, begin your prayer remembering it's your father and that he is in heaven. And because our life, even after we become Christians, is so centered in ourselves, when we pray, our requests are all about ourselves.

And that is why many of our prayers are not answered. One of the things Jesus wanted to do is take away our life centered in ourselves and make God the center of our life. We have a throne in our heart.

And from childhood, it's our self that has been sitting on that throne. That's why children are always fighting for something for themselves. Now, when we are born again, God wants to remove self from that throne and put Christ there.

But very often, even in Christians, Christ is not on the throne. We are so many things, we are seeking only our own. And that is why we have so many problems.

If you seek the things of God first, he will take care of your things. So, in this prayer, there are six requests. Let's look at it carefully.

And the first three requests have got nothing to do with us. The first three requests are not about us. They are about God, his kingdom and his will.

And then comes our need. So, what is the Lord trying to teach us? We must learn this lesson permanently. That whenever you pray, my first concern must be the glory of God.

And if I put that first, my requests can come later and they will be answered. God created man to glorify him. And when we put God on top of our life, then we are standing with our head on top and our feet below.

But when you put yourself first in your prayer, you are like a man standing on his head with his legs on top. And most Christians are like that. They are upside down and they are praying.

Self is first. The things of God are secondary or not there at all. And that's why we have so many problems and so many unanswered prayers.

Here is a wonderful promise that the Lord gave. Jesus said in Matthew 6 verse 31, Jesus said in Matthew 6 verse 39, This verse is about three things. What we eat, what we drink and what we give.

For our children also. What they eat, what they drink and what they give. It is so that they can grow up and get a job and get something to eat and drink and clothe themselves.

So it's all centered around these earthly needs. And Jesus did not say that's wrong. But he said, that is what all the people in the world, verse 32, all the Gentiles are eagerly seeking for all these things.

Then what is the difference between you and all the Gentiles? There must be a difference between the way we pray and non-Christians pray. There must be a difference between the way we pray and the way non-Christians pray. When all non-Christians go to their churches and temples, they go on long pilgrimages and put money in the handy to get something for themselves.

Some healing, some job, some marriage for their children, that is all their mind is occupied with. Every non-Christian in the world, nobody is interested in the glory of God among them. But then God has put a group of people on earth called Christians.

They must be different from them like light is different from darkness. That this group of people are not praying for their own needs all the time. Their mind is not always occupied with more money or getting a visa or things like that.

But we may say then how do we take care of ourselves? I need a visa, I need food, I need money to live. And the Lord says this is the way to get it. Then God says, when you do these things, you will be saved.

Verse 33 The verse says, first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things will be given to you. Then I did not seek to teach them. I did not seek these worldly things.

I seek the kingdom of God. Now when I seek the kingdom of God, all worldly things are given to me as a bonus. We all know that in the places where we work, how we are given a bonus for our salary.

Nobody joins a company to get bonus. They join a company to get a salary. Bonus is extra.

Salary is what I look for. And the Lord says in the same way, you seek God's kingdom first. Jesus Christ says in the same way, seek God's kingdom first.

Seek His righteousness. That is your monthly salary. You seek that.

All the worldly blessings that you need will be given to you as a bonus. When I was 24 years old, I believed in these things. I was working in the navy at that time.

God called me to leave my job for ministry. The goal of my life was to come to a higher position in the navy. But God said, leave it.

You seek my kingdom first. And the Lord told me to take all my life savings which I earned in the navy and give it away to God's work. I gave it all away and I had zero in my bank account.

I am telling you the truth. In 1966, I left my job. And now it's been 52 years.

I have sought God's kingdom first. My wife and I sometimes had to go through a lot of poverty and struggle. But we never had to starve.

My four children never had to starve. I never asked anybody for money. Because I have a rich heavenly father, why should I ask human beings? I never sent a report of my work in 52 years to anybody.

And wherever I went to preach, I would never tell my earthly needs. I mean, today God has blessed me immensely. All my children are employed and they are well off.

But I am not saying that is a big thing for me. My children are following Jesus and planting churches. That is what excites me.

That's what I wanted them to do. What do you desire for your children? I will tell you, when they were born itself, I said, Lord, I want them to live for you. What you have taught me, I want to teach them.

And like I serve you, they must serve you. They don't have to be in full-time work like me. That depends if God doesn't call them, they should not go into full-time work.

See, just like you cannot join the army if they don't recruit you. So in the same way, you can't go to serve God if he doesn't call you. It is not a better thing to do full-time service than to do a secular job.

Don't think it is more spiritual to work for the Lord in Rajasthan than to earn money in Dubai. It is not better to serve the Lord in Rajasthan than to earn money in Dubai. Both are equally good.

The question is, what is the will of God for you? And if God wants you here, you must be here. And if God wants you in Rajasthan, you must go there. You know, I know many people in India who are doing full-time Christian work who are not in the will of God.

And that is why God is not blessing their work. So I want to say to you, follow this principle. Determine that you will seek the kingdom of God first.

That you will not be sitting on the throne in your heart. You will not think of yourself and your family first. You will think of God and the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.

I told you there are six requests here in this prayer. The first three requests are concerning God. And the next three requests are concerning us.

And Jesus says, whenever you pray, this is how you must pray. When you come to God in prayer, first of all you are thinking of God's need, not your need. And if you do that, your need will be met.

I can tell you that after 52 years of experience. I have never been in debt to any man in my life. I have never borrowed one rupee from anybody in my life.

I have never expected a single gift from anybody in the world. Because I have a rich heavenly father. No, if I didn't have such a father, then I have to go around begging from people.

No, my question is this. Is my father your father also? Then he is the ruler of this universe. We don't get much from him because we don't trust him.

We don't get much from him because we don't trust him. See this verse. Mark chapter 6. Verse 5. And 6. He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

The same thing is repeated in Matthew 13. Verse 58. He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief.

Please keep that verse before you all the time. I keep that verse before me when I pray. Jesus did not do any miracle for them because when they prayed, they didn't believe.

Keep that verse before you whenever you pray. If you want, keep it on a piece of paper and write it and keep it in the place where you pray. Jesus did not do any miracle for them because they did not believe.

You must keep that in front of you when you pray. To teach you, you can pray for one hour and get nothing. Because you don't believe.

You don't believe he is a loving father. You think he is a miserly person who is very hesitant to give you anything. You believe like that, then you will get nothing.

But believe that he is my loving father. And he is in heaven and he can do everything. Then there is no unbelief.

Then he can do miracles for me. You know, here is a non-Christian. Example of a non-Christian in Matthew 8. He was not even a Jew.

He was not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had never read the Bible. Never gone to a temple.

He did not know about Moses. But he came and prayed to Jesus. This is a non-Christian.

Coming to Jesus and praying. And he got an answer. Why? How can a non-Christian get an answer from Jesus Christ? Shall I tell you? Because he had faith.

See Matthew 8. Verse 5. When Jesus came to Capernaum, a centurion came and pleaded with him. Now the Roman centurion is a soldier who has killed many people in battle. And he is a Roman.

He does not probably worship the idols and so many things. But he heard about Jesus. And somehow he had some faith.

This Jesus can answer my prayer. And he wanted his servant to be healed. So he comes to Jesus and asks, Can you please come and heal my servant? And Jesus says, Seven, I will come and heal him.

And look at his humility. You know, wherever there is humility, there is faith. Very often faith is not there because there is so much of pride in us.

I have discovered this very often. Pride and unbelief go together. And humility and faith go together.

Jesus said, I will come to your house. Imagine if you are living in Nazareth. And if one day you heard a knock at the door and Jesus came there.

You know, you were living in Nazareth 2000 years ago. And Jesus says, Can I come into your house? He says, Sure Lord, come in. But you know what this man said? Lord, I am not worthy.

You should come to my house. See the difference between him and us. We think we are worthy for Jesus to come to our house.

He said, No, I am not worthy. I am not at all worthy that you should come to my house. There is so much of sin in me.

How can I have a holy person like you come to my house? But Lord, you don't have to come. There, two miles away, is my servant lying paralyzed. You stand here and say the word and I know my servant will be healed two miles away.

You just have to say one word from here. And how do I know that? He says, Because I am a centurion. If I tell one soldier go, he goes.

So you tell the sickness to go, it will go. You know when Jesus heard that, It's a lovely verse in Matthew 8 verse 10. He looked at all the Jews who were standing around him including his disciples.

He said, You read the bible all of you. This fellow has not read the bible. You know about Moses and the ten commandments.

He doesn't know any of that. But he has got more faith than all of you. Verse 10, in the whole of Israel, I have never found anybody with such faith.

And God said to him, verse 13, Go, it will be done for you exactly like you believed. That's very very important when we come to God in prayer. We must begin with faith.

So remember this verse, He could not do many miracles because of their unbelief. Did Jesus want to do miracles for them? Yes. Did they need a miracle? Yes.

Did they get a miracle? No. They needed a miracle. Jesus was wanting to do it.

But they didn't get it. Because of unbelief. Now you look at your life.

Do you need some miracle in some area? Is Jesus willing to do that miracle? Yes. But do you get it? No. Same reason.

God is a rewarder of those who believe. See Hebrews 11. And verse 6. It's a very important word.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. But you say, I'm doing everything correct. I'm not cheating anyone.

I'm not doing anything wrong in my life. I'm keeping my mind pure. I'm going regularly to the meetings.

I'm giving money for God's work. I'm bringing up my children properly at home. But faith is missing.

You get zero. Because without faith, all these things are worthless. It is impossible to please God.

You know the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It was not just disobedience to God. That disobedience came from unbelief.

You see, the devil told them. See this beautiful tree. Why God has not allowed you to eat it? Look at it.

No, the devil said. See how attractive it is. Why has God told you not to eat from it? And he put a thought into Eve's heart.

God doesn't really love you. That's why he doesn't give you this. Even today the devil, when you don't get something from God, the devil says, see God doesn't love you.

That's why he didn't give it to you. What should Eve have said to the devil? Yes, I know this is very attractive. I would like to eat it.

But God has told me not to eat it. I don't know why God has told me not to eat it. But I believe in God.

There must be a very good reason. If she had said that, there would have been no sin. But she lost faith in God.

When the devil says something to you like that, why hasn't God given you this? Why he didn't give you that admission for your child over there? And you say, I don't know. But I still believe God loves me. Why hasn't God healed you so far? I don't know.

But I know He still loves me. You know one of Paul's most best co-workers was Timothy. And Timothy had such a severe sickness in his stomach that he was sick all his life.

You read in 1 Timothy 5 verse 23 Some of you whom the devil says, because God doesn't love you, that's why you are sick. Timothy was more wholehearted than you and me. But it says in verse 23, his stomach was always, there was sickness in his stomach.

Do you think Paul prayed for him? He must have prayed for him numerous times. Paul laid his hands on Timothy 10, 15, 20 times and Timothy was not healed. And Paul says, now better take some medicine.

My prayer did not heal you. And he would have told Timothy, I also have a thorn in my flesh. And I prayed, God did not heal me.

But God allowed me to keep it, to keep me humble. And maybe Timothy, God has allowed it to keep you humble. But don't doubt that God loves you.

Even if you are sick from head to toe, God still loves me. Even if none of my prayers are answered, God still loves me. That is the man who will get answers from God.

Let's turn to Matthew 6. What are the first three requests? Lord, let your name be hallowed. You know, that should be the number one desire in your heart. I remember as my children were growing up and we had many needs in our home.

But I always would say, Lord, that's not number one. I want your name to be glorified in India. That is my number one desire.

I want you to use me to glorify your name in India. That's my number one request. And this is my request even now.

Lord, I want your name to be glorified. That is my number one request. All my other needs, even if you don't grant them, grant this, that your name will be glorified.

Have you read this prayer? Jesus said, pray like this. I have traveled all over India in the last 50 years. I have seen the tremendous dishonor that has come to the name of Jesus Christ by the way Christians behave.

How bastards cheat people and take money from people. Threaten them that God will punish you if you don't pay your tithe. And they take their money and buy property for themselves.

Write all types of false reports to America. And the devil says to God in the heavenlies, Look at these children. These are your children.

See the lies they are saying. See how much they love money. And the name of the Lord is dishonored.

Dishonored in the heavenlies. And the non-Christians in India watch all this and the name of the Lord is dishonored among them also. It's very sad.

When you go to witness to some non-Christians I have witnessed. I have gone house to house witnessing in India. And some of them say, I don't want to be a Christian.

I don't need any money. Why should I be a Christian? I don't need American money. I have got plenty already.

They think Christians means is to get American money. What a dishonor to the name of Christ. We should be weeping before God because of this.

I want to ask you. Supposing somebody scandalized the name of your daughter all over town. Everybody is talking bad about your daughter that she is immoral.

Even though your daughter is a pure girl. Will you be concerned? Of course you will be concerned. Are you concerned that the name of Jesus is being dishonored all over India? Do you feel burdened? I have said this to the Lord many times.

I have said this kind of prayer. Supposing they say that I am a false preacher But still I have said that the name of God should be glorified. My prayer is not hallowed be my name.

My prayer is hallowed be thy name. Don't seek your name. Die to your name.

Say Lord let your name be hallowed. That must be my number one request when I kneel down to pray. If my backache is not healed If my children's need is not met That's okay.

Let your name be hallowed. Number two Lord your kingdom must come on this earth. I want Jesus Christ to be the ruler all over this world.

What is the kingdom of God? Let me show you in Romans 14. Verse 17 The kingdom of God is righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Verse 17 Never forget this verse.

In my younger days when I read Seek the kingdom of God first I thought that meant I must go as a missionary to North India. Till I read this verse Then I saw kingdom of God is not missionary work. Kingdom of God is righteousness in my life.

Peace in my heart and always being at peace with my neighbors and with everybody else. Having peace even towards my enemies who hate me and joy and joy also. No complaining no grumbling no murmuring Righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

That is the kingdom of God I must seek first. So today you understood what the kingdom of God is. It is not doing missionary work.

It is seeking to be totally righteous in your life. Always being at peace in your heart and at peace with everybody around you. If they don't want to be at peace with you that's not your business.

See Romans chapter 12 It says here in verse 18 Romans 12 verse 18 As much as it depends on you be at peace with all men. I can't be at peace with everybody because the world is full of people who want to fight with me. But from my side I want to be at peace.

I say you come to fight with me brother I am not going to fight with you. So it says as much as lies in you be at peace with people. And the third thing is joy.

Righteousness, peace and joy. But my joy is not dependent on anybody else. That is only dependent on living in the presence of God.

I have a rule in my life. Psalm 16 and verse 11 It says in the middle of this verse In your presence there is fullness of joy. What is there in God's presence? Fullness of joy.

So whenever I don't have fullness of joy in my heart I say to myself you are not in the presence of God now. Yeah I say that to myself. Anytime I don't have fullness of joy I say to myself you are not in God's presence.

Because in God's presence there is fullness of joy. And when I realize that I repent. And I say Lord I want to be in your presence.

And like that I have sought God's kingdom. Righteousness in every area Peace with all people as much as I can be at peace. And joy all the time.

Lord your kingdom come. That's the number 2 request. Number 3 request in Matthew 6 verse 10.

Again I still haven't come to my needs. My needs are all further down the line. I'm still thinking of God's needs.

Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. And your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

How is God's will done in heaven? When God says to Gabriel like this Go to Nazareth Go and give this message to that little girl Mary. Does Gabriel say just wait Lord I got something busy right now. I'll do it a little later.

Never. Even if he's doing something he drops everything and goes. Lord help me to do your will in my life like those angels do it in heaven.

And they don't go grumbling and complaining oh God has told me to do this. No grumbling complaining. They do it immediately.

They do it joyfully. And they do it completely. They don't do half a job and come back.

How is God's will done in heaven? Immediately joyfully completely. Lord help me to do your will like that. Everything written in your word.

For me. Let me do it immediately. Completely.

Joyfully. As it is done in heaven. These are my first three requests in prayer.

After that I can come to my needs. My three needs. Number one Lord give me my food.

That is not an unspiritual prayer to pray. It is a good prayer to pray. Give me food.

Which means give me a job because that's the way I can earn my living to get food. In that request is hidden the request give me a job. Because if I don't have a job how will I earn money to get food.

And also hidden in this request is give me money to educate my children so when they grow up they can also get a job to get food. So hidden in this request is give me health Lord so that I can go and earn my living. So in this simple request give us this day our daily bread.

Is the request Lord give me a job. Give me a house to live in. And give me money to educate my children.

So that they will also one day be able to get their food. There are so many things in this one earthly request. Is it right to ask God to give us a job.

Yes. Is it right to ask him to give us a house to live in. Yes.

Is it right to ask God to give us a better job because the cost of living is going up. Where I can get a better salary. Absolutely right.

There is nothing wrong in that. Give us this day our daily bread. And if the cost of food is going up Lord give me a better salary.

There is nothing wrong in asking for these things. Provided you first pray for God's name God's kingdom and God's will. The problem is if we put this as number one.

So my brothers and sisters. There is nothing wrong in praying for healing. Nothing wrong in praying for a better job.

Nothing wrong in praying for a more convenient house to live in. Our earthly needs God is interested in. He said look at the sparrows.

God cares for them. How they make their nests and God enables them to build nests for their little ones. He who cares for them will care for you and me.

He just said don't be anxious. Your father cares for the sparrows. And the next request about ourselves.

Forgive us our sins. But it doesn't stop there. Lord forgive me exactly like I have forgiven the other people.

God says how should I forgive you? Exactly like I have forgiven that man who hurt me. Then you must think how have you forgiven the people who hurt you? You have not forgiven him? Then you are praying Lord don't forgive me. Do you know some people are praying that? Lord don't forgive me.

Because they are praying Lord forgive me exactly like I have forgiven that man. Lord do you forgive that person and always have a grudge against him and hope some calamity will come to him? Then you are saying Lord forgive me like that. Like I wish some calamity will come upon him, let some calamity come upon me.

Do you wish some evil to come upon those people who hurt you? Then you have not forgiven them. Are you happy when some bad thing happens to that person who hurt you? Or some bad thing happens and you are happy? Then you haven't forgiven. That is why many of you who think God has forgiven you, he has not forgiven you.

Because he forgives you exactly like you forgive others. If you want God to forgive you fully and freely, forgive other people fully and freely. And wish no evil for them.

And no evil will come to you also. The last request. Lord don't lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil.

That means Lord please give me victory over sin in my life. More than other things give me victory over sin. Why do I want my daily food? So that I can forgive others and so that I can overcome sin.

And when you do all these things for me, the last statement there, I will give you all the glory. I will not take any glory for myself. God is a good God.

He wants to do amazing things for you and me. If you will pray the way God taught us to pray. I hope you will never forget in all your life what you heard today.

It will change your life. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we know you love us greatly.

There are many wonderful things you want to do for us you have not been able to do for us yet. Now Lord, help us to trust you and help us to follow your way in prayer. We bow before you.

Let there be a revival in many hearts here this morning. We humbly ask in Jesus' name Amen. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forevermore.

Amen.

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