

OK, Well, good morning. Again, this is a bit of a special Sunday. This morning we're going to do something that I personally love to do as a church family that we haven't done together, at least in this setting, for well over a year.

Today we're going to talk about prayer.

That's not new. We do that all the time, but we are going to. At the end, well,

I shouldn't say at the end, really at the second-half of the service, we're going to take some time to pray together as a church family, just in real small groups with people that you're sitting around.

I've got some slides to direct us as Ella read the Lord's Prayer. We're going to be working our way through the Lord's

Prayer. But first, I do have. Some stuff

I want to go through as we continue to talk about prayer this week. Now I will give you a preview of what is to come.

Starting next week, we'll move on from

the topic of prayer, at least in the

teaching series and we're going to move

into a series that I've been thinking about for a long time and I'm pretty excited to teach. We are going to start to look at some of the. Lives of lesser known figures in Scripture. So you know how many of you have heard you have to raise your hands. But you've heard sermon series on David, of course, you've probably heard on Sampson, certainly on you've gone through the New Testament epistles, and yet especially when you go through the Old Testament. Especially the book of Judges. That is a weird, crazy book. There are so many interesting and insightful stories that we can learn from. It's like God coming and he's just plucking certain individuals out of the fray and saying I'm going to work through you and many times that person. Those kicking and screaming, but as much as they're like alright, let your will be done, then God does some pretty incredible things. But for those of you who are very familiar with your Bibles,

you know that just because somebody is in the Bible, in no way does that mean they lived as this incredible God centered righteous life. Many times we see God taking people in. Like every single one of them except for Jesus Christ, all of them are flawed, all of them are messed up, and some of them are really flawed and really messed up. And yet God chooses to continue to work through that person.

So I'm going back and forth. I've, I've always wanted to teach on Saul. You always hear about David, but you never hear about Saul. And so we might start with him. I got one other one that I'm kicking around, something my daughters brought up to me. Like dad, no one ever teaches about the great women in Scripture. And there are some incredible, I'm hearing some response there, Deborah, there's some violent women in Scripture.

JL Lurie to sleep and then put a tent peg through your skull. Like these things happen in the world of women in the

Bible. There's a lot of good stuff out there. So I'm still thinking about exactly where I want to kick it off. What we're not going to do is this. We won't go like for some of the shorter ones, we might. But like if we go through saw, we're not gonna do verse by verse because we'll be here all the way through the summer. She mouths, thank you at me. That'll take forever. No, what we'll do is we're going to kind of take a bird's eye view. We're going to zoom in. I'm going to tell the story of Scripture. Coming up to that point, we're going to look at the highlights, really the highlights of the highlights because what's in there is already the highlights. We're going to look at the biggest stuff to say. What can we learn from this person? OK, so that is coming up starting next week. We'll get into that and we'll be in there for a few months for sure. I think we're going to have a lot of fun with it. I know I'm

excited to teach it, and that's a good sign. So OK, this morning we're going to talk about the four levels of prayer. The four levels of prayer. Now, I went through this all the way back in like late 2024. So for some of you who have exceptional memories, you might say this sounds a little familiar. And it probably will, and that's a good thing. And we should probably cover the four levels of prayer more than just once every, you know, year and a quarter. So we're going to go through that today. And the four levels of prayer are what they sound like. There are different levels, there are different types of prayer. Now, some of you might hear me say that and be like, I don't know what you're talking about. Right now, prayer is prayer. You get down on your knees, you sit in your chair, whatever posture you assume, and you just pray and you talk to God. And if you're thinking that, I would say, yeah, that does make sense, But just

consider this for a moment. In human conversation, there are different levels and types of conversations. Between 2 human beings. So let me just give some examples. I'll just do the married human beings in the room cause I've been married for 15 years. Everyone who's been married knows there are different types of conversations that you have with your spouse. For example, there is the To Do List conversation if you have that. It usually happens right when I'm walking out the door to come here and Dan's like, ohh, can you, Or sometimes I'll say to her, ohh, can you? And we both know this is gonna be a very brief, to the point conversation. We're just trying to communicate what we need the other person to accomplish that day. It can be a little more in depth, a little more, what's the word I'm looking for? I don't know, You got to read the room a little bit like, you know what I'd really appreciate your help with? That's the To

Do List conversation, man, what they're really asking is can you help me with this thing? It's something that needs to be done. So there's the To Do List conversation. We've all had a million of those. You probably had those with your boss as well or people that you work with. And then there's the ever cumbersome. We have a problem conversation. We have a problem for Danny and I usually begins with this. Danny will say, hey, honey, in a very sweet way, can we talk? And I go, ohh, crap. Like we have a problem. You might start it a different way, but sometimes it's like, hey, would you have a minute? Can we can we sit down and chat with together? And anyone who's been married for a little while knows that there's something that the other person, husband or wife wants to talk about. It's probably something serious. And they're asking you in so many words, make time for this. Now is the we have the we have a problem

conversation the same as the To Do List  
conversation. No, it is not. It is not  
husbands in the room. Go to the husband  
who confuses the we have a problem  
conversation with the To Do List  
conversation. There are two separate  
types of things could be the same thing  
even not in a marriage. Again, think of a  
working environment. If you're talking to  
your peer, there can be a we just got to  
get this done versus like we got an issue  
we have to work out. All right, Those  
ones are a little more. Perfectly. What  
about these ones? There is the ever  
intriguing you're confusing me  
conversation. I have this conversation a  
lot because I live with four women and  
girls are weird. They were very weird and  
I never quite know what's going on. It's  
not a bad conversation. I just have to  
hit pause and admit the truth, which is.  
I don't actually totally understand  
what's going on right now and what you're  
asking or trying to tell me. I'm

confused. This is the you're confusing me  
conversation. We can raise hands for  
this. How many of you, you don't have to  
be married, have had that conversation  
with somebody? Just raise your hands. I  
think we all have like you're going like  
this and eventually it's like just stop.  
What are you trying to tell me? Heidi and  
I had that conversation today. I said  
something, she said something. We both  
looked at each other like what? And then  
we took a minute and we were like, ohh,  
that's what you mean by it. You have the  
you're confusing me conversation now.  
What about this one? This is getting into  
the real depths of the levels of  
communication you can have. Between human  
beings? What about the  
no words necessary conversation?  
Now, when you know somebody really,  
really well, you can communicate a ton  
with no words at all.  
And no words necessary conversation this  
happens a lot and married life at either

the saddest or happiest moments in a couple's lives together so imagine with me for a minute we'll pick a sad example imagine there's a couple you've probably seen this on the news who is standing in front of their home which has. Have just been completely demolished because of a natural disaster and they're looking at their home and they have their arms around each other and they're both crying. They're not saying anything, but nothing has to be said.

It's a no words necessary conversation.

They both understand what it means.

Here's another one. We'll give a good example this time. What about the couple who are sitting together side-by-side at their son's wedding, watching their son dance with his new bride, and they're both holding each other's hands and they're both beaming. Maybe they're crying a little bit. Nothing is being said because nothing needs to be said. The whole

conversation is just them together

in that moment and everything

that that means for them.

Funerals, weddings, there's so many times

with the people you love or even just

friends that you really know. You're

having all types of backward back and

forth dialogue with nothing being spoken.

Alright, so even in just the

human to human sphere, there are

different types of conversations and

different. I could think I could

put it this way accurately. Different

levels of interaction. The interaction

you have with the coffee barista

is different. Than the interaction you

have with the coworker that you know

really well, which is different than the

interaction you have with your husband or

wife, which is different than the

interaction you have with your kids, and

so on and so forth.

So let me ask this question. Let's just

take a step back for a minute. If

there are so many different levels of communication and types of communication between us, would that not be the same truth? Would that not also be true of our communication with God through prayer?

Now, unfortunately, in the evangelical sphere, especially over the last 50 years, it doesn't get talked about enough. But if you go back in church history and you look around, you will find that there have been incredible men and women of God throughout the centuries who have practiced some depth of prayer that we're only just beginning to explore. Let's, let's talk about those.

I'm going to go through four different levels of prayer and what they are, and we'll go through them pretty quickly. And then we're going to spend a little bit of time praying together. Now, the exact wording that I'm going to use for those of you who are in the spiritual formation groups, you're going to recognize this from John Mark Comer. Believe me, and he

would say this too, he is not the person to come up with this. These levels of prayer have had different names, but they have been talked about for as long as the church has existed.

OK, 4 levels of prayer. Here they are

#1 talking with God #2.

Talking to

God #3.

Listening to God. And

then the last one being with

God. 4

levels talking with God,

talking to God, listening

to God, and then

just being with God.

Let's go through them one by one. Let's

start with talking with God. This is very

likely the one that all of us in

the room are most familiar with. It can

happen in all types of different ways. It

can be praising God for certain things He

has done in our lives, showing gratitude,

blessing. Can all showing gratitude,

thanking him for the blessings. It can also be lamenting, meaning you're telling God the things that are going on in your life. It could be mourning different wounds or hurts. It could be asking God for specific things. But in each one of these things you are talking to God. Now let me give you a scriptural example. Go ahead and grab your Bibles. And let's turn to the same passage we were in last week. First Kings 19, because Elijah actually goes through all these different levels of prayer, but we're going to focus on just the talking to God. First Kings.

We are going to be in Chapter 19.

Last week we read starting up at the beginning of chapter 19, and then now we're going to start down in verse nine.

I'm not going to go through the whole back story because we talked about it last week. Elijah has had an incredible victory. He fell into this deep depression because he felt like nothing's

changed at the end of it all. The prophets of Baal are slaughtered, got publicly humiliated, shows Baal to be a false God. Rain comes on the land. And what happens after that disables like, I'm going to kill you. And so he runs for his life. And it's like after all that, that incredible miracle by God, nothing has changed and. Elijah falls into one of the darkest moments of his life. He goes into the desert. He falls into a deep depression, which he says in so many words, kill me or I wish I was dead. And then he goes 40 days in the desert and then he comes to this cave and he has a conversation with God. Let's look at. Chapter 19, Verse 9.

Then he came to a cave and lodged in it, and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and said to him. You gotta love how God communicates. What are you doing here, Elijah? And he said he's talking to God. I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of

hosts, the people of Israel have forsaken  
your covenant and thrown down your altars  
and killed your prophets with the sword.

And I even I only am left, and they  
seek to, and they seek my life to take  
it away. Now, I'm not

going to dissect all of those verses,  
but what's the point for today's topic?

What's Elijah doing? He's just telling  
God exactly how he feels.

And I can't spend too much time on it.

But note his honesty. He doesn't  
mince words. He doesn't come up with,  
you know, grab a Hallmark card to give  
him some cheesy language to move around  
with what he's actually trying to say.

When he finally talks to God. And I'm  
sure during those 40 days in the desert  
that was time spent just being with God,  
he just says what is going on.

She's seeking my life as well. I'm the  
only one left and he just lays it out for  
the Lord. Talking with

God is an incredibly powerful type of

prayer, and no doubt it's one that every single one of us has engaged in. But here's the difference. Sometimes we rely so heavily on our own words to try to express what we're feeling or whatever it is we need to express to God, we neglect just the incredible resources at our hands to have those conversations, which is starting right here with Scripture. Which leads me to the next level of prayer. The first one is talking with God. Hopefully I didn't confuse those a minute ago. That's talking with God. Now you go to talking to God. Now here's a way to define talking to God. It's using other people's prayers as a basis for your own prayer life. Using other people's prayers as a basis for your own prayer life. How many of you have used the Psalms to help you pray? Just give me a nod. If you've done that before, raise a hand. Hands are going up left and right. Yeah,

look at that. That's talking  
with God. It's using pre-made prayers  
like psalms or liturgies, or there are so  
many beautiful prayers that have been  
written by again, great men and women of  
God throughout history, and it's using  
that to express what you're feeling to  
God. Now. One of the lesser known  
examples the verse is. Known very well,  
but not many people know where it comes  
from. Is Jesus himself on the cross?  
Those famous words? When he's dying, he  
cries out, My God, my God, why have you  
forsaken me? And many people  
take that as that's Jesus, just in  
his own words, expressing how he feels  
in that moment. But actually what he's  
doing is he's quoting Psalm 22. It's  
a direct quotation. At the deepest,  
darkest moment in Jesus's life, he cries  
out Psalm 22, David's words, my God,  
my God. Why have you forsaken me?  
Now I'm not gonna spend a bunch of time  
going into this because it's another

sermon for another time, but I would encourage you all read the whole Psalm.

And Jesus without a doubt knew the entire Psalm. Many times when we hear those words, we take it as ohh, God actually did forsake him and turn his back. And yet if you keep reading through the song, you get to verse 24 with the psalmist.

The Self says, For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him.

Jesus, talking to God, cries out the words of the Psalm, and then, I have no doubt encourages himself in that moment with the promise later in the Psalm that God is still with him. Now we're doing this a lot during summer of, I'm sorry, not summer prayer. We're doing this lot during the 100 days of prayer.

Every class that I prayed with, we pray different Psalms. We read through them, but that is talking to God. Now those ones, again, like I said, we just saw by

a show of hands, a lot of different people have engaged in those two. So let's move on to the ones that are lesser known and certainly. Not utilized as much talking with God.

Just having a conversation, talking to God, using the Psalms or maybe other prayers, or you know, there's a lot of really good devotional books out there.

But then you get to listening to God, listening to God, which I warn you all.

Requires a little silence, which is tough for a lot of us.

I say this all the time, but it's so true. We live in the only time in history where you can, outside your sleeping hours, spend your entire life devoid of silence, thanks cell phones and you go to the gym or anywhere else, walking them around the grocery store. Everybody's got stuff going in their ears all the time, listening to God. I had a good friend, Mike, Zach. And knows him or knew him. He passed away, but his wife still lives up

in Omaha. And Mike was was miles ahead of  
me in his even though I was his pastor,  
He was way ahead of me in his own walk  
with God. And he came to me one time and  
he said, Seth, when you have a  
conversation with somebody, do you let  
them speak which I thought. Kind of  
depends on the person, but I try to, I  
try to. Otherwise it's not a conversation  
or it's certainly not enjoyable at all  
for the other conversation partner. He's  
like, do you be quiet and give them a  
chance to answer? I was like, yes, he's  
like great. Do you do that with God?  
I was like, no, now that you put it  
that way, I don't know why.

Listening to God, just listening.

Is an entire form  
of prayer.

Many times we don't hear from God.

Because he we never gave him a  
chance to answer us.

Or I had to get honest in my own life.

Many times I did not listen to God

because I didn't really believe he was gonna say anything.

Now, I don't want us to get confused.

That doesn't mean you're always gonna have a vision. It doesn't mean something

miraculous is gonna happen. Maybe,

perhaps I find a lot of times in my own

life, God will just bring back some of

the Scripture reading that I've done

earlier, but in gentle ways. He does

often communicate. And even if He chooses

not to, my goodness, no harm is going to

come out of learning to listen to. God

Psalm 1-2 talks about this, one of

the best known, best known psalms it

says. But his delight talking about the

righteous man is in the law of

the Lord, and on his law he

meditates day and night.

If you ever bring up meditation and you

have some people freak out because they

don't know what to do with that word

because they saw a YouTube video and it

told them something and now they think

all meditation is wrong, you just very  
sweetly and kindly bring them right back  
to Psalm 1 and say look at that. The  
whole book of prayer, the number one book  
of prayer in all Scripture begins this  
way. This is how the righteous man. Or  
woman's lives. He or she meditates  
and delights in the law of  
the Lord, day and night.

Now, what does that mean? If you're in  
the spiritual formation group, you've  
heard of Lectio Divina, and I can just  
bring that down to a very simple way  
of understanding it. All that is, is a  
contemplative way of reading the Bible  
and praying it. It's learning how to slow  
down. You just take one or two verses.  
You prayed them back to the Lord. You  
just listen. And you  
think about them. You chew on them, as  
it were. You let them work their way  
through your mind. You pray them again,  
and you listen. And you pray them again,  
and you listen. And one of

the beautiful things about this system of prayer is that it takes all the pressure off. Maybe I'm the only person, but have you ever had the experience where it comes time to pray? And it's like, I hope I can come up with something good to say. Today I am talking to God. I got my list. I got my note card. There's nothing wrong with that. What I found so much freedom and being like I can have a whole prayer time and maybe just have one verse and a lot of silence. It actually makes me look forward to praying a lot more because there's no pressure. I'm just listening, learning. Let God speak through his word. OK listening to God. I don't have stats. I don't know how you would get stats on this. I can only speak from my own experience and you guys all have your own experience. But I have found that Christians in general in my limited experience. Really struggle to listen. Now, that's no surprise because in our conversations with each other, we all,

with a few exceptions, struggle to listen. There are studies on that. How much time do people think of, think of what they're going to say next versus actively listening? The ratio is not even, believe me. OK, last one, being with God, just being with God. There's a famous interview, Dan Rather interviewed Mother Teresa and Dan who I have no idea his whether he was a Christian or not, but he asked this, he said to Mother Teresa, when you pray, what do you say to God? To which she replied, I don't say anything. Dan was confused. Dan tried another tactic. He said, ohh, OK, well, when God speaks to you, what does he say? To which Mother Teresa replied, he doesn't say anything, he listens. At this point, Dan is completely bewildered. And she could read it on his face and she says, I'm sorry. But if you don't understand that, I just can't explain it to you. True

story.

I don't say anything, I listen.

What does he do? Nothing. He

listens. I want

you to think back to the example I gave

earlier of the married couple, either at

the wedding, happiest moment or maybe

what, looking at their shattered house

and everything that represents saddest

moment. They're not saying anything.

They're both just listening to each other

in the silence.

No words are being spoken.

And yet there's more communication in

those moments than any words could

express.

Friends, there's such a thing, and I

think it has to be learned, and I don't

pretend like I am there yet, because I'm

not, but there is such a thing as simply

being with God.

In that deepest

level of wordless

communion.

I think this is what David is talking about in Psalm 27 where he says one thing I ask of the Lord. And remember David writes this at a hard time in his life.

We don't know exactly what was going on, but most agree was either probably his own son trying to kill him or Saul trying to kill him. And yet he says

this one thing I ask of the Lord, that I will seek after, not make it stop, but instead back to the verse, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.

His one request is that he will simply be. With God.

Let me end with the challenge, and then we're gonna transition into our own times of prayer together.

Folks, just remember this.

Your comfort zone and my comfort zone. Does not define the boundaries of prayer.

Sometimes I think that is where we struggle the most, like, well, that I'm not very comfortable and it's like, fair enough. I mean, be honest about how you feel. But your comfort zone and my comfort zone does not define the boundaries of prayer.

And if you're thinking to yourself, you know what a load of hogwash, that's silly. Prayers, prayer, you just sit down, you pray, That's all it is. I would invite you to go back and look at the life of Jesus because he repeatedly practiced every single one of these. He had times where he would talk to God. Where he was with, talked with God so many times and all the time that guy was quoting scripture. And what do you think happened during his 40 days in the wilderness prior to temptation? Solitude, deprivation, being with God.

One other one. Think back when he was a boy, just a boy. Luke 2. Remember, he ran away. His parents couldn't find him for three days. Somehow in the midst of that, there was no sin. Some of the needle on for a while and that would drive me nuts if I was his mom or dad. He disappears. They finally find him. What does he say? He's like, why were you looking for me? Sounds like rhetorical question, but it's not. Why are you looking for me? Didn't you know I'd be in be in my father's house? Even as a boy, what did he want to do? Where was he drawn? To just be with God. Just as when you go home or your kids come back to your house, it's your family just being together. You don't have to be doing a craft or something all the time. You can just be together and Jesus wants to just be with God. And you and I can learn to just be with God.

OK, here's what we're going to do. If

we could please put the first prayer

slide up.

Go ahead and grab your Bibles and go

back to the Lord's Prayer.

Well, there's multiple, but we'll go to

Matthew. Matthew 6, the one that Ella

read for us. Matthew 6.

Now for a very, very long time.

The church has been used in the Lord's

Prayer, the movements of the Lord's

Prayer to guide them in their prayer time

starts off with worship. How it be your

name, your Kingdom come, your will be

done thing moves into petition. Give us

Our Daily Bread. Help us to forgive we

just not just temptation etcetera. So

here's what we're going to