



WHAT DO I DO WHEN I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO PRAY?

— ROMANS 8:26–30 —

MOSAIC LIFE CHURCH

What Do I Do When I Don't Know What to Pray?

Bible Study Review: Romans 8:26–30

Last night, we learned that not knowing what to pray does not mean we should stop praying. It means we have reached a place where we must stop depending upon our own understanding and submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit.

1. Begin With Honest Acknowledgment

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought...”

—Romans 8:26

- Sometimes we know that something is wrong, but we do not know how to address it.
- Sometimes the burden is real, but we cannot find the right words.
- Sometimes we think we know what we need, but we do not know what God is doing.
- God does not condemn us for not knowing—He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us.

The first step is simply admitting:

“Father, I do not know what to pray, but I trust that Your Spirit does.”

2. Submission Begins Where My Understanding Ends

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

—Proverbs 3:5

Submission means placing my will beneath the will of God.

- I surrender what I want.
- I surrender what I think should happen.
- I surrender my preferred outcome.
- I surrender my need to understand everything.
- I trust that God knows what is best for me.
- I believe that God wants better for me than I could ever want for myself.

When I acknowledge that I do not know what to pray, I make room for the Holy Spirit to lead me.

3. Pray With the Spirit and With Understanding

“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.”

—1 Corinthians 14:14

“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also...”

—1 Corinthians 14:15

There are times when God gives us understanding and revelation concerning how to pray.

During those times:

- Pray what God has revealed.
- Pray the promises of Scripture.

- Pray specifically concerning the need.
- Speak what God has placed in your heart.

However, there are also times when we have no understanding.

During those times:

- Do not stop praying.
- Do not force your own answer.
- Do not allow confusion to produce fear.
- Yield yourself to the Holy Spirit.
- Pray in the Spirit as He gives the utterance.
- Trust the Spirit to pray what you cannot express.

4. The Holy Spirit Helps Carry the Burden

“...but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

—Romans 8:26

The Holy Spirit comes alongside us in our weakness.

Intercession may be expressed through:

- Words inspired by the Spirit
- Praying in tongues
- Groaning

- Weeping
- Silence before God
- A burden that cannot be explained naturally

Romans 8:26 does not explicitly identify these groanings as tongues, but 1 Corinthians 14 teaches that there are times when our spirit prays while our natural understanding is unfruitful.

When our words reach their limit, the Holy Spirit does not.

5. God Understands What the Spirit Is Praying

“And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit...”

—Romans 8:27

You may not understand the prayer, but God does.

- God searches the heart.
- God knows the mind of the Spirit.
- God understands every groan.
- God recognizes every tear.
- God knows the meaning of every Spirit-inspired utterance.

Spirit-led prayer is not meaningless. It is divine communication between the Spirit working within us and the God who completely understands us.

6. The Spirit Prays According to God's Will

“...because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

—Romans 8:27

Our prayers can be influenced by:

- Fear
- Pain
- Anger
- Impatience
- Limited information
- Personal preferences

But the Holy Spirit is not limited by any of these things. He always intercedes according to the perfect will of God.

That is why Jesus taught us to pray:

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

—Matthew 6:10

This is the prayer of submission:

“God, establish Your will in my surroundings, my circumstances and within me. Let Your will be accomplished in the earth around me and in this earthen vessel where Your Spirit dwells.”

7. Stop Carrying What Belongs to God

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”
—1 Peter 5:7

Anxiety and fear often grow when we attempt to carry the weight of what we do not know, cannot understand and cannot control.

But that weight does not belong to us.

Our responsibility is to deliver what we do not understand into the hands of the Father who understands everything.

- I cannot carry tomorrow—but God is already there.
- I cannot control every outcome—but God remains sovereign.
- I cannot solve every problem—but God knows exactly what is needed.
- I do not have to understand everything in order to trust Him.

8. Let the Firefighter Fight the Fire

Think about a house that is on fire.

If we called the fire department, it would be foolish to stand between the firefighter and the fire. We called the firefighter because he is trained, equipped and able to do what we cannot do.

In the same way:

- Prayer calls upon God for help.
- Submission moves our will out of His way.
- The Holy Spirit knows what must be done.
- We must allow God to perform the work we are not equipped to do.

We delay our peace—and sometimes our deliverance and provision—when we insist upon controlling what we have already asked God to handle.

Do not call upon God and then stand between Him and the fire.

9. God's Thoughts and Ways Are Higher

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”

—Isaiah 55:8

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your

thoughts.”

—Isaiah 55:9

Moving out of God’s way means trusting that:

- God sees what I cannot see.
- God knows what I do not know.
- God understands what I cannot understand.
- God’s plan reaches beyond my present moment.
- God knows what is best for me.
- God is able to accomplish what I cannot.

Submission is not giving up. Submission is placing the situation into more capable hands.

10. While the Spirit Is Praying, God Is Working

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

—Romans 8:28

The word “and” connects verse 28 to the Spirit’s intercession in verses 26–27.

- I do not know what to pray.
- The Spirit helps me.
- The Spirit intercedes according to God’s will.

- God begins working everything together for my good.

This does not mean everything that happens is good. It means God is powerful enough to use everything—including our mistakes—and work it toward His purpose.

God does not waste:

- Our pain
- Our tears
- Our waiting
- Our disappointment
- Our failures
- Our mistakes

11. The “Good” Is Becoming More Like Jesus

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...”

—Romans 8:29

The “good” of Romans 8:28 is explained in verse 29. God is using everything to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ.

Prayer is not only about God changing what is happening around us. Prayer also allows God to change what is happening within us.

God is developing:

- Our faith
- Our patience
- Our character
- Our obedience
- Our dependence upon Him
- Our resemblance to Jesus

12. We Can Rest in God's Completed Purpose

“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

—Romans 8:30

Paul shows us that God is committed to completing His work in His people.

We may not understand the present moment, but our future remains secure in the hands of God.

The progression is:

- God foreknew us.
- God predestined us to become like Christ.
- God called us.

- God justified us.
- God will complete what He started.

13. Prayer Produces Peace in the Storm

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

—Philippians 4:6

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

—Philippians 4:7

God’s peace does not always wait until the storm is over.

Peace comes when we transfer the weight from our hands into God’s hands.

The result may not be an immediate explanation, but it can be immediate peace:

- Peace while I wait
- Peace when I do not understand
- Peace before the answer arrives
- Peace in the middle of the storm
- Peace that guards my heart and mind

Psalm 23 reminds us why we can trust Him:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

—Psalm 23:1

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me...”

—Psalm 23:4

14. Lay Aside the Weight and Look to Jesus

“...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us...”

—Hebrews 12:1

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”

—Hebrews 12:2

Worry is a weight we were never created to carry.

When we do not know what to pray:

- Lay down the weight.
- Look to Jesus.
- Pray what you understand.
- Yield when you do not understand.
- Allow the Spirit to intercede.
- Trust God with the outcome.
- Receive His peace.

“For in him we live, and move, and have our being...”

—Acts 17:28

This Week's Prayer Pattern

When you feel anxiety, fear or uncertainty rising, pray:

“Father, I acknowledge that I do not know what to pray as I ought. I submit my thoughts, desires and preferred outcome to You. I will pray with my understanding, and I will also yield myself to Your Spirit. Carry what I cannot carry, express what I cannot explain and accomplish Your will in the earth around me and within me. I trust that You know what is best for me and that You desire better for me than I could desire for myself. I release this weight into Your hands and receive Your peace. Let Your will be done. In Jesus' name, amen.”

Remember This

When I don't know what to pray, the Spirit does.

When I don't understand what God is doing, I submit rather than worry.

The weight of the unknown does not belong to me—it belongs to God.

My responsibility is to pray, surrender, move out of the way and trust Him.

The Progression of Romans 8:26–30

- **Weakness:** I do not know what to pray.
- **Submission:** I surrender my will and understanding.
- **Intercession:** The Holy Spirit helps and prays through me.
- **Alignment:** The Spirit prays according to God's will.
- **Providence:** God works everything together for good.
- **Transformation:** God uses it to make me more like Jesus.
- **Assurance:** God will complete the work He began.
- **Peace:** I rest because the outcome is in God's hands.