

**Spiritual Disciplines**  
*Developing Habits That Will Change Your Life*  
Week 3: Praying Like You Mean It

**Scripture**

James 4:2-3; Matthew 6:9-13

**Motivation (Why You Need This):**

Traditionally, I've always been apprehensive about asking questions...

This is most clearly manifest in restaurants when my order isn't right.

In my opinion, when an order isn't right, there are three types of people:

- Those who say **just enough**
- Those who say **too much**
- Those who say **nothing** (I fall into this category)

***Why don't we ask?***

- We believe it **can't** be done
- We believe it **won't** be done
- We believe it can just **continue as is**

It's very easy to transfer these "asking attitudes" into our connection with God.

**Philippians 4:6 (ESV)** ...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

**Hebrews 4:16 (NLT)** So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Because we believe God can't or won't do anything, we feel we're better off continuing as is.

But we'll never reach a trusting and dependent relationship with God without learning to ask our Father.

## Information (What You Need to Know):

Before we jump into **WHAT** we should ask, let's talk about **HOW** we ask...

**James 4:2 (ESV)** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

The extremes are **not asking** or **asking with selfish motives**.

So, let's clearly get a picture of what we can and should ask from our Father...

We are going to use Jesus' own words to guide our prayers.

### Dear God...

**Matthew 6:9 (ESV)** Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven...

Our approach is to a PERFECT Father.

A perfect father cares for his child, helps and protects his children, provides for his children, guides and teaches his children, doesn't discourage his children, disciplines his children, has plans for his children, and will never do anything to purposely hurt his children.

### I respect who You are...

**Matthew 6:9 (ESV)** Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

This is not an issue of being afraid, but rather seeing God for who He is. God is strong and capable, but also has outstretched arms.

### I desire for Your will to be done...

**Matthew 6:10 (ESV)** Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

*Your kingdom come* is to ask for God's control in your life as well as in His future kingdom.

*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven* is a prayer of surrender to God's purposes and plans.

You and I have a will, but we should bend to His will.

### **Provide what I need for today only...**

**Matthew 6:11 (ESV)** Give us this day our daily bread...

You are recognizing God as the One who can furnish or provide what you need.

This is not a *selfish* ask, but a *dependent* ask.

### **Forgive me as I forgive those who have wronged me...**

**Matthew 6:12 (ESV)** ...and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **14** For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, **15** but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The forgiven should forgive.

### **When I am tempted, deliver me from giving into temptation...**

**Matthew 6:13 (ESV)** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

We should ask to be kept from temptation. We won't always avoid temptation, but we can ask God to deliver us from giving into evil.

### **Application (What You Need to Do):**

As I'm closing today, I'm going to lead us into a time of response.

Having spoken about asking our Father, I want to focus our attention on what makes it possible for us to approach God in prayer.

What is about to take place may or may not be familiar to you, but I hope you'll begin to understand the following...

We can only approach and ask God in prayer when we properly understand and believe in the death of Jesus Christ for our sins and His resurrection for assurance of eternal life.

### **The Lord's Supper is a remembrance, a celebration of Christ's death for sin.**

Let's look at 1 Corinthians 11 where Paul teaches the church about connecting with God through the Lord's Supper.

On the night before Jesus was put to death to pay the penalty for sin, He shared a meal with His disciples.

Jesus established the meaning of the Lord's Supper at this meal.

Let's look at what Jesus does on this night.

**1 Corinthians 11:23 (ESV)** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Much like baptism symbolizes a person's belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord's Supper is also symbolic.

Jesus points their attention to two elements used in this ordinance.

First, Jesus takes the bread, breaks it, and declares that it symbolizes His body, which would be given for them.

Second, Jesus takes the wine and declares that it symbolizes His blood, which would be shed as payment for sin.

After telling them what these elements symbolized, Jesus told them why they should continue to practice it until He comes back.

It's very simple.

Participating in the Lord's Supper helps us remember the significance of Jesus' death for sin.

His body was offered as a sacrifice for our sin.

His blood was shed so that our sins could be forgiven.

Before we take the Lord's Supper this morning, let me read Paul's words of caution to those who are thinking about participating.

**1 Corinthians 11:28 (ESV)** Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30** That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

Let me give all of us one piece of advice before partaking – examine your life and confess any known sin to God.

If you willingly continue in sin, you are taking part in an unworthy manner.

Think of it this way...you are remembering that your sin cost Jesus His life; yet, you continue to take sin lightly.

I like to always give you a time of reflection and confession before choosing to participate in the Lord's Supper.

Let's take some to reflect and remember.

**Matthew 26:26 (ESV)** Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." **27** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, **28** for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. **29** I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."