



# Words of Prayer

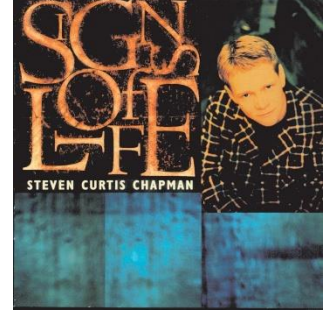
Just Pray #1 • Praying the Scriptures • April 12, 2026



## Let Us Pray

Song by Steven Curtis Chapman

©1996 Sparrow Song (BMI)



I hear you say “**your heart is aching...**  
You've got trouble in the making...”  
And you ask **if I'll be praying...** for you... please.  
And in keeping with convention,  
I'll say **YES!** (with good intentions)  
To pray (... later... ) making mention of your needs.  
But since we have *this* moment here at heaven's door?  
We should start knocking **NOW!** What are we waiting for?

Let us pray. Let us pray! Everywhere. In every way.  
Every moment of the day, it is **the right time.**  
For the Father above, He is **listening** with love  
And He **wants** to answer us. So? Let us pray.

So when we *feel* the **Spirit** moving...  
Prompting...prodding... and behooving...  
There **is** no time to be losing. Let us pray!  
Let the Father hear us saying  
what we need to be conveying!  
Even while this song is playing, let us pray!  
And just because we say the word, "Amen"?  
It doesn't mean this conversation needs to end!

Let us pray. Let us pray! Everywhere. In every way.  
Every moment of the day, it is **the right time.**  
Let us pray without end...and when we finish start again!  
Like breathing out and breathing in...**Let us pray!**



## The Importance of Prayer

Thirty years ago, those lyrics and that song were released by Christian artist Steven Curtis Chapman. I'm old enough to have played it on the CD player on my boombox while at college...but the song's age doesn't mean the content is out of date! "*Let us pray*" – immediately and sincerely – is wise advice for all of us! **Praying is important!**



## What is prayer?

So, what is prayer?

Prayer is **talking to God**. (Say it with me. "*Prayer is...talking to God*"). It is a direct address to Him, not just *thinking about* Him or *meditating on* His qualities. It is a conversation, and a conversation that can take many forms:

- It can be **out loud**.
- It can be **in your mind**.
- It can be tied to an **occasion**.
- It can be **long-term**.
- It can be **formal**.
- It can be **spontaneous**.
- It can be **on your knees**.
- It can be **standing up**.
- It can be with **hands raised**.
- It can be with **head bowed**.

Prayer is a conversation that can be many things. But here's what it can't be: **absent from your life!**

Prayer needs to be an important action, done frequently. "*Let us pray. Let us pray! Everywhere. In every way. Every moment of the day, it is the right time.*"



## Why do we pray?

The reason the Christian (YOU) must pray is because the Spirit living inside us compels us to do so!



*"And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, 'Abba, Father.'"*  
(Galatians 4:6, NLT)

As children of God, we are prompted to “speak with Dad!” That prompting is not because of religious obligation or ritual. It’s not because of superstition or manipulation.

It is the nature of our life in the Spirit, and it is there simply because of *relationship* and *reliance*.

- **Relationship.** If you love someone, you want to communicate with them regularly.



*Did you know that every day on the drive home from work, my wife (Deb) calls her parents? She calls and talks to Roger & Kappy... Every. Single. Day. They live in Arizona, and since I moved Deb to Kansas and no closer, this is the way they keep in touch. Ever since she got a car that has had Bluetooth connection to her phone, she uses the hands-free calling to dial her parents and talk about anything and everything while she drives from Lawrence to our garage in Tonganoxie (and frequently longer while she sits in the garage).*

*I'm amazed they haven't run out of things to say! Yet there's always something from the day...or a health issue to discuss...or a story from the past (for the 4<sup>th</sup> time)...or Roger might just give her the whole rundown of what happened in today's episode of Gunsmoke.*

*The daily communication from a distance maintains the **relationship** until their proximity is restored.*

We speak with our Heavenly Father because of relationship, because communicating with Him keeps us connected until our proximity with Him is restored, when we're with Him in heaven!



*“The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him in truth.” (Psalm 145:18, NLT)*

We speak with our Heavenly Father because of relationship...and we speak because of...

- **Reliance.** We also pray because there is no power without prayer. You and I have no real control over anything in our lives! Think about it...



- Can you control the weather? If so, stop a thunderstorm!
- Can you control your looks? If so, make your gray hair stop growing!
- Can you control your kids? If so, make them wake up happy!

We like to think that we can control outcomes, but none of us can truly control our own lives. We can't guarantee our own health, our own happiness, our own relationships, our own safety and security, or our own wealth. You and I can take *wise steps* in each of those areas, but we don't really *control* them.

When we recognize our own limitations, we realize that we must rely on Someone greater. We must bring our cares and concerns to the only One who can do something about it.



*“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.”*  
(Philippians 4:6, NLT)

We speak with our Heavenly Father because we rely on Him for everything.

For those two reasons of **relationship** and **reliance**, prayer *cannot* be absent from our lives. It must be (or become) a critical piece of our daily lives.

**We need to encourage one another to pray!**

## Sermon Series Intro



Last week, our church had a fantastic Resurrection Sunday! Easter weekend was filled with activities at TCC, and we were blessed to have a large number of people enjoy those activities with us. In our worship, we looked at the empty tomb through the eyes of Peter and John and wrapped up our series “*On the Outside Looking In.*”

I know that Easter is a time when many people came to church for the first time or for the first time in a while. And they were looking for some practical power in their spiritual lives. Otherwise, they would have spent Easter going to a restaurant for brunch, or they would've just slept in!

So, for those who came last week, I want to give you a chance to continue growing. I want to bring up a subject to help you gain spiritual strength.

You came looking for spiritual power...so why not be equipped to go to the Source of spiritual power yourself?!

That's why we're talking about **prayer**. Over the next few sermons we're going to talk about prayer and give you some guidance to help you pray more effectively. We'll give you some *examples of prayer* to understand **what** things people in Scripture prayed for...and **how** they prayed for them.

The goal is not doctrine. The goal is action. This is a “*YOU CAN DO IT!*” series! I want to encourage you and equip you to do better.

This morning, I want to encourage you. You *know* that prayer is important. We just talked about what it is, and why we should do it.

But I also want to tell you this: *You have the right words to pray.*

## The Wrong Words?

Have you guys ever had “prayer anxiety” – worry about saying **the wrong words** when you pray?

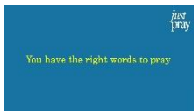
*Maybe it's your first Thanksgiving as a young couple in your new home, and you are hosting the gathering. You have friends and family over, laughing and crowding around the too-small table. The food is ready, the turkey is carved, and now everyone is prepared for the blessing before they dig in.*

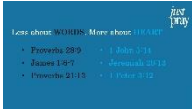
*All eyes turn to you. You're the man of the house. You're supposed to be the spiritual leader of the home. Of course it is your place to pray (unless you have a minister in the family – then it is his job. Every single time. Forever).*

*But praying in public hasn't been your thing. What do you even say?!*

*Your mouth gets dry, your palms start to sweat. As the mashed potatoes grow cold, you are paralyzed, thinking, “What will I say?!”*

Who has ever been in a similar position? Whether you must pray for a dinner, pray for a special event, or pray just because a friend asks you to do so, we often struggle with knowing *what* to pray...even if it's alone, not out loud in front of a crowd.





## Here's the good news: **prayer is less about your words and more about your heart!**

God can and does critique prayer in Scripture, but His criticism is not about delivery. Instead, he judges prayers offered with a misplaced heart.

- **If you are a person who doesn't want to follow what God has said?**  
*"God detests the prayers of a person who ignores the law."  
(Proverbs 28:9, NLT)*
- **If you are a person who doesn't trust God to answer?** *"But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord."  
(James 1:6-7, NLT)*
- **If you are a person who doesn't love people that He does?**  
*"Those who shut their ears to the cries of the poor will be ignored in their own time of need."  
(Proverbs 21:13, NLT)*

God has plenty of critique for prayers that are offered stubbornly, in sin, in disobedience, in self-indulgence, or with indifference.

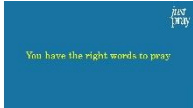
But for prayers that are offered in contrition, in righteousness, in faith, in obedience, whole-heartedly? Regardless of the right words...He hears!

*"And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him."  
(1 John 5:14, NLT)*

*"If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me."  
(Jeremiah 29:13, NLT)*

*"The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil."  
(1 Peter 3:12, NLT)*

You might still sound goofy as you pray out loud! You might not sound flowery or eloquent. But God loves you and your goofy words as much as we love little kids who mispronounce "popsicle" or "purple!" **My nephew, when he was about one, used to have his own word for cat. Don't ask me how or why, but "Phthla-nanny" was what he said every time! We didn't love him less!**



If you trust Christ fully...if you lean on Him...if you follow Him... then it doesn't matter how you say it. You can approach the throne of grace with confidence.<sup>1</sup> **You have the right words to pray!**



## Looking for Fresh Words

If we no longer have the pressure to say the "right" words, then, why do we still struggle with praying?

Author Donald Whitney recognizes the problem. Here's what he says in his book, *Praying the Bible*.

*Since prayer is talking with God, why don't people pray more? Why don't the people of God enjoy prayer more? I maintain that people – truly born-again, genuinely Christian people – often do not pray simply because they do not feel like it. And the reason they don't feel like praying is that when they do pray, they tend to say the same old things about the same old things. (Praying the Bible, 2015, Crossway. p 11)*



Do you find yourself saying the same old things over and over and over again in your job?

- *"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?"*
- *"Welcome to Good Burger. Home of the Good Burger. Can I take your order."*
- *"Corporate accounts payable, Nina speaking...Just a moment."*

We do it in our everyday lives. Certain words become habitual. Certain phrases become rote and routine.

It happens in our prayers, too. We get in a rut. We say the same things in the same ways.

- Maybe it's a prayer you **grew up praying**.
  - o *"God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food, Amen."*
- Maybe it's a prayer you were **taught**.
  - o *"Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name..."*

---

<sup>1</sup> "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." (Hebrews 4:16, NLT)

- Maybe it's a prayer you **repeat quickly** throughout the day.
  - *"Oh God, help me!"*

Don't misunderstand me. You and I will pray for many of the same things repeatedly. Your circle of loved ones, their situations, your church, your community – these won't change frequently. You'll talk about them a lot to other people, and certainly you'll talk about them to God!

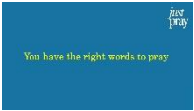
It's not subject of our prayers that need **fresh words**. It's the way we talk about them.

Whitney goes on to say, "[Prayers without variety eventually become words without meaning](#)" (p. 17). And that echoes Jesus' words in Matthew 6:7.



*"When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again." (Matthew 6:7, NLT)*

If you need fresh words to pray, if you want to build in some variety and stop saying the same stuff in constant repetition, then let me encourage you:



**You already have the right words to pray.**

Where? In your Bible.

**Pray Scripture.**



## The Method

Here's what I mean (and this is not my own insight – I'm just passing along what people like Whitney have known): *If it's in the Bible, you can use it as a springboard for your prayers!*

- **Simply go through a passage line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the text. (p. 33)**
  - o If you are confused by a verse, it's okay to move on to the next...
  - o Just speak to the Lord about everything that occurs to you as you read his Word.

This isn't a method of study and interpretation. That work can happen in a Bible study, or a classroom. Praying Scripture isn't about understanding and application. No, it is simply a launching point for your words to God...using some of the words He already gave us.



*"The Lord is My Shepherd..."* says **Psalm 23:1**. So, your prayer could be,

*“Lord, thank you for leading me like a shepherd leads a sheep. You guide and protect me. You’re the one in charge, not me. Thank you for not just being “a” shepherd, but for being “my” shepherd.”*

*“I shall not want...”* says the rest of the verse. Or in a different translation, *“I have all that I need.”* So, your prayer could continue,

*“Right now, I have everything that I need. Not everything I want. But I trust that you have provided me with good things: food, shelter, family, multiple working vehicles, friends, a church that puts Jesus above everything else. And even what you have withheld in your blessings, you’ve used the lack to provide other things I need: patience, courage, trust, love, faithfulness, and more. I will be content with the things You give me, trusting that your desire isn’t to leave me wanting...but instead, to help me grow closer to You...which is all I ever need.”*

How different does that sound from, *“Dear God, thank you for today. Please help so-and-so get better from sickness. Please help me find a new job”*? Such a prayer is good and wonderful if your heart is in the wrong place. But praying Scripture can give you *fresh* words to say!



**Pro Tip:** *You can use any part of Scripture, but the Psalms are built for this. Each day, choose one as your springboard for prayer!*

*For variety, break it up. There are 150 psalms and 30 days in a month. So, break it up to help you choose. On April 12, maybe skim over five psalms (not read in depth, but skim to select one). Pick the day and keep adding 30 to get your options for the day.*

*Ex: Day 12: Choose from Psalms 12, 42, 72, 102, or 132*

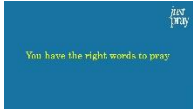
As you do this, you’ll not run out of things to pray! **You already have the right words to pray.**

## Conclusion



*“Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.”*  
(Ephesians 6:18, NLT)

Church, you can do this!



If you came today looking for spiritual power..you have been equipped and encourage to go to the Source of spiritual power yourself!

- Prayer is talking to God.
- Prayer is empowered by the Spirit.
- Prayer is for relationship and reliance.
- Prayer is less about your words and more about your heart!
- And prayer is within reach.

***You have the right words to pray.***

Remember, the goal is not doctrine. The goal is action. This is a “**YOU CAN DO IT!**” message! So, go! Spend time talking to God.

Let us pray. Let us pray! Everywhere. In every way.

Every moment of the day, it is ***the right time.***

Let us pray without end...and when we finish start again!

Like breathing out and breathing in...**Let us pray!**



## Prayer

*“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.”*  
(Hebrews 4:16, NLT)

## Invitation

Do you need prayer? We invite you to come forward and lift up your needs to God. I'll be up front and you can join me during our invitation song – we can pray together for your needs. Or you can take the time to share a prayer request on the back of your connection card (in your bulletin).

Let's stand. Let's sing. Let's pray!

# Sermon Notes

## The Importance of Prayer

(Galatians 4:6; Psalm 145:18; Philippians 4:6)

## The Wrong Words?

(Proverbs 28:9; James 1:6-7; Proverbs 21:13; 1 John 5:14; Jeremiah 29:13; 1 Peter 3:12)

## Looking for Fresh Words

(Matthew 6:7; Psalm 23:1; Ephesians 6:18)

## **Pray Scripture!**

# Sermon Discussion Questions

- The sermon defined prayer as “talking to God.” How does that simple definition help or challenge the way you think about prayer?
- The sermon gave two big reasons we pray: relationship and reliance. Which one stands out more in your current season of life?
- Read Psalm 145:18. What does this verse teach about God’s nearness in prayer?
- Read Philippians 4:6. What worries are you currently carrying that need to become prayers?
- Which warning passage challenged you most: Proverbs 28:9; James 1:6–7; Proverbs 21:13. Why?
- Why do repetitive prayers sometimes lose meaning? Read Matthew 6:7. What is the difference between faithful repetition and empty repetition?
- What phrases or “default prayers” do you tend to fall back on? How might praying Scripture (line-by-line) help your prayers become more heartfelt?
- Why do you think the Psalms are especially helpful as a springboard for prayer?
- Read Psalm 23:1. How would you use that verse to jumpstart your prayers today? What other Psalm will you choose as your prayer springboard today?