



MAY 24TH, 2026

BEHOLDING: DISCIPLINES FOR IMAGERS INTEGRATION: THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

Scriptures

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (ESV)

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Genesis 2:1–3 (ESV)

⁹ Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Matthew 6:9–13 (ESV)

^{14b} Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Mark 1:14b–15 (ESV)

³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33 (ESV)

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

John 15:4–7 (ESV)

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26–27 (ESV)

²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 8:22–23 (ESV)

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question:

What's your earliest memory of prayer? What did you think prayer was when you were a child?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. **Prayer is not transactional wish fulfillment** - It's not about getting God to do what we want, but about aligning our will with His.
2. **We were made to dwell with God, not visit Him** - Prayer is communion with God, not just a scheduled event.
3. **Prayer is kingdom integration** - It's bringing our small kingdoms into alignment with God's kingdom.
4. **The Spirit helps us pray** - We don't pray in our own strength; the Spirit intercedes and carries the weight with us.
5. **"Pray without ceasing" is possible** - Prayer is both an event and a posture/orientation toward God throughout all of life.

Discussion Questions

Understanding Prayer Differently (15-20 minutes)

1. The pastor described how most of us have inherited a "transactional" view of prayer. How would you describe your current understanding of prayer? Has it been more transactional or relational?
2. What struck you most about the statement: "We were not made to visit God. We were made to dwell with Him"? How does this change your perspective on prayer?
3. The sermon suggested that prayer is "will alignment" rather than "wish fulfillment." What's the difference? Why does this matter?

Kingdom and Creation (15-20 minutes)

4. The pastor walked through Genesis 1-3, describing how creation began as one unified kingdom under God's will, which was then shattered by the Fall. How does understanding this backstory help you understand what prayer is really about?
5. Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What does it practically mean to pray for God's kingdom to come in your life? In your workplace? In your relationships?
6. Where in your life are you most tempted to build and protect your own "kingdom" rather than submit to God's kingdom?

The Lord's Prayer Reimagined (10-15 minutes)

7. The pastor said Jesus wasn't giving us magic words to repeat, but a template for understanding prayer. Looking at the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), what does each line teach us about the nature and purpose of prayer?

8. "Give us this day our daily bread" connects to trusting God for provision. Where do you struggle most to trust God rather than trying to provide/control things yourself?

The Spirit's Help (10-15 minutes)

9. Romans 8:26-27 tells us the Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes with groans too deep for words. When have you experienced this kind of prayer where you didn't even have words?
10. The Greek word for "help" means "to take hold of something together from the other side" - like lifting a heavy couch together. How does this image change your understanding of prayer? How does it relieve pressure?

Praying Without Ceasing (15-20 minutes)

11. Paul commands us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The pastor suggested this isn't just about praying frequently, but about living in continuous communion with God. What's the difference?
12. Brother Lawrence wrote: "The time of business does not differ with me from the time of prayer." What would it look like to experience God's presence while doing dishes, changing diapers, or sitting in traffic?
13. What are the biggest obstacles in your life to "praying without ceasing"? What makes it difficult to maintain awareness of God's presence throughout your day?

Personal Reflection (5-10 minutes)

Take a few minutes of silence for personal reflection. Consider these questions:

- If prayer is about entering God's kingdom rather than improving my kingdom, what needs to change in how I pray?
- What would it look like for me to start my day in intentional communion with God?
- In what area of my life am I most resistant to praying "Your will be done"?

Practical Applications

Choose one or two of these practices to commit to this week:

For Beginners:

- **Morning Kingdom Prayer:** Each morning this week, pray through the Lord's Prayer slowly, personalizing each line. Ask God to help you see your day through the lens of His kingdom.
- **Hourly Check-ins:** Set three alarms on your phone (morning, midday, evening) as reminders to pause and acknowledge God's presence with a simple prayer: "God, you're here with me. Help me live in your kingdom right now."

For Growing:

- **Transitional Prayers:** Before entering different spaces (your workplace, your home, a difficult conversation), pause and invite God into that space. "Lord, I'm walking into _____. Help me be your image-bearer here."
- **Brother Lawrence Practice:** Choose one mundane daily task (dishes, commute, exercise) and practice doing it as an act of communion with God. Talk to Him throughout, acknowledging His presence.

For Advanced:

- **Kingdom Journaling:** Each evening, reflect on your day and journal answers to these questions:
 - Where did I seek my kingdom today instead of God's?
 - Where did I experience communion with God?
 - What does "Your will be done" mean for tomorrow?
- **Intercession with the Spirit:** Set aside extended time this week to pray for something you don't know how to pray about. Invite the Spirit to pray through you, even if it's just groaning or silence.

Closing Exercise (10 minutes)

Group Prayer Practice:

Go around the circle and have each person complete this sentence in prayer:

"God, the area of my life where I most need to surrender my kingdom to yours is..."

After each person shares, have the group respond together: "Your kingdom come, your will be done."

Close by praying Romans 8:26-27 together, thanking God that the Spirit helps us in our weakness.

For Further Study

- **Scripture:** Read through the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) this week, noticing how Jesus is teaching about life in God's kingdom.
- **Book Recommendation:** "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence
- **Reflection:** How does understanding prayer as "dwelling with God" rather than "visiting God" change your expectations for your spiritual life?