

01 | Prayer is Our Responsibility

GOD ANSWERS PRAYER Series

Welcome to our Walk with God: God Answers Prayer. Throughout this entire series of teachings, you're going to be really strengthened and encouraged and shown how to engage with God in prayer. And today, we're going to talk about how prayer is our responsibility. Prayer is our responsibility. We're going to get into Matthew 6 here in just a few moments, but before we do, I want to encourage you that prayer is not just something religious. We're not just trying to repeat something over and over. We're not trying to rub the lamp of some genie up in the sky. Prayer is actually something that really connects us to God and empowers us to walk out this life as a true follower of Jesus. Prayer is a response to an invitation from God Himself. It is not purely transactional, but it is, in its essence, relational.

And I want to get into Matthew 6, and as we get into this chapter, I really believe that God is going to encourage you as we go through a number of scriptures today. But we're going to get right into Matthew 6:6. And it reads like this: "But you, when you pray..." These are the words of Jesus. "...when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret,

will reward you openly." Before I even go on, "pray to your Father who is in this secret place." As I was praying and thinking about how prayer is our responsibility, I think first, prayer is a response. Prayer is a response to an invitation from the Father. Because you notice here Jesus is encouraging us, "Pray when you go into your room, shut the door. Pray to your Father who is in the secret place." This is where He is. He doesn't just want us to pray prayers to Him. He wants us to pray prayers in the midst of where He is, in the secret place.

Reading on in verse seven, Jesus says, "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things that you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray..." So, Jesus says "in this manner"; it's important for us to recognize we're not praying this as a robotic prayer, but that we are shown here by Jesus how to approach God. He says, "Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name." What does that mean? Honored, holy, revered is Your name. This is an appropriate way to come to God by first giving Him honor. And then it says, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done." Now, after we've given God honor, maybe even sung songs and worshiped and honored the Lord, He says, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is important for us to recognize that we are not building our own kingdom. We are not here on earth seeking out our own will, but we are seeking

the will of God, that He would bring heaven to earth. And then in verse 11, it also says, "Give us this day our daily bread." And this is important to note, because Jesus wants us to know that God cares about our everyday needs. The Bible also shows us that Jesus is the bread of life. And so, we can also see that we have enough for every day. We can have relationship with Jesus, relating to Him as the bread of life. But also give us this day our daily bread, Lord, our daily needs. You have your mind on those and You will take care of us and provide for us. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. What is this saying? If we have done wrong, Lord, before You, if we've done wrong before others, if we've sinned, Lord, we ask for forgiveness today, and we also release forgiveness to others. Jesus is showing us that this is an important way to approach God, because just like no parent likes their kids fighting with each other, God is the same with us as brothers and sisters in Christ, that we are to walk in forgiveness. "And do not lead us into temptation..." What is He saying? Lead us away from it, Lord; steer our path in a path of righteousness. "But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." This is the way that Jesus taught us to pray. And at the end, what are we doing again? We're giving the glory back to the Lord. We're recognizing who our source of life comes from and why we're even spending time in prayer that way. Now, this is not a checklist that you can go through, but this is a verse to study, to memorize, to understand, in order to know how to approach

God and the things that God wants to take care of in our lives. Remember that prayer is our responsibility. But first, it is a response. It is the Father God who draws us in to pray. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us what to pray. And it is the sacrifice of Jesus who gave us the ability to come boldly to God to pray. And this is such a blessing to be able to come and to pray, and to seek the face of God, and to be with Him.

I want to direct your attention to Matthew 18:19-20. It says, "Again I say that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My name, I will be there in the midst of them." Look at this again. This is another response to an invitation to be with God. God says, when My children get together to pray, and when they agree, there is power in agreeing together on a matter. But He's also encouraging us again by saying where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there in the midst of them. This is a beautiful thing that God lays out multiple times in Scripture and shows us that He, as our Father, says, "I will be with you when you pray," not just when we're in bigger gatherings together, or maybe you're in homes or you're at a school, at a workplace or a church. God is not just in the big gatherings, but He is in the small, intimate gatherings. When we're behind closed doors, when we're in our prayer closet, in a prayer room, or even just two or three people getting together and praying, we know that God is there, in the midst of us.

Could you imagine if you wanted someone to experience the best meal that you ever had, and you said something to the effect of you said, "Hey, I want you to experience a wonderful dinner." And you said to someone, or maybe someone said to you, "I want you to show up at a certain place. This is the place, this is the restaurant, show up at 7:30 on Friday night and just show up, tell them your name. Dinner will be taken care of, and it will be the best dinner that you've ever had." But this person wasn't quick enough. Or maybe it was you. You weren't quick enough to ask questions, and you showed up and you said your name and they said, "For how many?" And you said, "I actually don't know. I think I'm meeting someone here." And they said, "Oh, I have your name down, but it's just for one." Wouldn't that be kind of lame and kind of a disappointment to have maybe the best food that you've ever had with no present company? I think great food with bad company ends up as not a great experience, but even decent food with great company is a great time, right? And enjoying a meal or an experience has so much to do with who you're doing it with. And I'm noticing in Scripture that as you look through certain passages that talk about prayer, God wants us to know that He wants to be with us. We are responding to an invitation from God when we go to pray. And this is a wonderful thing that He is not just saying go and pray and figure out what you're supposed to do with your life, what you need for today. He's saying, "No, I'm going to be there with you in the midst of this."

James 4:8, really the whole chapter, is really precious to me. But in James 4:8, there's this little phrase right in the beginning of the verse that says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." It doesn't say He might. It doesn't say when you've got everything perfect, He says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Scripture cannot lie. These statements, they cannot lie, because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is God, and God simply cannot lie. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." When I was meditating on this scripture, I thought of my wedding day and how I stood on the stage and my wife came down to the middle of the aisle and she started to draw near to me. And then I also remember the moment where I stepped down off the stairs and I met her when her father handed her hand over to me and I drew near to her. And I remember walking, starting to go back up to the stairs and I did something that I didn't plan on at all, but I asked her to stop right there in the aisle, and I went up on the stairs and I sat down. It's kind of an awkward pause of our wedding, but I sat down, and I just stared at her for a few moments. And I didn't do it because it would make a great picture. I didn't do it because, oh, that she might think that's cute. I really just wanted to take in the moment. And as she drew near to me, my heart was drawn near to her. And then in that process as we got married and as we then began this life together, you know, we exchanged words with each other. We began a new level of our relationship. We started to begin a new level of intimacy. And these things are the ways

that God is to us. Did you know that the Bible calls us the bride of Christ, that we are, in our relationship with Him, in a sense, to be married to Him? And as we draw nearer to God, He draws near to us. And can I just say this? He can't help it. He loves us so much! He can't help it but draw near to us when we draw near to Him. And so, when we come to pray, and when we really take this on as prayer as our responsibility, let's also remember what our position in this is, that we are not alone, that we are not even necessarily the ones initiating this, but we are responding to His invitation to be with Him and to pray.

And I know oftentimes for myself there are different points of the day that I am maybe going about my day and I receive an invitation from the Father to pray. There's one specific time that I'm remembering when I was actually asked something at my job, I was basically given somewhat of a new opportunity, and it was something that I knew I needed to pray about. And it had been weighing on my mind for a couple of days. I drove into the offices where I worked, and I had the freedom and the ability to be able to get away into another room and pray if I needed to. And I just remember that tug of the Holy Spirit saying, "I know that's weighing on your mind, but would you just come and spend some time with Me? Come and spend some time with Me in prayer." And I did. And I went. And I read my Bible. I spent some time in worship. It really was a wonderful time with the Lord, about an hour or so that I just really was focusing on being with Him and honoring Him, and I was reading

through some things in Scripture that were really encouraging me. And what was funny was I walked out of that place--I had just been with God-- and I walked out of that place now in full peace, full confidence that God's going to lead me. And as I walked out, I remember saying, "Lord, what about that decision?" Like, what should I do? And He said, "Yes, I'm asking you to do that. And also, there's going to be something else that's going to come on the table." And wouldn't you know it? About six days later, I was given the opportunity to do exactly that. And then someone else said, "Hey, I also feel like we have this other position and role for you that's going to be crucial for you in this season." And I knew, right in that moment, this is exactly what the Lord was telling me. And I got a big answer in a small amount of time because I answered the call. I responded to go and to be with Him and to pray. And boy, I tell you what, there are times when it is almost like God is just opening up doors. He's making crooked places straight. When you're spending time with Him in prayer, and when we're not trying to do it all ourselves, He wants to be with us. We are co-laboring with Him. It's almost like, you know, when a father is carrying around a heavy moving box and a little child says, "Daddy, I'll help you with that." As a father, we know he's not actually helping, but we want him to participate in this. And He does the heavy lifting.

And so, we've talked about how prayer is a response to an invitation to God. Now let's talk about how it's our responsibility. This

is a big deal for us to understand. And one of the scriptures that's really impacted me in my life is 2 Chronicles 7:14. I'm going to read verses 14 and 15. It says, "...if My people..." This is God talking. "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and heal their land. Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place." This is a powerful scripture here. It says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven..." Notice this "and will forgive their sin and heal their land." Notice this is not just God saying that I'm going to forgive them and they're going to be protected, and that's all. Everything's good, just for them. No, He's saying that the world around you is impacted. The people around you are healed. The people around us come to the Lord when we accept it as our responsibility to pray and to humble ourselves and to seek His face, He will answer, and He will come and bring deliverance to things going on around us. It is our responsibility. Sometimes we can hear Christians saying things like, "Oh, well, they're just so far gone. And, oh, society ... it's just terrible the way that this group of people is doing it, that group of people...." No, God does not see it that way. God sees it, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves..." If they will stop being prideful and stop looking at themselves as God, if they will pray and seek My face, if

they will seek Me for Me and turn from their own wicked ways, I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land. I like this part too, it says, "My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to the prayer made in this place when people..." This could be you in your household. This could be those around you in your community. Maybe you're trying to reach people in your neighborhood or house church or whatever. God is saying, those people, when they humble themselves, pray, seek My face, I will hear from heaven. I'll forgive their sin and heal their land. It will begin to flow out of them to the people around them. Prayer is our responsibility. Let me say this: God is not waiting for the unsaved just to turn, to repent, in order to heal the land. He is waiting for believers to step up and to pray and to seek His face.

And I want to conclude with this in Matthew 9:35-38. It says, "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion..." I want to say that again, "He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd." Before I get into the end of this, I want to show you that Jesus showed us the emotion, what He was feeling. He saw the needs of those around Him. And He was moved with compassion. He was moved deeply with compassion. And then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful..." There are many people that

need to come to the Lord, "...but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest." Notice Jesus didn't say, "So, hurry up and go start harvesting." No, Jesus helped us to remember who is the best one at the harvest, and that is the Father. He said, "Pray the Lord of the harvest..." Another version says, "Beg the Lord of the harvest to send laborers out into His harvest." This was what Jesus taught us after He was moved with compassion. And then He called us to pray.

One thing that I was thinking about as I read this, how Jesus was moved with compassion, is that we can look around in our world and we can see so much brokenness, we can see so many hurting people, we can see so many people being taken advantage of. We can see young people's lives being destroyed. We can see people's sexuality being taken advantage of. We can see people starving and hungry. And there's brokenness in our world. And sometimes it can be almost as if it's too much for our hearts to bear, and therefore we do nothing. But I was thinking about this, how my wife, I've been so proud of her over the years, that at first maybe when she would see things that were so painful, she would almost kind of just, like, run from it, like, she didn't know what to do with it. But I remember when God broke through in her heart one day, and she began to receive some freedom from the Lord on some things. She would see hurtful situations like this, the brokenness that people are walking through, and she, rather than trying to walk away from it, trying to just turn the other

way, she would begin to pray and say, "God, I pray that You be with those people. I pray that You bring deliverance in these situations." And the compassion, really, that she felt, that she was overcome with, began to be something that burdened her to pray. I remember one example. I was at work one day, and where we live in the United States, there's a certain thing that goes out when a child might be taken, whether they were in a car or something like that. There's something that goes out called an Amber Alert, and it'll beep on everybody's phones. And I remember getting this Amber Alert when I was at work. She got it when she was at home. And what she actually did was she texted me and she said, "I am praying for this child," and we don't know who this child is or what the situation is. But she began to pray, like praying in the Spirit, praying fervently. And she prayed for quite some time. And I remember later on, somehow, we saw a news clip or some kind of a notification that said this child was found. They were found! The thief was caught, and they were found. And my wife's response was, "Yes! Lord, you did that. You did that." And I remember as I talked with her about it, I said, "I feel like God responded to what you prayed." Many people may get the invitation to pray, but not everyone does. Prayer is our responsibility as believers in Jesus, as followers of Jesus. And as we go throughout the rest of this Walk with God, you're going to learn much about how to pray. But first, we have to catch this essence. That prayer is a response to an invitation from the Father, and it is our responsibility. Prayer is the most

impactful thing that we can do to bring heaven to earth.

Father, I pray in Jesus' name that You would help us to catch the weight, the privilege, the joy that it is to be in partnership with You by praying and calling heaven to earth. And God, I pray that every person under the sound of my voice feels that stirring, that burning, and the burden to pray, to go, and to meet with You in the secret place, to gather hands with their family, to seek You, and You will hear from heaven. You will forgive not only our sin, but you will heal our land. We thank You for this, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.