

Good morning Cornerstone! It is good to be with you this morning. My name is Joe and I am the Pastor here at Cornerstone.

If this is your first time worshiping with us I want to invite you to fill out our connection card. That just gives us some information to be able to connect with you throughout the week and get to know you a little bit more. If this is home for you, you can use our app to check in let us know you're here. As well as fill out a prayer request so that we can be praying for you throughout the week.

We are going to be continuing our sermon series called 'Spiritual Habits'. Were we have been looking at and studying the habits that we have in order to build a deeper connection with God and grow in our spiritual lives.

Today our scripture is going to be found in Matthew 6:9-13. So, go ahead and turn there in your bibles, if you would like to follow along with us there. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, lets read a part of our passage this morning together which comes from the book of Matthew 6:9-13.

### **SCRIPTURE** Matthew 6:9-13

*Pray then like this:  
 "Our Father in heaven,  
 hallowed be your name.<sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>10</sup>Your kingdom come,  
 your will be done,<sup>[b]</sup>  
 on earth as it is in heaven.  
<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread,<sup>[c]</sup>  
<sup>12</sup>and forgive us our debts,  
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
<sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation,  
 but deliver us from evil.<sup>[d]</sup>*

This is the Word of the Lord  
 Thanks be to God

### **INTRO**

When we talk about prayer there are often 2 schools of thoughts on it. There are those that are so comfortable that they have no problem praying. They will pray out loud in groups of other people. At home in their private lives and while they're driving. The other camp are those that will have prayer as a private matter and if anyone in a group asks who is going to pray they will become one with their chair and hope everyone forgets that they are in the room.

Whenever we are having a meal with friends, most of the time when it comes time to pray for the meal, everyone there expects that I am going to be the one to do it. They think well Joe you the pastor you are the professional prayer. Like I have God's personal cell phone number so I should be the one to call him.

For all of you who have had meals with us know that I will try to avoid this. Not because I do not want to pray or that I am intimidated by it, but I know that my prayers are not anymore special than another's.

So usually before I get asked, I will say, “hey Shawn, will you pray for us.” Which usually catches people off guard and makes people a little uncomfortable. Which I’m okay with because no one has said ‘no’ to me yet. Of course now that I say that the next time I ask someone they are going to. Hopefully though after today the awkward conundrum of who is going to pray will not be such a debacle.

My hope for this morning is to demystify prayer. I think by talking about what prayer is. Why we do it and how will help us not to see it as intimidating but as a spiritual habit we enjoy.

## BODY

Some of us that grew up in church are used to saying the Lord’s prayer in church regularly. The one some of us still have committed to memory comes from the passage that we read in Matthew 6. When Jesus gave this prayer template it was during his great sermon on the mount. Where he was teaching about a lot of things but a focus on the Christian life in practice. He talked about loving our enemies, giving fasting and prayer among other things.

But that is not the only time we see these words when Jesus is talking about prayer. In another passage in Luke 11, Jesus’ disciples came to Jesus and said “Lord teach us to pray”. They were probably asking because they were not sure that they were doing it right. Jesus responds with the cliff notes version of the prayer from Matthew 6.

### Luke 11:2-4

*“When you pray, say:  
 “Father, hallowed be your name.  
 Your kingdom come.  
 Give us each day our daily bread,  
 and forgive us our sins,  
 for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.  
 And lead us not into temptation.”<sup>1</sup>*

A lot of similar words but to many of us scratching our heads seeing there are things missing. So, what do we follow the one in Matthew 6 or the one in Luke 11. We weigh this like we are trying to decide which story we like better the book or the movie. But in reality it is not that complicated.

Jesus gave both of these as a formula. A template if you will of things that prayer includes but this is not a checklist to follow so that God can hear your prayers. I know that I have caught myself even praying then stopping to recite the Lord’s prayer to think of what part comes next. Like we do when we’re trying to think of the letter that comes after “q” in the alphabet.

To some, the structure is helpful to understand all that prayer can and should be. To others it makes prayer feel robotic and disingenuous. What we must see, is that prayer is a form of worship. Thinking about all the songs we sing on a Sunday morning, are they not prayers proclaimed out loud and set to music?

Jesus when he was talking with the Samaritan woman at the well, he said that there will come a day that people will worship in ‘spirit and truth’<sup>2</sup>. We pray in the same way, which is why there are times

<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 11:2–4.

<sup>2</sup> John 4:24

throughout the new testament that says we pray in the spirit referring to the Holy Spirit, which we will talk about in a little bit. We also worship and pray in truth. How we pray is based on scripture, and we do not worship in ways that God does not instruct which is why no one brings animals to offer as burnt offerings anymore.

There are many ways that we are told to pray and how to pray. We pray for personal intervention, for intercession of others and pray to align our hearts with God's.

The first thing that we have to understand about this concept of prayer is that when we pray, we are entering into the very presence of God. It is our opportunity to talk with our Lord and savior. It is our direct access to God. We only have that kind of access because of the work of Jesus Christ, who is our high priest, our advocate and our mediator.

### **1 Timothy 2:5**

*"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"*

Jesus through his death and resurrection he became our high priest. This was a role where Jesus works on behalf of the people to advocate or mediate for the people to God the Father. It was because of the saving work of forgiveness and the giving of his righteousness, that we can have this direct access to God. The book of Hebrews talks about the things that Christ fulfilled and our approach to God in prayer.

### **Hebrews 4:14-16**

*"Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

Because Christ is acting on our behalf, we have this direct access to God through prayer. It is through prayer that we approach the throne of grace. It is because of Christ that when we approach God through prayer we can communicate to God with confidence and boldness, knowing that our prayers are heard and answered.

This is where prayer can feel intimidating. Because it is our direct access and communication with God. It is our ability to be in the very presence of God. We have to grasp the magnitude of that. We should approach prayer with a deep sense of awe, appreciation, and reverence.

Prayer is a big deal and a great privilege we have through Christ. This sense of reverence is a reminder of who we are talking to.

Tim Keller said, ""The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 AM for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access."

As a child of God we approach him as our father but even though we have that kind of relationship with him, he is still king. When we can grasp that understanding of the relationship we have with him, it is a sign of our maturity level in Christ.

So, in prayer, when we are intimidated by this communication, we see him as king and not so much as father. When we use prayer to God like a dad that is there to just there to fulfill our needs, we see him more as father and not as King. We must have a balance of both.

When we have this healthy perspective, we approach prayer differently. Scripture tells us that prayer is done with a purpose. It is the way that we connect with God in all areas of our lives.

### **We connect with God when we pray for his intervention.**

When we pray for God to intervene in our lives, we approach him as Father. He is a father that loves and cares for us. He wants to know what is happening in our lives. Our hopes, dreams, wants, needs, thoughts and concerns. We go to him with everything.

#### **1 Peter 5:6-7**

*“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,<sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”*

Even in this verse we see the mighty God. In reverence and humility we come to him, but we go to him because he cares for us. In this approach of the throne of grace that is talked about in Hebrews 4, we are casting all of the things that trouble us, the things we hope for, care for, and need. We give them to him, so we can find grace in our time of need because he cares for us.

Its exactly the same with our human relationships. We form deep relationships with people when we can be vulnerable. When we let people into the deepest parts of us, you move from acquaintance to friend and friend to brother or sister. The things we love and care about that’s easy to share. The things that we worry about, the things that keep us awake at night, we don’t share those, because that’s private. What we’re really doing by not sharing those things in relationships, is we’re saying that we don’t believe that the other person cares enough about me to be entrusted with those things. Because what we are truly afraid of are those things being used against us or to hurt us.

Prayer and coming to God with that vulnerability is trust. Trust that he really does care. Trust that he is mighty enough to change these things that we lay at his feet, and trust that he loves us as a father would especially when he doesn’t give us the things that we want. God is the only one that is worthy of that trust, if we have a hard time sharing those things, a hard time being vulnerable in prayer, we have to ask do you trust him?

This trust is not pointless or nullified because of God’s omniscience. What I mean by that is we cannot make excuses for this lack of trust. We cannot tell ourselves that its okay that we don’t trust God with those things yet, because He already knows what I need so I don’t even have to tell him.

God already knows what you want and need, that is true. However, he wants you to come in your vulnerability and let go of those things. Lay them at his feet, so that, you are ready to hear what he has in store for you. We could be so consumed by what is happening in our current circumstances that we are not ready to carry the lessons that prepare us for the road ahead. Or we are not prepare to take on his yoke because we are carrying our own. For his yoke is easy and his burden is light<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 11:30

This idea is not the new age Christianity that says you won't receive your blessing unless you ask. This is saying that the season you are entering into might be a difficult one. A season that you are not prepared for. A season he is going to use for your good. If you are still fighting for control of your life carrying your worries and are not living in his freedom, you will not make it through the way he has for you to.

When we trust him, it is an acknowledgement that I can't carry these things. It's saying "Father take them from me I cannot carry them". "I'm tired of the burden of trying to get all of these things in my life in order on my own". It's saying "I'm ready for whatever it is that you have for me". That requires vulnerability in our prayers, we give him all of it, everything, it not cast some of your anxieties, it is cast all of them.

There is a freedom that comes in that trust within this deepest part of us. When we can take the load off our shoulders and give it to God, who cares enough to listen, powerful enough to change then and loves enough to give you endurance to make it through, we can be freed from our burdens.

#### **Philippians 4:4-7**

*"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Let God be the one that guards your heart. Do not guard your heart against the God that cares enough to take your burdens. When we pray and give them to him his peace will guard our heart in the times of trouble. We know that is the result so we should not be anxious for anything. In this day in age it feels like everyone can be diagnosed with some anxiety disorder. That is not a "you feel anxious, just stop it" but this is saying that when you feel anxious do not let it fester, grow and become out of control. Give it to him. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says that we are to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ. We do that by giving the captive thought to the one they are to be obedient to.

Just as much as he cares for you, this promise and truth is also true for others. Through prayer we can bring our own personal stuff, but we can also pray for the needs of others. If going to God on behalf of yourself is approaching God as Father, going to him on behalf of others is going to him as king. It an acknowledgement that you see this need in another and there is nothing that you can do about it, but you know that a mighty God and king that can.

#### **This is called praying for intercession.**

We see times where people prayed for intercession, for God to do something in the lives of others. We see Abraham in genesis praying for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and his nephew lot. We see Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah, Ezra, Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah and Isaiah praying for the people of Israel. In all of Paul's letters he is praying for the churches that the letters are written to. Jesus prayed for believers in John 17. We even see Jesus on the cross praying for his father to forgive his murderers.

Prayers to intercede for others is not just a calling for some. All Christians are to be people who intercede for others, believers and non-believers. The prophet Samuel saw it as a sin against God for him not to

pray for the people of Israel<sup>4</sup>. All believers in the New Testament possess the Holy Spirit and all of us follow the model of Christ, who intercedes for us.

### **Romans 8:34**

*“Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”*

Daniel chapter 9 is a beautiful example of this kind of prayer. Daniel is praying for the people because they are sinful that God might delay judgement on them. We don't have time to dive into the passage fully this morning, but here is an overview of Daniel's prayer.

Daniel understands the needs of the people and his prayer for them is in response to reading God's word (v2). He goes to the Lord in prayer as a way of seeking after God through these pleas to him (v3). He approaches God with humility and self-denial (v.4). This self-denial is strengthened by the confession of sin (v.5-15). He acknowledges that the salvation of the people from judgement can only be dependent on God's character (v4, 7, 9, 15). Finally, if the people are to be saved, he desires that it is done for God's glory (v. 16-19).

The elements of Daniel's prayer we see riddled throughout scripture. God's word tells us the needs of man (2 Tim 3:16-17). We confess our sins one to another to find healing (James 5:16). We are to humble ourselves before a mighty God (1 Peter 5:7). Salvation comes from God alone through Jesus Christ (John 14:6, Ps 62). All Glory belongs to God and God alone (Eph 3:20-21).

I don't know how many of you noticed but there is a theme in praying for intervention and intercession. When we go to God as Father in personal pleas and going before the king for the needs of others in intercession, in both we approach with humility.

Both of these parts of our prayers are ways we connect with God, but both are done as a way of seeking out his will. Jesus thought it was important enough to put it in his sermon on the mount.

### **Matthew 6:10**

*“Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.”*

The spiritual habit of prayer is not just talking to dead space and hoping God hears you. It's not even one way communication, where God is always just a listening ear. A great way to look at this, have you ever tried to communicate via walkie-talkie with someone who doesn't really know how they work? They might not hold down the button long enough before they start to talk, so you miss part of what they are saying. Or, worse yet, they might hold down their button the entire time, cutting off the ability to hear whatever you have to say. It's not a very effective way to communicate!

We tend to look at prayer like a one-way conversation where we talk and God listens. Like God has the walkie talkie. We say what we have to say and we think God does use his to talk back. This view of it misses the biggest part of this connection to God. When we view prayer like this we are the ones

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 12:23

holding down the button on the walkie-talkie the entire time. We talk and don't realize we aren't doing it right and can't hear him talking back.

It's helpful to know how prayer is supposed to work. Biblical examples of prayer include not only petition and thanksgiving, but also asking questions, listening, and God answering. In order to hear God respond in prayer we have to be listening by reading the Bible regularly and quieting our hearts.

When we pray, we humble ourselves, we enter the presence of God, we connect with God when we establish trust, we seek him and seek to glorify him, and God works in you to align your heart with his heart and his will.

It's amazing how much we can be okay with chaos in our lives when we are confident in what God is asking us to do. It's amazing how much our perspective can change when we seek after God. One minute the world is ending, and the next, we truly believe that God is going to work this out for our good and his glory (Rom 8:28) no matter what our circumstances look like.

Jesus is the Son of God; He claims over and over again that he and the father are one. He is Yahweh, the great 'I am'. The God of the universe, and one within the trinity. Even He prayed to maintain that connection. Because of Christ, we have the example of how to connect and how to remain focused on him, and surprise it's through prayer.

Look at Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus has already had the last supper with his disciples. He has already said repeatedly that he is going to die. He said at dinner that tonight is the night that he was going to be captured and put to death. He said one of them at the table is going to betray him into the hands of his enemies. At one point Jesus dismisses Judas from the table and says go and do what you need to do. He then retreats with his disciples to go to a quiet place and do what? Surprise again, Pray and connect with his father because he knows what is about to happen.

#### **Matthew 26:39**

*"And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'"*

This is the example of seeking out the will of God. This is Jesus setting the example of not my will be done but yours. Not that Jesus' will was not to go to the cross. This is Jesus facing the hardest thing that he is going to face, and he sets the example for us when we face impending doom. "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Even though Jesus set this example of sensitivity and obedience to God's will, I see so many people read this and miss the heart of the example being set. They will think that they have to pray like "uh God please heal my wife she's really sick, but you know whatever, do what you want."

Listen to the heart of it. It's saying God this is what I see in front of me. These are the things that are screaming the loudest. This is the weight that I carry. I lay it at your feet because my desire is to seek after you, let your will be done in me and not my own desires."

When we align our hearts with God's heart and his will, the things around us don't seem so big. The horrible death that is waiting just around the corner, we are prepared for. Because we know no matter what happens God's will, will be done, and we seek that above our own.

There is so much accomplished through prayer. There is so much that can deepen our connection to the amazing God who is great and mighty, who is gracious and merciful, and who is father and king.

The shame is that most people don't experience it because they don't practice it. Or when they do its just before they eat meals or for 2 minutes when they tuck their kids in at night. This is a spiritual habit that is practiced with vulnerability. Its good to pray for meal and have the posture of prayer before we go to bed but what about the other 23 hours and 45 minutes of the day?

### **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

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

**Prayer is not meant to be isolated incidences sprinkled throughout your day. Prayer is to be a continuous and on-going conversation with God that maintains an ever-present heart of worship.**

The conversation, connection and heart of worship should not have an end while we are alive conscious and awake. It is continuous, ongoing and ever present. It should never cease within us. That posture of prayer takes maintenance. Which means we stop and focus throughout the day. It doesn't have to be fancy either. You could be at work or with your kids, pause and think where is my heart at? "God, be with me, align my heart with yours. Amen."

Prayer is not meant to be some fancy opportunity to show off all of the theological terms we know. It's not us trying to impress God with all the scripture we have memorized. Sometimes its messy. Other times we know exactly what we're feeling, and we can explain it well. The point of prayer is connection. Praying to God is connecting with him both in our requests, and in our ability to stop long enough to hear him speak.

Jesus when he was teaching on prayer in his sermon on the mount he said it this way.

### **Matthew 6:5-8**

*"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*

*<sup>7</sup> "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

God knows what you need before we ask. It doesn't matter how we say it. Which is why he says do not pray empty phrases like the pagans do. God isn't going to hear you better because you are a pastor or leader in the church. He is not going to hear you better because you know fancy terms or you are well spoken. Pray to the King who is reigning and ruling in your life. Pray to your father because he wants that relationship with you. A relationship where you speak with him about your hopes dream, worries and fears.



Prayer's main concern is time with him. That is why he instructs to go into a room and close the door praying in secret, it is your time to spend with him. We pray publicly in church, but it is not so that I can have others prove how holy someone is, or how well they can pray. That is not what it is about. If it was we would be the hypocrites God is talking about. When we pray in church we are connecting with God corporately as a body. Connection to him as a unified whole instead of just as an individual.

Prayer has to be the heart of worship, communicated through connection. We have created that environment in our hearts and in our lives. We sometimes just have to pray, speak out loud like we are holding a walkie talkie. Even if you feel like you can't or you don't know what to say or you're afraid that you're going to say the wrong thing. Where the reverence of going before God is commendable. It is good to have the desire to present your best self because it is your God and king. When we let it hold us back in prayer our relationship to the father pays the price. Just go for it in the mess and in the uncertainty. Maintain the on-going conversation with the God that loves you. The God that is a mighty king but is also your heavenly father.

Jesus came and died to give you his mercy in forgiveness. Equip you with his righteousness so that you can be in right standing with him. It is a relationship you have because you have been ransomed. It is a connection you have because it was bought at a great price. Prayer is an act of worship we can use to build a relationship that impacts eternity, but that relationship also completely alters the present.

"The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 AM for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access." -**Tim Keller**

We have it because of the sacrifice of Christ. We are the child of the most high God and King. Invest in that relationship, because God has chased after you and saved you, pray and seek him without ceasing, aligning your heart with his.