



Habit #2 - Prayer – I talk to God

Session #2

Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

In his book, *Prayer*, Tim Keller describes a time when his wife Kathy demanded that they learn to pray together. It happened in 2002. The church Keller pastors in Manhattan had just experienced the 9/11 attacks. “The whole city sunk into a dark depression, even as it rallied.” Many of the people in their church had lost friends and loved ones. The pressure was intensified as both of the Keller’s were experiencing health problems. Kathy was struggling with Crohn’s disease and Tim was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. In this time Kathy asked Tim if they could pray together every night. She said it this way:

“Imagine you were diagnosed with such a lethal condition that the doctor told you that you would die within hours unless you took a particular medicine—a pill every night before going to sleep. Imagine that you were told that you could never miss it or you would die. Would you forget? Would you not get around to it some nights? No—it would be so crucial that you wouldn’t forget, you would never miss. Well if we don’t pray together to God, we’re not going to make it because of all we are facing. I’m certainly not. We have to pray, we can’t let it just slip our minds.”

Some truths about prayer:

- ***We know that we need to pray because Jesus needed to pray.*** – Jesus, the Son of God, walked upon this earth in complete dependence upon the Father and the Spirit. And His dependence, obedience and communion with the Father and the Spirit happened through prayer. Luke 6:12 tells us about Jesus’ prayer life; in the midst of constant teaching, traveling and preaching it says ***Luke 6:12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.*** Tired and busy, Jesus prayed all night long. He needed commune with the Father, via the Spirit in to order minister.
- ***The things that we need to do are often difficult.*** Prayer is a lot like falling in love. When you first met someone that you fell in love with, it was easy, right? Everything was new and exciting. In marriage counseling I try to share this all the time. When people come in and they want to get married it is often because they are crazy in emotional love. Everything is new and exciting and wonderful. And I say “*If you want to turn this relationship into something wonderful, lasting, and deep, it’s going to take a lot of reflection, it’s going to take a lot of patience, it’s going to take a lot of emotional elbow grease, it’s going to take a lot of work.*” And they look at you like “Oh it’s OK, we got this... we love each other! And I always think “Well you will begin to understand what I’m talking about

over the next two years! In the same way, to have a good, rich, deep loving prayer life you also have to work at it.

- **The basis for Prayer is the relationship that you need most.**
- **Matthew 6:9** “This, then, is how you should pray: “ ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
- **This statement is revolutionary**, although not to us. As people who have grown up with the idea of God as a Father, this is a regular part of our vocabulary. But to the Jew, the idea of knowing God as a personal Father was not a common idea.
- The word “**Father**” appears 1,164 times in the OT and in only 14 of those times does it refer to God as a Father, and in those instances its use is either metaphorical – “God is like a Father” or it refers to God as the Father of Israel, the nation. In Jesus’ time calling God the Father was more common, but not for an individual personal Father/Son relationship with God.
- **But Jesus tells us that this is what the gospel is**, “Not everybody can come to God as Father. But if you believe in Me and only if you believe in Me, you can have the same legal standing as I do before the Father.” See **John 1:12–13** *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.*
- So what Jesus is saying is, “If you belong to me, then you automatically receive my status.” You now can talk to God as a Father.

FOUR TRAPS OF POWERLESS PRAYER:

1) The NO PRAYER Trap – The most powerless prayers are the ones that are never prayed. Many times, we say we will pray, but prayer is squeezed out by every urgency that we face each day.

Matthew 7:7-8 “Keep on asking, and you will be given what you ask for. Keep on looking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And the door is opened to everyone who knocks.

2) The RITUAL PRAYER Trap – this kind of prayer is where I find myself praying the same things over-and-over because I have no real direction or sense of relationship. “God forgive my sins, and bless the missionaries around the world.”

- **Example: The time when I left a message on an answering machine and ended the message with “In Jesus name I pray” I knew that I had fallen into a prayer rut at that time!!**

Jesus said that ritualistic prayers are not a way to get God to listen to you.

Matthew 6:7-8 When you pray, don’t babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered only by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, because your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

3) The DOUBTFUL PRAYER Trap – We ask out of obligation, because we feel we should, but we don't really think that prayer has any effect, that God is listening or that He would ever answer us.

- **Example: When I am praying for someone who is sick and in the process of praying, I give God every possible out, so that it will not hurt my faith if He says “no” to my prayer request.**

James 1:5–7 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;

4) The SELFISH PRAYER Trap – We pray without thinking of God or others. We end up praying for our own felt needs, without much input from God's point-of-view. “God, give me a great day, give me, help me, show me.

- **Example: I remember looking through my prayer journal and seeing how many times I wrote the words “me” and “I”**

James 4:3NLT And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole motive is wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

1 John 5:14-15NLT And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

THE A.C.T.U.P. METHOD FOR PRAYER:

ADORE GOD – Adoration means acknowledging God's worth or value. We reflect on God Himself, we think through His many attributes and praise God for being the God who deserves to be honored, loved and boasted about. This is the pattern for prayer that Jesus gave His disciples:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. (Matthew 6:9)

- **Why do we begin prayer with adoration?**
- **The Lord's Prayer begins and ends with adoration. The Psalms are filled with adoration**

1) Adoration reminds us of God's IDENTITY–

- **Adoration SETS THE TONE for prayer** – It reminds us that we are talking to the God of creation. It reminds us of Whose presence we have entered and Whose attention we have gained. It helps us recognizing God's person tends to draw us to be more alert in prayer, more careful about what we say. Somehow, reducing God to a cosmic genie

- I remind myself who God is and who I am not. I remind myself who it is that I am actually talking to

2) Adoration BUILDS MY FAITH as I begin to pray. God's identity focuses on His attributes or characteristics and His abilities

3) Adoration is a NATURAL response for people when they encounter greatness.

C.S. Lewis noted that praise is something we all do. All people young or old, humble or proud, shy or loud, naturally overflow with praise when they experience something that is really good. He writes: *“The world rings with praise – lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars.”*

- **So then, praising God is the most natural thing that a being created by God can do!**

How to Adore God

1) Boast about God's GREATNESS to God.

Find a passage about God's greatness and pray it back to Him, say it back to Him in your own words.

***Psalm 86:5-8** O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask your aid. Listen closely to my prayer, O LORD; hear my urgent cry. I will call to you whenever trouble strikes, and you will answer me. Nowhere among the pagan gods is there a god like you, O Lord. There are no other miracles like yours.*

2) Get in the habit of praising God as the SOURCE of every good thing.

C.S. Lewis talked about seeing every pleasure of life as a means for gratitude and praise to God. He called it *“Running your mind back up the sun beam to the Son.”* Did you eat a good breakfast? Praise God for that! Did someone greet you warmly today! Praise God. Can you walk? Did your cold go away? Do you have loved ones?

- ***James 1:17** Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow.*

3) Remind yourself of Who God is in the midst of TRIALS and STORMS – You will see this time and again in the Psalms. The author of the psalm will be in some kind of desperate situation and then they will meditate on who God is. The self-reminder will cause them to rise up within the situation and make a faith declaration based on their relationship with God.

***Psalm 5:1–7** Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my sighing. Listen to my cry for help, my*

King and my God, for to you I pray. In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.

- David, the writer of this psalm, is in a rough spot. We know from vv. 7 and 9 that liars and deceivers seem to have it in for Him and even want to kill him. So, David reminds Himself that God is just, God is against evil and that God is the one who avenges wrongs.

4 You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell. 5 The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong. 6 You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors.

- In the middle of his trouble, David makes a statement of faith, he rises up, not because the trouble is gone, but because God is good and just and merciful, and David trusts Him.

7 But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple.

- We can praise God in the storm, in the trial, in the trouble. God is who He is, no matter what is going on. He can be our peace and our strength. He is our true life and hope. Who God is, is the assurance of our future.

CONFESS YOUR SINS

Confession is admitting your sins to God. Be honest and humble. Remember that Christ has paid for each and every sin on the cross and that confession is primarily a restoration of a familial relationship.

Steps to Forgiveness

1. Ask God to REVEAL sin.

He does this through our prayer - Psalm 139:23-24 *God, examine me and know my heart; test me and know my nervous thoughts. See if there is any bad thing in me. Lead me on the road to everlasting life.*

He does this through relationships - Galatians 6:1 *Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.*

He does this through emotions – Psalm 51:8–9 *Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.*

2. Agree WITH GOD that your sin is wrong and TURN AWAY from it.

Confession is not just feeling bad that you got caught in the act of sinning. It is an act of faith. All sin is rooted in the suspicion that God isn't really good and doesn't have your

best in mind. Confession is agreeing with God that He is right, and His way is best. Repentance is turning from unbelief to faith.

Proverbs 28:13 *If you hide your sins, you will not succeed. If you confess and reject them, you will receive mercy.*

3. **By faith, ACCEPT God's forgiveness.**

1 John 1:9 *But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.*

- **Faithful** – Jesus cannot be unfaithful, He will faithfully forgive us, we will not “wear out” His faithfulness. **Just** – It would be unjust for God to not forgive you. Jesus has fully paid for your sin, the penalty for sin has been satisfied.
- **This is about restoration of relationship** – Imagine Courtney as a little girl, covered in mud, wanting to sit on my lap. Go clean up! She is still my daughter, but cleansing is needed before intimacy can be restored.

Psalm 103:12 *He has removed our rebellious acts as far away from us as the east is from the west.*

T HANK GOD – There is a difference between feeling grateful and expressing thanks. In Luke 17:11-19, Jesus healed ten men of leprosy, but how many came back to thank Him? Only one. Were they all grateful? I'm sure they were, but only one came back to thank Christ for healing them. And this built a deeper relationship between that man and Christ.

Psalm 103:2 *Praise the LORD, I tell myself, and never forget the good things he does for me.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18 *No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*

Examples of blessings for thanking God

- 1) **ANSWERED** prayers,
- 2) **SPIRITUAL** blessings,
- 3) **RELATIONAL** blessings, and
- 4) **MATERIAL** blessings

Make a list of everything you are thankful for!

As you finish thanking God for these blessings, you are reminded of God's faithfulness, which helps to build our faith even more.

U PLIFT OTHERS – Lift up the needs of others to God before you pray for yourself.

- *This is a great time to lift up the needs of others before God. This is a time when you can focus one by one and ask God to remind you of all the people that you can pray for.*

For Christian brothers and sisters: *Ephesians 6:18* *Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.*

For everyone who needs prayer: *1 Timothy 2:1* *I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. As you make your requests, plead for God's mercy upon them, and give thanks.*

- **This focuses us on loving others as ourselves.**

PERSONAL REQUESTS – Praying for your own needs.

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

What needs do I pray about? ALL OF THEM. There is nothing too great for God's power to take care of and there's nothing too insignificant for His concern. I am to pray about every need.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 *Be joyful always; **17** pray continually; **18** give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1. God loves to give His children good gifts.

Matthew 7:7–11 *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. **8** For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. **9** “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? **10** Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? **11** If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”*

- **We are fallen, we are sinners, yet giving good things to our children is natural to us.** If you are a parent, how much pleasure do you take from seeing your kids have great joy? An immense amount! How fun is it to give your child something that you know they really want? Or to see them earn something that they have really worked for? It brings us amazing amounts of joy as parents and as grandparents. How much joy does it bring God to give His children good things?
- 2. We bring our desires before God by aligning our will with His.** We bring our prayer request to God after praying “*Your Kingdom come Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” In bringing our requests before God and knowing His goodness and perspective. We pray that our requests be filtered through God's desires for our lives. We ask for God to fulfill both our desires and His will. And if our desires do not line up with God's will, we ask that God would do His will first and foremost..

1 John 5:14–15 (NET) And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him.

We lay out the reasons before God why we think that what we ask for is the best thing. This is called arguing with God, but not in the sense that you are trying to win an argument, we are simply reasoning in prayer, why we think the request that we ask lines up with His will and will bring Him glory. This means more than just asking, it means we think deeply about God and His will and what He desires in our world when we pray.

Let me give you an example: We have been praying regularly for the funds to come in for our building fund and specifically for this building to sell at a reasonable price to provide money for us to break ground on our new building. Now we have been very careful with our hearts before God. So when I pray I reason with God. Our desire is to bring more people to God, that more would believe. And that more people could worship Him. A new building will give our many visitors a better sense of safety for their children. We take them a block down the street, I am sure that has scared some people off. I reason with God that our new space, all on one level, would allow people with bad backs and legs and knees, manage to get in this room to worship. I reason with God that we could have more and better fellowship as a body. We could all go to one service, people would know each other better. We could add fellowship times that would fit everyone in our church. I reason with God that we could let our building be used by the town and schools as a meeting and gathering place and therefore people would regularly come into the space and may consider checking out one of our services. Our youth ministry would have better outreach possibilities with the multipurpose room. We could have dinners and concerts etc. All of this could bring God glory. All of this helps us to really examine our own hearts.

3. Tell God that if He wills something different that what we are asking, that we will believe that His will is better than our desires.

This is praying “*Your will be done Lord.*” And this can be very difficult. Especially if we are asking for something that we desperately want. Like that someone would be cured from a disease, or that a relationship would be restored, or for the salvation of a loved one, or praying about being able to get pregnant, or to be married someday, or to save your marriage, or for a tragedy to be averted or reversed. You know that kind of requests that I am talking about.

Tim Keller says it this way in His book on prayer. Praying that God’s will be done is praying with faith “*...that God will either give us what we ask for or give us what we should have asked for if we knew everything that He knows.*”

A COMMITMENT TO PRAYER

“Father, I desire to relate to You as a son or daughter of Yours. Teach me to pray in a way that goes beyond giving You my wish-list, to a conversation with You that adores You, confesses my sins to You, thanks You for Your blessings, and gives You all of my concerns.

Right now, by Your power working through me, I commit to a regular time for prayer!”

SIGNED: _____

Some verses for Adoration

- Psalm 25:1-11
- Ephesians 1:3-14
- Deuteronomy 32:3-4
- Psalm 42:1-5
- Ephesians 1:15-19
- Psalm 51:1-13
- Revelation 5:9-14
- Psalm 119:9-24
- Psalm 139:1-18

Attributes of God

Self-existence. Exodus 3:14; John 5:26; Dan. 5:23; Acts 17:28

Unchanging - Malachi 3:6; James 1:17

Truth - Isa. 44:8–10, 45:5; Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:3–4; John 14:1, 2, 6; Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2

Love. 1st John 4:8, 10; John 3:16; 5:42; Rom. 5:5, 8; 8:35, 39; 1 John 4:10, 11, 19; Rev. 1:5

Holiness - Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 57:15; Leviticus 11:44, 45; Ps. 11:4–6

Eternal - Psalm 90:2; Ps. 102:12; Exodus 3:14

Immensity - 1st Kings 8:27 Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:23, 24; Acts 7:48, 49