EMPHASIS: PRAYER · WEEK 2 · SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2026

TEACH US TO PRAY

"It's funny how quickly we become familiar with someone's presence, and how quickly we take it for granted."

LUKE 11:1–4 · ESV

[1] Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." [2] And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. [3] Give us each day our daily bread, [4] and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

HAVE WE EVER BEEN TAUGHT TO PRAY?

Everyone has been told to pray. We read books on prayer and work through devotionals. But has anyone ever sat with us in prayer and invited us into their secret place — *"this is how I do what I do"*? For most of us, the answer is no.

Prayer is something we do, something we've seen and heard, but rarely something we've been **invited into.** And yet the entire Christian life is built on it. It is the fundamental piece of life in the Spirit and life with God.

NOTES

WHAT IS PRAYER, REALLY?

> *"Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God."*
>
> — JOHN OF DAMASCUS, AN EXPOSITION OF THE ORTHODOX FAITH

Timothy Keller draws on Friedrich Heiler, an early-20th-century scholar who split prayer into two types. We tend to lean toward one or the other, but the Bible won't let us choose. **Prayer is a two-sided coin.**

SIDE 1 · MYSTICAL

COMMUNION

Seeking union with God and the inner experience of his presence.

SIDE 2 · PROPHETIC

CONVERSATION

Word-centered and active — asking, wrestling, calling on God for his kingdom to come.

1. MYSTICAL — BEING WITH GOD

Half of prayer is the full attention of my heart, my mind, and my soul toward God — the giving of myself over to him. Think of being so captivated by a film on the big screen that for two hours nothing else exists.

- **Prayer is the fullness of all that I am, looking at God. Full intimacy — nothing hidden, nothing distracted.**

> *"Your desire is your prayer; if your desire is continual, your prayer is continual."*
>
> — AUGUSTINE, EXPOSITIONS ON THE PSALMS

That's why **silence and solitude** are among the most fundamental practices of prayer. And this should lift a burden: sometimes you only have a few moments, and sometimes you have nothing to say at all. Turning your heart, your mind, your body, and your ears toward God with no words — *that is prayer.*

2. PROPHETIC — SPEAKING WITH GOD

The other side of the coin is that prayer is word-centered. It's about the voice of God and our voice — intercession, supplication, confession, and more. To pray and feel it fully is to hear the voice of God, and to know the comfort that our voices have been heard as well.

In his book *Answering God*, Eugene Peterson describes how a baby learns language. A baby doesn't invent speech. For months it is spoken to, sung to, and named — and only then does it begin to answer. Its first words are responses to voices that came first. Prayer works the same way: **we can only speak to God because God has first spoken to us.**

Prayer has always started with God speaking, not us speaking.

Prayer operates the same way the gospel does. We have never been the ones initiating our salvation; it has always been our response to the invitation of Jesus. Prayer is the same — it is our response to God's desire for communion with us. *We are accepting his invitation.*

> ROMANS 8:26-27 · 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.

NOTES

THE HEART OF IT: GOD PURSUES US

There is something about being pursued first — being wanted, sought out, called to — that makes us feel loved and cared for. The most radical, amazing thing about prayer is this: **prayer has always been, and always will be, God's pursuit of us.**

God loves talking to you more than you could ever imagine. He did all of this — sent his Son to die, redeemed the world — because he wants to be with us. God spent 4,000 years preparing a plan to once again walk with us in the cool of the day.

PSALM 37:4 · ESV

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

God is not burdened by your prayers. He is not tired of them, bored with your presence, or mad at how long it's been since the last time. God is *delighted* at the chance to talk to you, to help you, to grow you, to change you.

GOD'S GREAT REWARD OF THE CROSS WAS YOU.

JOHN 10:1-4 · ESV

[1] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. [2] But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. [3] To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. [4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."

NOTES

SO, HOW DO WE PRAY?

A simple rhythm for a life of prayer. Try walking through it once a day this week.

1 BEHOLD
We put all of ourselves in front of God.

2 LISTEN FIRST
We start by listening to Jesus, in silence.

3 WORSHIP
We give thanks for who he has been and what he has done.

4 RESPOND SECOND
We talk, learn, grow, and are formed.

5 ASK
We bring him our needs, our wants, and our requests.

6 ENJOY HIM
We let ourselves enjoy God as God enjoys us.

FOR THE WEEK · REFLECT & DISCUSS

01 Has anyone ever invited you into their prayer life? What did you learn from them?

02 Which side of the coin comes more naturally to you — being with God, or speaking with God?

03 What would it look like to spend five minutes simply beholding God, with no words?

04 Where do you sense God pursuing you right now?

NOTES