

How to Pray

by David Hocking

The sermon teaches how to pray effectively by focusing on the heavenly Father, forgiving others, and seeking His holiness and righteousness.

Duration: 49:01

Scripture: Matthew 18:21

Topics: "Effective Prayer", "Spiritual Deliverance"

Description

In this sermon on prayer, the speaker emphasizes the importance of genuine and heartfelt prayer. He highlights the hypocrisy of those who pray to be seen by others, rather than seeking a true connection with God. The speaker encourages listeners to turn to God in times of trials, temptations, and struggles, emphasizing the power of prayer for deliverance. He also discusses the importance of forgiveness and the need to forgive others in order to receive forgiveness from God. The sermon concludes with a reminder to seek God's deliverance from evil and to rely on His strength.

Transcript

Our text is Matthew chapter 6 beginning at verse 5 and down to verse 15 on the subject, How to Pray. While you're turning, I'm reminded of the beautiful hymn in our hymn book that says, What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear, What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Oh, what peace we often forfeit.

Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer. Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged.

Take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Precious Savior, still our refuge. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer.

In his arms he'll take and shield thee. Thou will find a solace there. Isn't that a beautiful song? What a friend we have in Jesus.

Actually, the subject of prayer is a part of a three-fold application of what it is to be religious and to act spiritual and to desire to be seen that way, but not to be real. He begins the chapter, chapter 6, with the

matter of almsgiving and he ends the section on prayer with a discussion about fasting. We're just looking at prayer, how to pray.

The key verse of the Sermon on the Mount is chapter 5, verse 20, where Jesus said, if our righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. This is a discussion about why, in the matter of prayer, their righteousness was merely external and not what it should be. I don't know about you, but I've read a lot about prayer.

Through the years, I've read a lot about prayer. I've prayed a lot. But it doesn't matter how much you've prayed.

It doesn't matter how much you've read. There's a gnawing feeling in the heart of every believer as he draws near to God that he doesn't really know how to pray. The disciple said, Lord, teach us to pray.

He said, men ought always to pray and not to faint or to lose heart. We lose heart easily. Some of us maybe try to give an hour in prayer, thinking that the time alone makes us spiritual.

After all, have not the greats of the past spent a lot of hours in prayer? I don't know, maybe that was before telephone, television, fax, and computer. People had more time, perhaps. Some of us barely get five minutes in and we're off to work.

And some of us don't even pray. Some of us show up at church, kind of like a spiritual hypodermic needle. Get a little shot, keep us going for the week.

This is a very important message on prayer. How to pray. And maybe your heart cries out.

How to pray. The song said, have we trials and temptations? How about you, you got any? Are there any struggles? Is there any trouble anywhere? I dare say that every one of us could come forth with a whole parade of troubles and struggles and trials and temptations. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

How to pray. Let's begin in verse 5, chapter 6. When thou prayest, Jesus said, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet. And when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy father, which is in secret.

And thy father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them. For your father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner, therefore, pray ye.

Our father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen. Now a little footnote. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you.

But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses. Now this prayer is beautifully outlined by Jesus. I like that.

I don't have to struggle that much with it. It's very clear. In verses 5 to 8, he tells you what you should not do.

And there are two things you should not do when you pray. And then in verses 9 to 15, he tells us what we should do. Now let's start with the negative, what we should not do.

He first of all tells us in verse 5 and 6, don't pray like the hypocrites pray. How do they pray? Very simply, to be seen. Secondly, he says don't pray like the heathen pray.

Well how do they pray? They pray to be heard. Now let's back it up. Don't pray like hypocrites pray.

Turn to Matthew chapter 23. I guess that's the last thing in the world you want to be called. If people really want to hurt somebody, just call them hypocritical.

It was a word that came out of the Greek plays. It was used of a person who played multiple roles. And as they went behind a wall or a barrier on stage, they would change their mask and then change their voice pattern as they came out and played another character.

So it was a good word to start with. It meant to play a role. But it becomes a bad word when we play a role that's not ourselves, when we're putting on, we're shining, we're trying to make people impressed with what we're saying or doing.

Hypocrites. If I did what Jesus did this morning, a lot of you would write Pastor Chuck and ask me to leave town. Jesus looked at people who were very religious and said, you hypocrites! Now you've got to admit, that isn't what you came to church to hear.

But that's what he said. In Matthew 23, verse 14, he said, woe unto you scribes and Pharisees. These are religious people.

They believe in the Lord God of Israel and follow his law. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, he said. For ye devour widows' houses and, look at this, for a pretense make long prayer.

Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Look down at verse 27 and 28, which kind of captures what it is to be a religious hypocrite. It says, woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Don't pray like the hypocrites pray. They're doing it to be seen.

And Jesus said they have their reward, they were seen, but they'll get no reward from the Father at all. Then he gives a principle. Go back to Matthew chapter 6 again and look at the simple principle in verse 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet.

When thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret. And thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. The simple principle here is that God sees in secret and rewards openly.

You're praying privately and nobody knows what you're doing. But you're praying to the Heavenly Father, not like hypocrites who want to be seen. And God rewards you publicly.

And no one really knows why you're being rewarded by God. But he is because of the secret prayer closet where you've been praying and calling out unto the Lord. Prayer is a mighty thing, people.

I don't know about you, but I have often wondered what it's going to take to turn our country around. Contract America or not. I wonder what it's going to take.

It seems like Christian churches are more and more filled with people. Attendances are up in several areas of the United States. But the society around us doesn't seem to be affected.

Would Jesus say hypocrites? You appear outwardly religious, but inwardly something's not right. Your relationship with God is not what you say it is. And he knows, and we can't fool him.

And I sometimes wonder, did God mean it when he said, if my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Can God heal a land? Can God heal a country? Can God heal a city, a culture? Can God heal a church? We don't often hear much of that anymore. So maybe this will help you.

Just a few hundred miles north of us is a city in California that has a population of 100,000. A year ago, a group of pastors, a very small group, about five, were very concerned about longstanding grievances among the churches and people didn't get along and the pastors never got along and they decided to do something about it. So they agreed to meet for prayer for one hour once a week, just prayer.

No business, nothing else, just prayer. They started about a year ago. Right now, as of this week, there are 60 pastors praying.

Not five, 60, almost all the pastors in town. The story does not end there. One of these pastors in the original prayer group had a drama team this fall who came to his church to put on a little play.

It was on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The play's theme was on heaven and hell with a lot of focus on hell and very graphically presented, made people a little uncomfortable. The pastor was surprised at how many people responded to the play.

So he asked the drama team if they could stay another night, which they did. And another night, and another night. No, this is not one of those stories you read in a textbook.

And yes, I have called and got firsthand information. So far, over 60,000 people have seen that drama. Over 17,000 people have come to know Christ.

The bars are being closed. Video stores run out of the community. And in the schools, they're calling it a crisis in the education department of California because the students are coming up to the teachers and begging them, asking them, how do I escape hell and go to heaven? And many of the teachers are not Christians, of course, and don't know what to do.

My dear friends, that went on for four solid weeks. It is still going on every weekend, and they're going to keep it going until people stop coming. You have to go at 2 and 3 o'clock in the afternoon and wait in line to even get into the auditorium.

And it's been packed every single night. And this is not exaggeration. I asked them several times, are you telling me the truth? Please.

I don't want to hear any story again that will just defeat the people of God. I don't want to hear a snow job anymore. He said, if anything, I underestimated it.

I said, what's the key here? I don't know. We didn't advertise. We don't know anything.

All we know is it's a mighty movement of the Holy Spirit, and we want to stay out of the way. All I know is that we prayed and asked God to move in our town. All I know is a few pastors got right with the Lord and forgave each other, and people started doing it in their churches.

And before we knew what was happening, a revival has happened in our town. I say hallelujah. How about you? And I say if it can happen there, it can happen here.

It can happen all over the country. The problem is, getting back to this, what Jesus told us not to do is in fact what most of us do. We don't mean to.

We just do it. Don't pray as the hypocrites. God sees in secret, and He will reward openly.

And secondly, in verse 7 and 8, He says, don't pray like the heathen do. He's talking about the world, not the religious folks, the scribes and Pharisees. But among the pagans, there's all kinds of praying going on.

They tell me by national statistics that 99 point something of Americans always pray. Well, there's something wrong with the prayers. If that many people are praying, but nothing's happening.

Don't pray like the heathen pray. How do they pray? Jesus said to be heard. They think for their much speaking.

And sometimes I think when we Christians get together, it's like filling in time. You've got to learn how to pray and keep it going. You know, just talk a long time.

Maybe repeat the phrases over and over again. Folks, that is not biblical prayer. And the Lord warned us about it.

He said, don't use vain repetitions. Verse 7, they just want to be heard for their much speaking. Don't be like them.

And He gave us another principle. Why? Because God knows what we need before we ask Him. It's almost like we're informing God.

Do you know God about Mrs. Jones who needs to be healed? She lives over in Santa Ana Boulevard. That's about four doors down from the corner over in the northwest. Wait a minute.

God knows where she is. God knows her better than you do. He knows all about her and knows why she's suffering as she is.

He knows the beginning from the end and know how it's all going to turn out already. Jesus said, don't be like the hypocrites. God sees in secret and rewards openly.

And secondly, don't pray like the heathen pray. God knows what we need even before we ask Him. Look at verse 31 of this same chapter.

It says, therefore take no thought saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or wherewithal shall we be clothed. For after all these things do the Gentiles, same word heathen in our text, for after all these things do the heathens or Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.

But, he said, seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Is that great or what? Go back please to chapter 6. So that's what we should not do. Now let's talk about what we should do.

Beginning at verse 9 down to verse 15. If I'm reading this right, there's just two basic things. Number one is to focus on your heavenly Father.

Verses 9 to 13. That's the problem with prayer. A lot of us are praying among other people, thinking of them, what they're going through, etc.

Not that there's anything particularly wrong with that, but it's not what Jesus told us to do. Jesus told us to focus on our Father in heaven. That's what he said.

So number one is to focus on the Father, and number two is the footnote which is going to shake a lot of us up. And that's to forgive the trespasses of others. And if you don't, God won't answer your prayer.

Well let's start with what we should do. Focus on our heavenly Father. Let's look at the prayer, because he said in verse 9, after this manner, therefore pray ye.

I don't know anything that's more simple. I read a couple books on prayer this week, and trying to just prepare my heart for it and going over it, but I'm amazed every time I come back to it, it is so simple. Some of you have this down, you haven't memorized.

Maybe we ought to say it every day, because Jesus said this is the way we're supposed to do it. What is he talking about? Let's look at request number one. Our Father, verse 9, which art in heaven.

Now right away that says you've got a relationship with him. If you can't call him Abba Father, this is going to be tough for you. Our Father, which art in heaven.

Where is he? In heaven. He's not next door. He's not in New York City, though they need him.

Actually he dwells in a whole universe and fills it with his omnipresence. But his particular location is described to us as to prayer as being in heaven. Why? Because it's from heaven.

Every time I looked up that reference and for sake of time I'll skip over them, but simply to say to you that every time it talks about our Father in heaven, it's talking about how he looks down on the children of men and sees everything that's going on. Our Father, which art in heaven. The one who sees everything that's going on in my life and yours.

Here's the first request. Hallowed be thy name. Now I don't know about you, right away I have a problem.

How do I make holy the name of God? He already is holy and there's nothing I'm going to say that's going to add to it. So right away the first request is a problem. Let's call it the sanctity of his name.

Hallowed be thy name. Exactly what is Jesus talking about? Go back to Leviticus chapter 19. There's quite a bit about hallowed or holy or sanctify.

It's all coming off the same word. What does it mean when it says that our first prayer to God the Father is Hallowed be thy name. In Leviticus chapter 19 verse 2. The Lord said to Moses, speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel.

And say unto them, ye shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy. Look at chapter 20 verse 3. Here he's admonishing them to stay away from idolatry. Especially the god Molech.

Verse 3. I will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people because he has given of his seed unto Molech to defile my sanctuary and to profane my What kind of name? Holy name. Now I'm beginning to understand a bit. The way I desecrate and profane it rather than hallow it is by my own sinful actions and lifestyle.

Whoops. Maybe I better write 1 John 1.9 under Matthew chapter 6 verse 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us. Hallowed be thy name.

Be holy because I'm holy. Hallowed be thy name means to focus on the holiness of God. The name of God represents his character, his attributes and who he is.

And to understand that he's totally apart from sin. And totally apart from that which he himself created. He is the creator.

And we are in a sense to make that holy in our lives. Is God number one? Do we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Or do we basically give him a little token attention on the weekend and yet through the week live like the devil? Hey, something's wrong, folks. Jesus said when you pray, here's what you say.

Hallowed be thy name. And everybody in this world would shrink back and know immediately what the point was. That we're not a holy people.

God said in that wonderful passage in Chronicles 7.14 that if my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I'll hear from heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Look at chapter 20 verse 7. Sanctify yourselves therefore and be ye holy for I am the Lord your God.

Verse 26. Ye shall be holy unto me for I the Lord am holy and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine. And I look at the church today and I include myself.

I look at us and I say what? What's going on? Why are we different from them? Or are we at all? It just appears that Christians and non-Christians look pretty much the same these days. Something is wrong. As our pastor admonished us last Lord's Day, he said concerning the words of Christ that many people will say, Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful works in your name? And he'll say, depart from me, workers of iniquity.

I never knew you. There are people who may have made long prayers, may have been like scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites, but they didn't pray the right one. Hallowed be thy name.

In my life, I want you Lord to be number one. Everything about you. Your holiness and righteousness, I want it to dominate my life.

I want to fear the Lord and hate evil. I want to stop this mess I'm in. I want to get right with God.

That's the prayer. Hallowed be thy name. And I don't know about you, but I read that and I feel so far away.

Go to Isaiah 57. Let me show you something interesting. Isaiah 57, verse 15.

Now over and over again in the Psalms, you'll read about the holy name of God and hallowing it and sanctifying it. But in Isaiah 57, 15, we have an interesting verse that helps us to understand a little bit of what Jesus is teaching us about prayer. In Isaiah 57, 15, it says, I dwell in the high and holy place.

Watch this carefully. With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit to revive. You want revival? Here it is.

To revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. In our scripture reading in Psalm 34, we read that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord saves him out of them all. And that he's near to those that are broken hearted.

A broken and a contrite heart is what God wants. King David in his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51, 17 said, I wonder if we really understand. Let's go back to Matthew.

Chapter 6. First thing in our focus on the heavenly father is the sanctity of his name. The second thing is the sovereignty of his will. Look at verse 10.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Please understand something. The great kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ is going to come to this earth and be established on time in prophetic fulfillment to the word of God.

Not any pleadings of ours. Is this a prayer for the kingdom, the messianic kingdom to come down on the earth? No. No need to pray for that.

It's going to come when God wants it to come. And he's got the exact time already marked out. Your prayer won't have any effect on that at all.

Some people thought this meant we bring in the kingdom. No, we don't. Jesus Christ will bring the kingdom on earth.

Well, then what's he talking about? He's talking about the will of God dominating and controlling our lives. This demands submission and humility to God. Thy kingdom come.

The Bible says that God rules over all. His throne is established in the heaven and his kingdom rules over all. Psalm 103, 19.

He reigns in every part of it. And though there will be a visible manifestation of that on earth with Jesus Christ ruling and reigning in Jerusalem, all during this time of the rebellion, all during this time of the

nations of the world turning their backs on him, God is still ruling. He sets up kings, takes them down.

He's working all things after the counsel of his will. Thy will be done. One writer is kind of a hyper-Calvinist.

You say, what's that? You don't want to know. But this hyper-Calvinist wrote in his book, and it kind of made me laugh a little bit. He said, God is the strongest Calvinist I know.

And he was trying to favor his own view. The point is that everything is under the control of God. But, you know, as you read the Bible, that's true.

It doesn't matter what you are on every point of Calvinism. The point is God is working his will out. And who are we to question it? Both Isaiah and Paul say, what right does Clay have to say to the potter, why are you making me like this? Hey, stop.

I don't want... Wait, you have no right. Besides, Clay doesn't talk. Who are we thinking that we somehow are affecting the overall will of God? What about the classic example of prayer of Jesus in the garden? What did he say? Not my will, but thine be done.

In my opinion, there have been many circumstances in my life where I have not said that, though the words could come. Do you understand what I mean? As a Christian, I know the words. But sometimes God allows circumstances that I don't think are his will, but he allows them there to break the spirit.

The spirit of someone underneath who says, outwardly, not my will, but thine be done. But inwardly, it's not broken, because God is near to the brokenhearted. It's a broken and a contrite heart that God wants.

Jesus said, not my will, but thine be done. And many people trying to understand that say, well, he just wanted to get out of going to the cross, maybe. No, no.

He came to this world to seek and to save that which is lost. In Hebrews 10, he says, I delight to do thy will, and gave his body as a sacrifice once for all. No, he knew where he was going.

Then what was he saying in the garden? He said, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. The cup was not death, the cup was suffering. And in Hebrews 5, 7 and 9, we have a commentary on it.

And his prayer was answered. And how was it answered? By the resurrection, as God raised him out of the dead ones. In other words, endure the suffering.

Why, Lord? You will become the author of eternal salvation to all who obey you. You will become, as Peter says, the example to everybody who goes to a trial. To learn the will of God.

This is God's will. As Job said, though he slay me, yet I'll trust him. Is that what we say? Most of us are fighting God all the time.

Resisting what happens. Upset over the circumstances. We're not at peace, there's no contentment in us.

And we want to pray and we want to see God work. But it's on our terms. And Jesus said, when you pray, number one, you talk about the sanctity of his name in your life.

And two, the sovereignty of his will. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Your kingdom over everything, over my life.

Over all my relationships, my decisions, my possessions, everything. Let's go to number three, verse 11. The third request is the supply of our needs.

Give us this day our daily bread. Is that simple or what? Some of us would like to pray, Lord, give me a six month supply, I'll feel more secure. Stock the shelves, Lord, so I can be at peace tomorrow.

He said, daily bread. Do you understand that what we're talking about is a day by day dependence on the Lord? And look at where we are. Outside of a few exceptions among us.

Most of us, we have a bank account. Though it's not what we want it to be. We have credit cards that we probably shouldn't use.

We have homes and cars. We have futures and careers to think about. We have insurance and all that stuff.

And yet the Bible says to not trust in the uncertainty of riches, but in the living God who gives us all things to enjoy. It's a day by day dependence upon the Lord. David said, I've been old, I've been young, but I've never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread.

Does God care about your needs? You bet he does. Is there anything that's not significant enough? No. Everything bring to the Lord in prayer.

But understand, he's going to meet your needs. He promised to do so. The Bible says, my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Number four. Look at verse 12. At the standard of forgiveness.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. In Matthew 18, Peter said, How often should I forgive somebody that sinned against me? Seven times? Jesus said 70 times seven and then told him a story of a man who really owed a lot and a man who owed a very insignificant sum. A very fascinating story.

And the man who really owed a lot was forgiven. But then he who just had a small debtor, just minor money, refused to forgive a man after he had been forgiven so much. And the Lord told him that if you don't forgive men their trespasses, then your Heavenly Father will not forgive you.

Same message that's here. More about this in a moment. Let's move on to number five.

Number five is in verse 13. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Or literally in Greek, the evil one.

We're talking here about the strength of his deliverance. We read in our Scripture reading in Psalm 34 that the Lord will deliver us out of all of our troubles. In 2 Thessalonians 3, 1-3, Paul prayed and asked for prayer that I would be delivered from the evil one.

1 John 4, 4 says, Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. We need to be delivered. The Lord delivered us, says Psalm 34, and He will deliver us when we cry unto Him.

This is a prayer for deliverance. Are you going through a tough test? A difficult temptation? Do you feel the satanic pressure around you? And all the strategies of the enemy to destroy you, and defeat you, and devour you? Then what do you do? You pray. Jesus said, watch and pray.

Matthew 25-41, that you enter not into temptation. So important, isn't it? Prayer is the real weapon against the enemy. The weapons of our warfare, wrote Paul in 2 Corinthians, are not carnal, but are spiritual to the pulling down of strongholds.

And then finally, at the end of verse 13, I like to call this the splendor of His majesty. This is an interesting part of the prayer. It ends by saying to God, For thine belongs the kingdom.

It translates, is the kingdom, but it's thine the kingdom. Meaning, it belongs to you. The kingdom that reigns over my life and everything.

It's yours. And the power too is yours. And the glory is yours.

Forever. This is the prayer of someone who finally gets the message. The kingdom means that God rules over everything.

And I don't have any right to question Him. And the power means that He can do anything. And I have no right to question whether He can accomplish in my life what I need to have done.

He can do anything. There's not one problem in anybody's life, listening right now, that God the Father cannot answer. There's not one sore that He can't heal.

There's not one sin that He cannot forgive. There's not one need that He cannot supply. Our Lord is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.

And glory, He's the only one that's worthy. To Him be all the glory. Paul says, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we're to do all to the glory of God. Psalm 115 says, Not unto us give glory, but unto Thy name alone. Thine is the kingdom, He rules over all.

The power, He can do anything. And the glory, He alone is worthy. That's a good summary of prayer.

Amen? The whole issue is, I know God's in charge. He's running everything. Why have I been questioning Him? And I know He can do anything and meet any need.

Why have I been doubting Him? And I know He alone is worthy. Why don't I just burst into praise and cut this out? What I've been doing. Constantly trying to help God.

Figure things out. Resolve them myself. And then once in a while pray when I get real desperate.

What a simple prayer. Focus on the Heavenly Father. I wish we could end it right here and say, Amen, and go.

In fact, it's a little startling to see Jesus add this. In the Greek, there's no paragraph break here at all. He said it right after He told us how to pray.

You see, the second part of what we should do is not only focus on the Heavenly Father, but forgive the trespasses of others. Can we look at it one more time? Verse 14, If you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Have you noticed that... I don't know, maybe it's not your focus, but have you noticed how many people emphasize the need of the person who sinned to get right with the Lord? And very little is said about the person who should forgive them getting right with the Lord. Have you noticed that? Let me put it another way. Are there many people here who have been hurt by somebody real bad? Maybe a father, a mother, a relative, a friend, employee, a son, a daughter, somebody by their actions or words or whatever have really hurt you.

Let me put it another way. Is there somebody here who would say, I lost a lot in that deal. This cost me plenty.

And if they want my forgiveness, then they're going to have to settle this. Have you ever heard people say, Well, I would forgive him, but this is his third time. No more.

Or, of course I've forgiven him. It happened 20 years ago. Of course, that's the way he is, you know.

There's always a little footnote, a little addition, a little addendum that somehow rips apart the whole heart of forgiveness. I believe in the light of where this is placed in the matter of prayer and how often it is in the Word, I believe we can safely say that the greatest problem among believers in getting answers to prayer is the failure to forgive others. Now, I've got books on my shelf about forgiveness.

Some of them even have that title. It glares at you. Forgiveness.

So you reach over, Boy, that's what I need, man. I have read these books, and they're interesting. They tell you about how to straighten things out so true, godly forgiveness can be applied, et cetera, et cetera.

But then I come and I read the Bible, and I get a little confused. I've gotten so senile that I believe my Bible now gives great insight to all my commentaries. Although I was originally told that they would help me understand this, I think it's reversed.

Folks, I'm not trying to make a big deal over this, and yet I am. I'm not trying to bore you with a bunch of stuff. I'm trying to speak from my heart.

I don't know about you, but I have a problem with this. Do you? I have a problem learning how to forgive. Whether to accept God's forgiveness or forgive myself, or forgive other people for things they say and do that are unjust and wrong, or whether they were just, but it's a long time ago.

Why is it still going on? Don't you have problems like that? Please say yes. Okay. So I said, Lord, please help me to understand.

I want you to know that I don't doubt my forgiveness in Christ one bit. I know when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, all my sin past, present, and future was laid on Him on the cross, and I am forgiven and I am cleansed by the precious blood of Christ. We are not talking about positional forgiveness.

We are talking about the application of it in our relationships with people. And that's not easy. So I decided, Lord, help me to understand Your Word.

And our time is out, but I'm going to give you quickly, without going into details, what I found out about forgiving others. And since it is the number one hindrance to prayer, we need to deal with it. I'm asking myself as I'm asking you, what does it mean to really forgive somebody? Number one, it means you

realize that you could do the same.

Whoops. It means you realize you could do the same. Our Lord condemns in no uncertain terms any judgmental, self-righteous attitudes that comes into our hearts that makes us think that we would never do what this dear brother has done, no matter how gross he has been.

And we get the idea, well, I would never do that. Yes, you would. Under the right provocation, our depravity is so awful, we'll commit the greatest of sins and not even believe we did it.

If we truly forgive each other, then we realize we could do the same. Number two, if you truly forgive, you refuse to seek revenge. Ever.

Ever. Our media is hyping us with revenge. God says, vengeance is mine, I will pay.

I'll repay, saith the Lord. Don't ever vindicate yourself. Don't defend yourself.

The Bible tells you not to do it. It says to leave it with the Lord. Don't ever seek revenge.

Ever. Refuse to do it. Number three, if you really truly forgive somebody, you respond without bitterness or resentment.

There's no bitterness in your heart. Hey, how's your attitude toward that guy that really did that to you? I can't hardly believe he did it. He shouldn't have done that and all of that and said, oh, I forgive him, but he'll get his, let me tell you.

You know. Folks, that's not true forgiveness. Number four, if you truly forgive, you recognize the only basis of forgiveness is that God has forgiven you.

We are admonished to forgive one another as Jesus Christ has forgiven you. Aren't you glad he didn't wait while you tried to clean up your life? While you tried to prove your worthiness of him. No, he forgave you even though he knew what you're really like.

Number five, if you truly forgive, you release the person from debt or obligation completely. Yeah, I forgive you, brother. Hey, it was only 10 bucks.

Don't worry about it. But if it's 10,000, look, if you pay that back, then I'll know and I will forgive you. That'll be true repentance when I get the 10,000 back.

That is not biblical forgiveness. The Lord gave us an illustration of that. It doesn't matter what.

But you don't know what I lost. You don't know how they hurt me. None of that is brought up in the Bible.

You do it. Release them from the debt. Release them from the obligation to do anything.

That's true forgiveness. You want to know how to melt the heart of a marriage that's struggling? Learn to forgive. It'll heal it like that.

And number six, if you truly forgive, you're remembered against them no more. How are you and your husband getting along? Oh, just fine. What about that thing that happened 10 years ago? Well, yeah.

Well, I forgave him of that. Of course, he's still the same guy. You know.

We always have our little remarks that show us that forgiveness has not really taken over. People say, you know, I just can't forget what he did. But you can forget in terms of bringing it up against them.

And God will take it out of your mind when that happens. And finally, I learned that to forgive somebody else is you relate to them as though nothing ever happened. Wow.

That's true forgiveness. Hey, you remember what happened about 10 years ago, honey? And I, you know, you forgave me of that and so forth. No, I can't remember.

What? Well, you know when it was. I forget what the actual date is. No, I don't remember at all.

What usually happens is, yes, I remember. I know the month. I know the day.

I know the hour. I know the circumstances. Maybe it is good to laugh at ourselves, but the truth is there's not only a problem on the side of those who have transgressed and sinned, but there's also a problem on the side of those who are applying forgiveness.

And Jesus said, if you won't forgive men their trespasses, then your heavenly father will not forgive you. Let's pray. Thank you, Lord, for helping us.

Thank you for the simplicity and clarity of this passage telling us how to pray. Lord, we confess to you that we struggle. There are many people that lose confidence in prayer without even thinking about the nature of our prayer, whether it's what you want or not.

We're so arrogant and proud at times. Then it leads to depression and discouragement, and we start giving up and acting like God doesn't do anything. Thank you for your kindness to us, Lord, when we're so ugly at times towards you.

Lord, I would ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit you would work in our congregation. As you have brought to mind the names of people who have sinned against us and hurt us, God, give us the courage and the conviction to go to them and seek their forgiveness and straighten this out. Help us, Lord, to forgive them like you forgave us before we ever talked to them.

Help us, Lord, to be willing to let go. A lot of us are hanging on to past remembrances, and that breakdown in communication is keeping us from being healed and restored. God, I pray that you'd just touch by your mighty Holy Spirit help us to forgive like you did.

We thank you, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen. Would you stand, please? You might feel like others today have felt that you'd just like to pray, either alone or with somebody else.

And we would certainly encourage that. Our prayer room is to my left and your right down the end of this wall. We have a huge area.

We invite you to come by and pray. I cannot help but believe that you experienced the same thing while I was preaching that I did while studying this thing over and over again. Names of people and situations come into your mind.

Forgive them. Forgive them. It's amazing what burden will just go off of your shoulders.

That thing you've been carrying around, that heartbreak. You say, well, I need counsel. I need to talk for at least, you know, a couple of months or maybe even longer.

I've got to get to it. No, you don't. No, you don't.

I'm not against good counsel. I don't mean that at all. But I learned the hard way, and so do you.

What I need to do is get on my knees before God and forgive Him. No matter what it was. You know, some people don't even know they've offended you, and you've been running around for years with a spirit of bitterness in your heart, and they don't even know it.

And you say, well, that's the reason why we need to tell them. I'll tell you right now. No, you don't.

No, just let it go, people. Let it go. We are hindering the flow of God's precious Spirit in our lives.

We are grieving His Spirit. We are quenching the Spirit by our unforgiving attitudes and not experiencing the blessing of simple prayer to our Heavenly Father. May God help us.

We all need this, don't we? The Lord bless thee, and keep thee.

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