

Learning To Pray Again

by Donny Coulter

This sermon from Acts chapter two emphasizes the importance of pursuing holiness by focusing on the practical aspects of holiness in our lives. It highlights the significance of prayer, trust, and thanksgiving in our relationship with God, encouraging believers to have faith in God's goodness and sovereignty. The sermon addresses the hindrance of worry in prayer life and the need to trust God's plan, even in difficult circumstances, to experience His peace that surpasses understanding.

Scripture: Acts 2:42, Philippians 4:6, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 14:23, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 4:16, James 1:6

Topics: "Pursuing Holiness", "Trusting God's Plan"

Description

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Transcript

Acts chapter two. One more time, Acts chapter two. Next week, I'm excited because we're going to jump back into first Peter and we're gonna jump back into this pursuit of holiness.

As we look at, we've looked at the theological background. We've looked at the theological background of holiness and now we want to look at, starting next week, we talked about the battlefield of the mind and how much that plays into our ability to pursue holiness and next week we're gonna begin to look at the practical side of the pursuit of holiness in our lives and I'm excited to do that. Acts two, verse 42.

This gets old after a while. I know, you start reading the same things and hearing the same things over and over again but it shouldn't because the word says, and they devoted themselves, they devoted themselves. Or they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching.

That was our first distinctive. We said that they were a teaching, a studying, teaching, proclaiming church. And they continued steadfastly in the fellowship.

That's number two. They were together and they partnered around the one thing they had in common and that is Jesus Christ and their salvation. They continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread.

We called that worship. They continued steadfastly in their worship together and we started two weeks ago, we started they continued steadfastly in the fourth distinctive is they continued steadfastly in their prayers, in the prayers. Let's pray as we began.

Father, I think this is one of the most underutilized tools that we have as believers and that is prayer. There are some of us that have learned to pray and to pray well, but there are many of us that have not. Whether that be because of the busyness of life or our own failures and sinfulness that drive us away from your presence, whether that be the lack of faith and trust, whatever it is, Lord, we tend to pray, fire escape prayers, our religious prayers, but we don't really communicate with our God.

I pray that you would help us to make a shift in our thinking, our view of who you are. I pray that we could make a shift in that so that it would drive us to pray, to trust and believe. Lord, help us to be a praying people, not a worrying people, but a praying people.

Lord, we need you to do that in our lives and in our church. And so, Father, I pray that your Holy Spirit this morning now would come and be our teacher. I pray that he would teach, give me the anointing and the power that I need to be able to speak the Father's words, words of truth.

And then, Father, I pray that your Spirit would then take those words and begin to make them a reality in the lives and the hearts of those who hear. Give us ears to hear. I pray this morning.

We trust you now in Jesus' name, amen. Praying. Wow, how many of us really utilize that incredible tool to pray? I know they're gonna hate me for this.

Boys, where are you supposed to be sitting? Sorry. You can bring your food in here. Thank you.

All right, head back on track. Prayer. We talked about from Acts chapter four and Acts chapter 12, we looked at some of the experiences of the early church and how they prayed and we talked about how when things got bad, they prayed.

When decisions needed to be made, they prayed. And they got together. They got together to pray.

They didn't just pray by themselves. They came to the place of fellowship and prayed. That's one of the reasons why we want to do this Sunday evening prayer time.

They came together to pray and they believed God and they prayed out loud. Do you remember the stories? They prayed out loud. Yes, there's nothing wrong with saying words out loud to God.

It's okay. I know that we're trained to be quiet and make sure nobody hears us, but there is absolutely nothing biblically wrong with praying together out loud with your voice. Believe me, God can decipher all of the information that he receives.

He can do that at one time. We found out that prayer was a big part of the church life. A big part of the church life.

And we also found out that sometimes, beyond our expectations, that God does something amazing, like bring somebody out of a coma who has a prognosis of no life left. It happens sometimes. God does those things.

But then sometimes he doesn't. And that can cause us to take a spin down to the point where we don't pray because all of a sudden, we don't feel like we can trust him. When we have a high view of God, remember we talked about that a couple of weeks ago.

We talked about a high view as opposed to a low view. When we have a high view of God, when we put God where he belongs, in this place where the most high God belongs, then it makes it easy. That can drive us then to him to pray.

It's really hard sometimes when God doesn't do what we think he ought to do, how we think he ought to do it when God doesn't do that. It's really easy to think that God is not necessarily good. God is not necessarily wise.

God is not necessarily powerful. I know you probably would never say those words. But I wonder sometimes if they don't trickle around in their minds.

Turn to Philippians chapter four. Philippians chapter four. I want to see as we learn to pray together, I want us to see about three principles that will help us in our prayer life, personally and in our corporate prayer as well.

Philippians chapter four, verses six and seven. Now we talked about this initial part of this verse. I gave these three principles back in November, I believe, when we were talking about the last message before we moved out of holiness and into Christmastime and the distinctives.

But we talked about this verse just a little bit. I remember saying something, because Thayne wasn't here that day, and I remember saying something online that I'm covering his verse. Because this is one of the verses that he likes so much.

Philippians chapter four, verse six and seven. Be anxious for nothing. I want you to notice something about these verses, these two verses as we go through.

Look at the words that Paul uses to point us to a big God, okay? I want you to the high view of who God is. Look at the words that Paul uses in these verses to point us there. Be anxious for nothing.

Now, is there a word, is there something in there that nothing doesn't cover? Is there a problem in your life? Is there a problem in our country? Is there a problem in the church? Is there a problem in our family? Is there a problem in our job? Is there a problem anywhere in our lives that is not covered by the word nothing? Is it? So then, Paul says, be anxious for nothing. Do not worry. There's your first principle.

Principle number one, do not be anxious. Do not worry for anything. Don't worry about nothing.

You don't have to worry. And we're gonna get to the reason why that we don't have to worry, but you do not have to worry. So our first principle is do not worry about anything.

There is nothing in your life that's churning in your mind right now as you process through, wait a minute, process through, Canadian style, as you process through what's in your mind and what's in your life when you hear me say those kinds of words that begin to challenge you, there is nothing that you are processing through your mind right now that is not covered by nothing and it is not worthy to be worrying about. You don't have to worry. And there's a wonderful reason why you don't have to worry.

I realize that no matter how spiritual we are, no matter how much faith we have, there are times when we are anxious. Would you agree with that? Even the most solid people, those who have the most faith have moments of anxiousness and worry. But the scripture is quite clear here that we are not to worry.

Principle number one in praying, prayers of faith is don't worry. Second principle, well, let's read this part and then we'll get to the second principle. But in everything, are you catching on to the words and the wording that Paul is using? In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, there's my principle number two, is thanksgiving.

I realize that it's easy to thank God when things are good, isn't it? Oh, when we get an extra bonus at work, oh, thank you, Lord. It feels so good to have some cash in my pocket for two days. Thank you, Lord, for the healthy birth of my grandbaby.

Thank you, Lord, for the news of coming out of a coma. Thank you, Lord, for just some rest, to finally be able to sleep. Thank you, Lord.

It's easy to thank God when things are good, isn't it? That's when we're most thankful. But when Paul gives this instruction to be thankful, we're gonna see that he gives this instruction to be thankful without ever giving us how or why we're supposed to be thankful. We're just supposed to be thankful.

In, that's exactly right, thing, in everything. We are to be thankful. With thanksgiving, there's the second principle, don't worry about nothing.

There is nothing that you need to worry about, and you can be thankful no matter what your circumstance or situation that you are in is, you can still be thankful. And how many of you have ever taken the time to thank God for your overwhelming trouble? When life is at its worst, when the need is incredibly great, and it seems like there is no way out, how many times have we ever turned to say thank you, Lord, for my need? One of the greatest things about need, about things that come against us, is that oftentimes they drive us to God. And if it's something that drives me to the place that I need to be, then I ought to be thankful for it.

Paul says, don't worry, be thankful, and then principle number three combines both, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God. So this is principle number three, is just pray about everything. Pray about everything that's in your life.

That means, do you remember we talked about G. Campbell, G. Campbell Morgan, I can't remember now, my brain's quit, but he said about the little lady that says, can I just bring the big things to God, or can I bring the little things to God? And he says to her that all of your problems in your life are little to God, in comparison to God. Everything you have is little. We need to pray about everything.

So there's your three, I gotta move on, there's your three things. Your three principles of learning to pray. Number one, don't worry.

Stop worrying about stuff. Number two, in the midst of everything, no matter whether it's good or bad, give thanks to God, because he is worthy of your thanksgiving. Number three, then, pray about everything in your life.

Pray. Now I want you to notice something. What did Paul not say? Did he say, be anxious for nothing, and give thanksgiving, and, before I go too far, let me read verse seven, because we didn't read verse seven

yet.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Now, read that again together, the two verses together, be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God, and the peace of God, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, or surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and your minds through Christ Jesus. Now, what did he not say? Can you figure it out? When are you supposed to give thanks, and when are you supposed to never be anxious? All the time.

Here's the point I want us to make. He did not say, when you get the answer you were looking for, do these things. Do you see that anywhere in here? When you get the answer you're looking for, when you get that answer, then you can give thanks, and you don't have to worry, and the peace of God will come and guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, when you get what you want.

Is that what he says? It doesn't say that. It doesn't say anything about the answer, does it? It's just talking about praying, and then trusting God with the answer. That's what all of this depends on, and so what he says is that you, when you do these things, when you don't worry, because God is high and good, when you don't worry, when you give thanks, no matter what's going on, because God is good and he is the high God, when you pray and trust him in everything because God is the high God and he is good, when you do that, no matter what happens to the answer of that prayer, you receive the unsurpassable, unbelievable peace of God to guard your heart and mind no matter where you are in your life.

Now, we want to read verses like this and expect that everything is going to be hunky-dory, that everything is going to be great, that my cancer's going to be gone and my finances are going to be straightened up and the husband and wife relationship is going to be fixed. We want to take this and say that I can do these things when those kind of things happen, but that is not what Paul is saying, and if we understand that God is a high God, when we understand that this high view of God, then we can enter into a request to God without worry and without anxiety and we can make our prayers and supplications to God, that is the expression of what we desire with our finite minds, what we desire to happen, right, that's what prayers are, that's what supplications are, that's where we are going to God and saying, God, this is what I would like to see. You understand what I'm saying? There's your prayers and your supplications is what you understand in your limited, fleshly, finite capabilities needs to happen or wants to happen.

That's what we do when we have a high view of God, we can go to God with all of that and not worry and we can go to God and ask him in our finite capabilities for what we think we need and then we can thank him, you ready for this? We can thank him for what he can do, we can thank him for what he may do and we can thank him for what he will do. See how that works when you have a high view of God? You can thank him as you bring your request to him, you can thank him for hearing you and then it's there that we settle into a trust of this high God, this most high God, it's there that we settle into this peace and trust of God and with that trust comes this incomprehensible peace that God gives to us and in that, look at the promise, it's too much to get into but look at the promise of that, that when we do this and we trust this good and high mighty God, when we do that, his peace comes in and it guards our hearts even in the midst of the good and the bad. You're guarded, you're taken care of, you're being watched over.

See, it's this, that kind of prayer becomes a prayer of faith. It does become a prayer of faith because he, God, this almighty high God, this God is good and he has our good in mind. Now, as soon as I say that, some of you are thinking that if he had my good in mind, he wouldn't make this happen in my life.

If he had my good in mind, he wouldn't make this happen in our country but just because bad things are happening doesn't mean that God who is good does not have our good in mind with allowing the bad things to come in our life. Faith, true faith, trust God to build the present and the future for us which is way better, listen to me, which is way better than your finite fleshly mind could even imagine even if he lets bad things come. Faith is a complete confidence in God whatever your future is.

You hear that? Faith is a complete trust in God no matter what your future is. It is trusting God, good or bad, indifferent, he knows what's best for us. Do we believe that? Do we really believe that God is good and that he is high, most high, do we really believe it when difficulty comes? See, if we really believe it then we can read verses like this.

Watch this, Romans 8 verse 32. He did not spare his own son but delivered him up for us all. Do you see how a good God can allow bad things to happen? For he did not spare his own son but delivered him up for us all.

How shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Now we want to say all things are good things but the promise here is that God gives us all things that we need. And please understand as we'll see in a moment that all that you need is not just here in this life that you have a life of eternity to come and God is preparing you for that. Look at this verse.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God. Did you read that correctly? That all things, the good, the bad, the indifferent, all things work together for the good of those who love God. Why does it work together for our good? Because God is good.

To those who are called according to his purpose. And what is his purpose? For whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. There is the purpose of God in your life.

And sometimes he allows bad to fulfill his purpose. And that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Look at this verse.

Your suffering, the suffering that you're experiencing right now in your life, that you think is the most miserable and horrible thing, look what a good God allows that suffering to do. And not only that, but we also glory. Look what the attitude is.

I glory in my tribulations. I glory in my persecutions. Knowing that tribulation, knowing that difficult times produces perseverance.

And perseverance produces character. And character produces hope. Notice how he ended with hope.

When stuff is not going well, what do you need most? Hope. So we have to learn that God is high and that he is good. And that he has my good in mind.

And when we realize that, when we really catch onto that, then we can experience the peace of God. Now look what he says. Let's cover don't worry for a minute.

Based on that, let's cover don't worry for a minute. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse six. Oh, I'm sorry, I skipped a verse.

I wanted to get this one. Therefore we do not lose heart, even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. What is God? What is God's intention? Is his intention to

give you a healthy, strong, earthly body that will last forever? Or is he intent towards your inner man, your inner person that's being renewed day by day? For our light affliction, whatever that is that's going on in your life, for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Do you see the goodness of God in this verse? That God is good? If we don't have a forward thinking, eternal mindset, then everything will be miserable. Everything will be horrible.

If we don't have an eternal mindset, that God is not just here to take care of me in this life, but God is most concerned with preparing me for the life to come. I would love to spend a lot more time on that, but I won't. Hebrews 11.6 says, back to do not worry.

But without faith, it is impossible to please him that is God for he who comes to God must believe that he is. Without faith, it is impossible to approach God and believe God unless you believe that he is already and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Now, here in this verse, does it say that he is the rewarder of those, rewarder of those who get all the good things in their life? But when we seek him, even in the midst of the horrible things in our life, he is still out for our good.

Worry hinders your ability to pray. I used to be, and sometimes I still am. So when I'm preaching this, I'm preaching to myself today.

But I used to be a real worry wart. I was bad until I began to understand some of these concepts. But worry hinders your prayer, and I believe, I'm gonna make a statement here, you may agree or not agree with, but I believe that worry is a sin.

Because whatever is not of faith is sin. Here, he says, without faith, it is impossible to please God. I read a statement that says, we are to worry about nothing because we can pray about everything.

We are to worry about nothing because we can pray about everything. Worry is one of the greatest hindrances to your prayer life. Worrying that God is not good enough, God is not strong enough, God is not wise enough, God is not loving enough to prevent my disaster, to prevent my whatever it is, this bad thing in my life, to worry is this fear that God is not all of that.

He is not wise enough. That's what worry says. So he is not this high God, but he's this little God, and we are not to look at God that way, that God is this high God, and he is wise enough, and he is good enough, and he is strong enough, he is powerful enough, and yes, he does love me enough to be concerned about my good.

I think that's why Paul starts this section on prayer path with worry. He starts it with do not worry. Don't worry.

I used, last year when we were talking about this distinctive I brought a vacuum cleaner out, I don't know if you remember that, I brought a vacuum cleaner out and spilled some rice seeds on, seeds, what do you call those? Grains, there we go. Rice grains on the floor, and I sucked a few of them up with a vacuum cleaner, and then I took a ball and stuck it in the end of the vacuum cleaner, and then tried to suck up the grains, and the grains represented your needs. Whatever it is that you have, your needs, they represented the needs, so when I'm not worrying, prayer works, but when I'm worrying, it doesn't work, and it's the

same thing that's true with you.

How many times you've been trying to suck up all that stuff in the bottom, in your floorboard of your car, and something's been in there, and the machine's going, it's really loud, and it's not got much suction power, and you can't get much done. What do you gotta do? You gotta go clean out the clog, and to us, our prayer life, the clog in our prayer life often centers around worry. We have got to learn that God is a high God, and that He is a good God, and He has my good in mind.

When we have a low view of God, He is not wise. He is not good. He is not strong.

He is not powerful. He is not loving. When we have a low view of God, that's what happens in our minds and our hearts, and then we enter with worry and anxiety, and then our starting point, at that point, our starting point is coming from a place of mistrust or no trust with God.

Do you understand what I'm saying? That when you worry, and you enter into your request and your thanksgiving, when you're overwhelmed and overcome by worry, if you can't set that aside, you're worried, you're coming from, your starting point is a place of mistrust or no trust of God. And how in the world are we ever gonna get anything done? And if I don't trust God in that state, how can I ever be thankful? If I don't trust Him, how can I be thankful that God has my good in mind? And then thirdly, if I'm in that place of no trust, then there's no way that I can have peace in my life, that guards my heart. Do you see how a low view of God begins to destroy our ability to pray properly? Romans 14, 23 here.

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, but he who does not eat from faith for whatever, I said because he does not eat from faith for whatever is not from faith is sin. Now, I want you to understand that there's context to this that doesn't necessarily, speaking of prayer, the context is eating of meat or not eating of meat and doing that with faith that it's okay to eat meat. I don't have to be afraid of eating meat.

Everything God has sanctified, and along with thanksgiving, I can eat of it, but if my conscience doesn't let me do that in faith, it is sin. And everything that we do must be driven by love and faith. If you read the context of Romans 14, you'll see that everything that we do must be driven by faith and love, faith and love.

And so whatever, in this instance, whatever is not of faith is sin. The principle is the same, because the root of all sin is a lack of trust in God. You catch that? The root of all sin is a lack of trust in God.

If sin is a failure to trust, then faith is a confidence in God that He is at work in our lives every moment of every day so that nothing that happens to me, nothing that happens to me is not the best thing for me. And I think we need to come to a place where we believe that in light of eternity. If we truly believe that God is high, if we truly believe that we can trust Him and that He has my good in mind, it is then that peace comes.

If we're in a difficult time, and we have prayed, and we are lacking peace, I think we need to take stock. Now, peace does not mean that I am happy, go lucky, and everything is hunky-dory. Peace just means I'm trusting You.

That's what it means. You got this, God's got this. I remember us saying that back when COVID first came up and everything was shut down.

God's got this, He's got this. If we truly believe that God is who He is, that He is working for our good, then this unbelievable peace, there is an unbelievable peace about our life, and that, my friends, I believe is the complete essence of saving faith. Be careful that you don't have a backward-looking faith, meaning this, that you had faith when you came to Christ and He saved you and forgave your sins and He is not doing anything else for the rest of your life, that the only purpose of God was to save you from your sin.

Be careful that we don't get stuck there because I believe that our faith has to be a forward-looking faith. The essence of saving faith is seeing that God has worked in the past and He has forgiven all of my sin, but He is also forward-looking in that I know that a sovereign God, that a sovereign God would never do or allow anything that is not good for me, even when it may be hurtful or bad. Now, if we learn not to worry, then we can give thanks, and that ends, I would end with this last one.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, give thanks. The best way to combat worry is to be thankful. You believe it? Try it sometime.

The best way to combat worry is to be thankful. Thank God for your needs. Try it sometime when things are overwhelming and you wanna go to God with the fire escape prayer, just thank Him for the fire and see what an impact it has on your prayer life.

Thankfulness, and look what He says. Give thanks, it's give thanks in everything, everything. Your good times, your bad times.

I read a statement here that says there is nothing too great for God's power and nothing too small for His fatherly care. I don't know who said it. Nothing too great for God's power and nothing too small for His fatherly care, which is why we should pray for everything.

Now, if you're like me, I have not lived up to Philippians chapter four, verse six and seven. Not consistently all the time, but it ought to be my goal. And that's why we wanna have prayer together.

That's why we wanna get together and learn to pray together. We wanna take this prayer path of Paul's and learn to use it together, that we would be thankful in all things, that we would not worry about anything and that we would trust God to give Him all of our prayers and supplications, no matter what they are, and then step back and trust Him because He is good. You see it? I hope I've communicated that good enough today.

That God is good and He has your good in mind. And He is, if we put Him in that high place, then I can take whatever it is that I have and lay it at His feet and go, okay, I trust you. And when we trust, there comes peace.

If you want God to do something in your life, in your kid's life and in your community, if you want God to do something real, in your life, in the life of the people around you, you know where it starts? Starts with prayer and it starts with you. You have to believe that. That if there's going to be change, if there's gonna be something that happens in our community, then it starts with you.

And I think it brings us back to the place where we say again, I am the reason why we can't move from here. Take a personal responsibility in this. I am the reason why we can't move from here.

And if we can do that, then admit that, turn away from it, and move forward, then we can do that. So I encourage us then to take advantage of one of the greatest tools that we have and that is to pray. Do you

take advantage of your opportunity to pray as often as you can? Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for your word this morning. It is convicting and it is challenging. I know that some of the things that we have said today would be completely counter to the way that some of us have thought in the past.

But I pray that we would be able to look into Scripture and see the high God that you are, the most high God. And may we know that you do love us and that you are wise and that you are strong. I pray, Father, that we would be able to see that and correct our thinking.

Lord, for one moment, I do not believe that this is a cop-out. I believe that this is a promotion and an encouragement of trust and faith. And that it has a tremendous ability to change our lives as we move forward, no matter what's going on around us.

And so, Father, we pray that you would help us to be people who don't worry, who give thanks, and who offer our prayers and supplications to a God who loves us. Teach us to do that. Now, Father, I would be amiss if I did not pray for our country.

Lord, I pray for the country of Canada. We are just a small place in the world, but this is our country. And this is our people.

And this is our government. And I pray that you would help us to stand with you in praying for and trusting you for how to lead us through this and out of this in a way that would glorify and honor you. God, we pray for our leaders, that they would make wise and good decisions.

We pray for humility, brokenness, that they would experience that. We pray for those who are standing up for their freedom. I pray that you would give them grace and mercy for the discouragement that's going across our country.

I pray that you would fill it with hope. Lord, we're gonna trust you with this country. And I pray that Christians would stand up and take our place in seeing us find the way to recovery and healing.

We ask these things in Jesus' name, amen. Cliff, did you have another song? Have one more song as we close today.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/D6kEE6vK6Bg.mp4>

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