

**Healthy Church Membership: Part 3**  
**Be a Prayer Warrior**  
**Sunday, January 19th, 2025**  
**By Ryan Perry**

**Scripture**

**Matthew 6:9-13**

**[9] Pray then like this:**

***“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.***

***[10] Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,***

***on earth as it is in heaven.***

***[11] Give us this day our daily bread,***

***[12] and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.***

***[13] And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.***

**Let's Pray**

**Introduction**

So I have to open with a confession this morning. Prayer is something that I struggle with. I don't struggle with it theologically, nor do I struggle to believe that it is good, right, and necessary.

But for various reasons, I struggle at times to come to God. I struggle at times to believe that God wants to hear me, and I struggle within my heart at times to believe that my prayers are powerful and are doing something.

So then why am I preaching a sermon on prayer, and why am I doing it within a series on membership?

There are two reasons for this.

One, I need the truths of this sermon, just as much, if not more than you. So I chose to pick an area of membership in which I need to grow.

Two, because prayer is a vital part of how God accomplishes his gospel purposes in the world and in our lives. **So it is something we must take seriously as a church.**

So this morning, I want to help myself and hopefully, you grow in this vital ministry of the church by answering three big questions about prayer.

What is prayer? Why do we pray? and How should we pray?

And my hope is that whether you are a prayer warrior, or you feel like a prayer weakling, like me, that these words will refresh and invigorate your heart for prayer.

To come to God, to pray big and bold prayers, and that you will have a firm confidence that he hears you, he cares for you, and that he will use your prayers to accomplish his great purposes in your life and in his church.

### **What is prayer?**

If you have been a Christian for a long time this might seem like a fairly easy question for you to answer. But I can imagine that if we all wrote down our own definition of prayer, there would be a wide variety of answers given. Some of those answers might be:

**Prayer is talking to God like you would a friend.**

**Prayer is asking God to do something for us.**

**Prayer is about aligning our will with God's will.**

**Prayer is coming to God with hope.**

Now, if one of these definitions for prayer is the one you would write down, that's okay because all 4 of these definitions are a part of prayer.

When we pray, we do have access to God as we would a friend or family member. We do at times ask God to do things for us. God uses prayer to align our desires and our wills with his. And finally, we do come to God in prayer with hope.

The issue, however, is that none of these definitions give us a full biblical understanding of what prayer actually is. They don't give us an accurate picture of the purpose of prayer, they don't give us a robust hope in our prayers, and they may lead us to pray in ways that are not in line with what God wants for his people.

Therefore, before we talk about why we should pray or how we should pray, I want to give you a definition for prayer that is based on the pattern of prayer that is all over scripture.

**Definition of Prayer: Prayer is the act of asking God to do what he has already promised to do.**

This means that prayer is always a response to God's covenant promises that he has made with his people. In fact, we can see this early in Genesis 3 and 4.

In Genesis 3:15 we get the first covenant promise of God after the fall. God says to the serpent:

***[15] I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel."***

This particular verse is a special one in the Bible because it is considered by most scholars to be the first instance where the promise of Christ and the gospel are proclaimed.

The serpent, of course, represents the devil, and there will be strife or fighting between his offspring and the woman's offspring. The woman's offspring will bruise the serpent's head and the serpent will bruise his heel.

### **Sound familiar.**

The devil, working through evil men, had Jesus hung on the cross, and his feet and heels were ran through with a nail spike. However, Jesus, who was victorious over sin, death, and the devil will put him under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25) and he will crush him under the feet of his people (Rom. 16:20).

I point all of this out to show you that this was the covenant hope given to Adam and Eve even though they were kicked out of the garden. So then in Genesis 4:26 when it says ***“at that time people began to call on the name of the Lord”*** we can safely say that they are praying with this covenant hope as the backdrop of their prayers.

**They are coming, with the believe that God will fulfill his covenant (gospel) promise to them.**

Then, if we move forward to Genesis 17, God reaffirms this promise to his people in his covenant with Abraham.

- God tells him that he will multiply him greatly.
- He will make him the father of many nations.
- That this covenant will be an everlasting covenant.
- And he will be their God

And we know that this everlasting covenant with Abraham was fulfilled in Christ according to Galatians 3:13-14 when Jesus died on the cross and opened the way for all peoples to come to God.

It's this same covenant, that also becomes the basis of Jacob's prayer for safety in Genesis 32:9-12 when he prays:

***[9] ...“O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’ [10] I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. [11] Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. [12] But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”***

He is calling on God to protect him, in light of his covenant promises with Abraham and Isaac. **He is asking God to make good on his promises.**

Then, if we go to the New Testament, we see the same thing. Because prayer is spelled out within the framework of God's covenant with his people. **The New Covenant of Christ.**

Look with me at Jesus words in John 14:13-14:

***[13] Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. [14] If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.***

This is a promise that Jesus is making to the disciples, in light of the fact that he is going to the cross on their behalf to open the way to God the Father. **It is in light of his new covenant.**

**The promise is, that if they ask anything in his name, which is another way of saying "according to his will," he will do it.**

But there is one thing spelled out here in this verse that isn't necessarily in God's covenant with Abraham, but it is implied. That Jesus will fulfill this promise to them so that the Father will be glorified.

Meaning, that Jesus answers our prayers, according to his new covenant promises with us, so that God will be made much of and his purposes will be accomplished.

Application:

So when we see this definition of prayer: **Prayer is the act of asking God to do what he has already promised to do**, it should bring confidence and excitement to our hearts, but it should also change the way we pray.

We should be confident that when we come to God, and ask him for things, that he will hear us and will give us exactly what we need, what is best for us, and what is according to his will because he has made an everlasting covenant with us through Christ to do so.

**But it should also change our heart in relation to prayer and really to God.** We should come to God, not just with a desire to get or to make God do something for us. But instead we should come with a desire that his kingdom and covenant purposes would be accomplished.

**We should desire his purposes and his glory above all other things.**

Now, I have to admit that I was super convicted by this as I was preparing this sermon. Because very often when I come to God with things in my life, what I want more than anything is for my circumstances to change. I want God to take away my struggle or hardship so that things will honestly be easier.

But prayer, first and foremost, isn't about changing our circumstances, giving us material blessings, or relieving our hardships. It is about God fulfilling his covenant promises and purposes to us and within the world.

So on the one hand, we come to God in prayer, asking him for things because we are needy of him to work in our lives and he says that he will answer us. But we must do it with the same attitude and desire that Christ had in the Garden of Gethsemane when he said, **"not my will, but yours be done."**

**Or we could say, not my purposes or my glory, but yours.**

-----

But there is a nagging question that this definition leaves in the back of my mind and maybe in yours. And it's this: If prayer is simply about asking God to do what he already promised, then why do we need to pray? Isn't God going to give it to us anyway? So why do we even need to ask? **Why should we pray?**

**Why should we pray?**

Scripture, of course, gives us many reasons to pray, but the most simple and straightforward one is that God commands us to pray.

As Paul writes in Philippians 4:6:

***[6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.***

God tells us, throughout scripture, to pray which means that it must be good, beneficial, and effective. To highlight this, we will look at 4 different reasons why we should pray.

1. Prayer is a form of worship.

Look with me at Luke 2:36-37:

***[36] And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, [37] and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.***

Anna showed her honor, respect, and devotion for God by submitting to and depending upon him in prayer. So an active prayer life is sign that we are giving our God the honor and devotion that he deserves.

2. God rewards us when we pray.

**Matthew 6:6**

***[6] But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.***

Now, this doesn't mean that prayer always needs to be in secret, but Jesus talks about prayer being done in private, when nobody is looking, because he is contrasting it with the Pharisee's who pray in public for show.

But he wants his disciples to understand that their reward doesn't come from how spiritual others may think they are, but it comes from God when they seek him with a genuine heart even when nobody is looking.

This should motivate us to be a people of prayer because it means that the genuine prayers of God's people are a part of how we store up eternal treasures and rewards.

**We pray because genuine prayer is rewarded by God.**

3. God hears and answers us in prayer.

**1 John 5:14-15**

***[14] And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. [15] And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.***

These verses are very similar to Jesus' words that we read in John 14, and they are essentially saying the same thing.

We can be confident that if we ask God for anything that is according to his will, that he hears us and will give it to us.

Which also means that if God doesn't give it to us, then it wasn't what was best for us. Instead, he has a better plan that will help us to love and trust him more.

**Therefore, we can and should come to him in prayer believing that he hears us and will give us exactly what we need.**

4. God uses prayer to accomplish his will.

Look with me at Luke 6:12-13:

***[12] In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. [13] And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:***

Jesus literally prayed to the Father all night so that he would choose the right disciples that the Father wanted.

Also, in Luke 10:2 Jesus says:

***[2] ...“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.***

God uses prayer to both equip and to send people out to preach the gospel, plant churches, and to reach the unreached so that a harvest of souls will come to know Christ.

### **Prayer spreads the gospel.**

Finally, Paul writes in Ephesians 6:18-19:

***[18] praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, [19] and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,***

God uses prayer to strengthen his people, to give us direction, and to help us endure in our faith.

**And when we put all of these reasons together we can see that God uses prayer to accomplish his purposes in the world and in the lives of his people.**

Application:

Now, there are definitely more reasons than just 4 for why we should pray and be excited about prayer. But I've highlighted these particular ones because they give us a good foundation for why we should be prayer warriors in the church, and why we often aren't prayer warriors in the church.

The truth that we all need to wrestle with is that there are times that we struggle to believe God's promises. We don't believe that God will give us the promised rewards, that he will answer our prayers, or that they even matter in accomplishing his kingdom purposes.

This leads us to do one of two things, both of which I have been guilty of doing. One, we don't pray about something at all. We keep it to ourselves, hoping it will change or that we will change, but we never bring it to God.

Two, we pray about it, but we are lackluster and very half-hearted because we don't want to get our hopes up. **Because we don't want to deal with the rejection of God not answering the way we hoped he would.**

But when we go back to the definition of prayer, it reminds us that prayer is about God doing what he has promised to do.

So even if God doesn't answer in the way we expect, he will answer according to his promises that are ours through Christ.

Which means that he will hear us, will answer us, and he will accomplish his perfect will through our prayers.

**So if God gives a different answer than we expect, we know that he is doing it for our good and to accomplish his eternal purposes in us, in our church, and in the world.**

**Therefore, we, as members of the body of Christ can and should come to God in prayer. Because our prayers matter to God, and they are purposeful in his kingdom.**

-----

So now that we have the what and the why of prayer, let's look at the how. How should we pray as God's people and as a church?

### **How should we pray?**

For this let's turn to our opening verses for this morning to see what Jesus has to say about how we should pray.

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

***[9] Pray then like this:***

***“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.***

***[10] Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.***

***[11] Give us this day our daily bread,***

***[12] and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.***

***[13] And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.***

Now, if you have been at LEFC since roughly the Fall of 2020 you'll know that the Lord's prayer, as a template for how to pray, is something that we have been through before. In fact, it was a part of an entire year that was focused on prayer.

So I'm not going to give you another step-by-step plan for prayer that is based on how Jesus prayed. Rather, I am going to use his words on prayer to get at the heart attitudes that God wants us to have when we come to him in prayer.

Because our heart attitude toward him and his kingdom purposes will ultimately affect how we pray and what we pray.

So then let's walk through this prayer by starting with those famous words, **“Our Father in heaven...”**

The first thing that we need to recognize when we come to prayer is that we are coming before the God of heaven, the creator of all things.

As Psalm 115:3 says:

***[3] Our God is in the heavens;  
he does all that he pleases.***



We are coming before an all-powerful God who is above everything, is in control of everything, and can do whatever he pleases. **This means that we should come to him with reverence and awe, and should believe that he is capable of accomplishing anything we ask of him.**

But we don't just come to him as servants or as his creatures. Instead, we come to him as our Father. We are his children because Christ paid for us and adopted us into God's family.

And because he is our Father, we are coming before a God who loves us and is compassionate towards us.

As it says in 1 John 3:1:

***[1] See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.***

Application

Now, I don't know about you, but I can so easily forget the love and care part. Because I have an inner critic that replays all of my faults and all of my mess-ups, and I begin to believe that God is angry and won't hear me because of all of my failures.

And yet, he is continually saying to me and to you, "I bought you and paid for all your mess-ups and failures. Therefore, I am your Father and you are my beloved child, and no one can ever change this."

**"So come and ask. Because I am for you, I will hear you, and I will work for your good."**

He will never reject us as his children.

Then Jesus continues in Matthew 6:9-10

***hallowed be your name.***

***[10] Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.***

Everything that we have been talking about this morning is summed up in these 18 words. Because Jesus is showing us that God's aim is to advance his covenant promises and purposes and not our own agenda.

And he is putting it at the beginning of this prayer because he wants us to long for God's purposes in the world before we ask for his provision.

So when he says "**Hallowed be thy name,**" Jesus is asking that God's name would be honored.

He is showing us that God's honor and glory are meant to be our greatest desire and longing. And the way that God wants to be honored is through his creatures and his creation worshipping him.

Which is why Jesus prays, **"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."**

What Jesus is praying for here, and what we as Christians should be praying for is ultimately the spread of the gospel. We want the kingdom of God, that has come to earth through Christ, to spread and have an effect on the entire world.

The world is broken and we want our redeemer, Christ, to come and to put the pieces of this world back together. So that God's rule and reign would be fully seen and he would be honored as God.

And because the local church is the representation of God's kingdom on earth, this means that we should be fervently praying for the flourishing of the gospel in our church, the churches in our community, and the churches across the globe.

Because remember, the church is the fullness of Christ according to Ephesians 1:22-23.

Application:

So let me ask you. What does your heart ache for and long for in prayer? Are God's kingdom purposes and desires at the forefront of what we pray for? Or are we caught up in our own desires and agendas?

Wherever you are this morning, I want to encourage you to see these words of Jesus in a new way.

That we wouldn't see this prayer for God's glory and kingdom purposes as something that is opposed to our good and our happiness.

Rather, that we would be excited about God's honor, glory, and his kingdom purposes being done on earth because it will bring about our greatest good and joy.

Remember what Romans 8:28 says:

***[28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.***

This means that our good and our joy are linked to God's purposes.

So when we are praying for God's honor and for his kingdom purposes to be done, we are also asking God to do what is good and best for us as his people.

-----

And yet, despite all of that, Jesus still tells us to pray for what we need. As he says in Matthew 6:11-13:

**[11] Give us this day our daily bread,  
[12] and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
[13] And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

We are supposed to ask God for what we need both physically and spiritually.

We are to pray for daily bread which is a reminder that God wants us to trust him and seek him for our physical needs.

Whether we need our car fixed, help with our kids, the strength to get through a tough meeting or a medical issue, he wants us to ask him for help.

Likewise, he wants us to come to him with our spiritual needs. He wants us to confess sin and ask for forgiveness, and he wants us to pray against temptation and evil in our lives.

And we do this so that he will make us more like Christ as he cleanses us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:19), and so that we will not be led away from him into evil.

**This means that God wants to provide for our needs, every single day, so that we would love him, trust him, and honor him with our lives.**

As the writer of Proverbs says in Proverbs 30:8-9.

***[8] Remove far from me falsehood and lying;  
give me neither poverty nor riches;  
feed me with the food that is needful for me,  
[9] lest I be full and deny you  
and say, "Who is the LORD?"  
or lest I be poor and steal  
and profane the name of my God.***

Application:

I truly hope you are beginning to see prayer in a new way this morning. That you are beginning to see and believe that prayer is really about asking God to do what he has already promised he would do.

So then when we bring the medical bill, the cancer diagnosis, the house repair, the job transition, the marriage issue, the sin struggle, and anything else to God, we can bring them in light of God's new covenant promises in Christ.

- That he is our powerful God and Father who loves us and cares for us
- That he hears us and will answer us.
- That he will use our prayers to accomplish his will.
- That he rewards genuine prayers.
- That his kingdom purposes should be our greatest desire in prayer.

- That God's honor and his kingdom purposes will always work for our good and our joy.

So I encourage each one of us to pray in light of these promises. Be fervent and earnest in prayer for yourselves, one another, and for church, both here and across the globe, and believe that your prayers are powerful and purposeful.

Because we not only serve a God who loves us, hear us, and cares for us, but we serve a powerful, wonder-working God who has promised that he will answer us, will give us what we need, and will do his kingdom-expanding work through our prayers.

As God's word says in James 5:16:

***The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.***

**Let's Pray**