

The Prayers Of Jesus

Christ's Example in Prayer

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Good morning to everyone. Good evening to those of you in South Africa. I hope you have had a wonderful Days of Unleavened Bread.

I want to thank all of you for your sacrifices and your contributions to the church. We do not do this very often. We just do not particularly talk about money in this church. It is just not our way. It is not something that we feel is so vitally important that we need to mention it all the time, but we should thank you on occasion, so I wanted to thank you for your tithes and offerings and all the little helps that you give.

It is not just little helps, but big helps, such as your prayers and your concern that you give to us. I just wanted to mention that. We usually say it once a year at the Feast, but I thought this spring Feast would be a good time to say it again. I also want to thank all those who contribute to the *Forerunner*. It sure makes my job a whole lot easier.

Ask any master craftsman what makes it possible for him to work his trade. I am sure that either his first or second reason will have something to do with the tools that he uses. A master craftsman is like one who does intricate scrollwork that you see on some very ornate clocks, on nice mantle pieces, and neat little detailed moldings and accents that you see in the nicer houses. Such a man would be pretty much handcuffed without his scroll saw. A finished carpenter is lost without his miter box. A spindle maker cannot function without his lathe and sharp chisels.

Think about the tools of your trade. You may not be a tradesman, but you have a job, and the job that you have requires tools. Are you a salesman? Do you think you would make very many sales without a business card, or without a telephone, or without an automobile? Those are all tools of that trade.

Are you a landscaper? Could imagine cutting the grass with scissors instead of a mower, or an edger, or trimming trees and bushes without trimmers? Could you imagine planting huge trees without augers and such tools as landscapers use?

Are you a manager in a company? What would you do without the conference table? That is a pretty big tool to a manager. What would most business people do without a daytimer, or some sort of scheduling device to make sure that they use their time wisely?

I am an editor. That is my main function. I can imagine, and I would dread having to put the *Forerunner* together without a computer. I hope and pray I never have to put any kind of an article or a magazine together without a computer. It would take at least two to three times longer I imagine to do what we do now. I shudder to think of having to type the articles over and over and over every time we found an edit that needed to be made.

I cannot imagine cutting and pasting by hand to get everything to fit—cropping and mounting photos by hand. It is just beyond me. I would never want to do that. I just find a computer to be an indispensable tool.

As Christians, assisting God in the creation of children in His image, God has also given us tools to do this. Our main tools—you probably know them all—are prayer, and fasting, and study, and meditation. Some would even include things like fellowship and service as tools of growth and creation of God's image in us.

Are our spiritual tools in good repair? Do they even see much use? How often do you open your spiritual toolbox? Maybe a different question or more important question would be, assuming that we use these tools, do we sometimes use a hammer when a pair of pliers would work better? Or a saw when a screwdriver would do the job? How much have we read the manual, the instructions, to see that we are using those tools correctly?

We have come to the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. We know that the whole week pictures coming out of sin, and this is the process we call "sanctification"—when we remove the leaven from our lives, from our character, and we put on the unleavened traits of godliness.

This life-long process of sanctification, not just in this one week, but the whole time that we are growing toward the image of God, does not just (*SHAZAAM!*) occur because we desire it to. If that were the case God could change us at our baptism, which is something that a lot of people wish would have happened because they have looked back and have seen the things they had to go through in the meantime.

Despite Protestant belief to the contrary, creation takes work. It takes putting the will into doing what God says should be done in order to create His image in us. To do that work properly, to do it in a quality manner, to produce a quality product, to produce something that will please God, we have to use the tools that He has put at our disposal.

Let us take the physical example of the Israelites leaving Egypt, since this is the Days of Unleavened Bread, and we look back upon that. I am sure you know the types. We are analogous to the Israelites—God's chosen people—called people whom He has freed from the land of Egypt. The land of Egypt of course is analogous to sin, to our evil way of life that we lived before He called us, analogous to the bondage that we were under when we were under Satan's thumb. We are headed for the Promised Land—the Kingdom of God—and we have to get across the wilderness, and the wilderness to us is that intervening space of time between now and the time that God either sets up His Kingdom, or we die. We have to follow a leader. They followed Moses. We follow Jesus Christ, our Captain, who has taught us God's way.

How do we get there? Well, we have to use the tools. Look at it this way. The physical Israelites had to walk. Let us make an analogy of walking. What tools would we use in walking? Let us start off with the most basic component—shoes. Shoes are a tool, and Paul says in Ephesians 6:15 that we have to be "shod with the preparation of the gospel." So let us say that "shoes" then is the gospel that we have learned.

It would also be helpful to have a staff. Moses had a staff—a walking stick. What a walking stick does is it gives us a third point of contact with the ground. It helps us to be more stable. Right? It keeps us from falling. When we are going up inclines, it gives us a lever that we can pull ourselves along with. So a staff, then, can represent the church. Does not Paul say in I Timothy 3:15 that "the church is the pillar and ground of truth?" So that is our stability, let us say.

If any of you has ever been out in the desert, a vital tool to keep you from keeling over is a hat. If you do not have a hat, you will fry your brain out in the wilderness. You will very quickly dehydrate, and in the process of time you will die. A hat is a very big tool that we could use. It shades us from that merciless sun. So let us make this kind of like "the shield of faith" that Paul mentions in Ephesians 6:16, which keeps "the fiery darts of the Devil" off us.

Maybe one of the more important tools is a compass. If you know basically where you need to go, but you are going across this trackless wilderness, a compass would be very helpful in making sure you stay on the right course. We will call it, "our hope in the resurrection," and "our hope of eternal life." You will find that in I John 3:2-3, that we have this hope in us of being just like God, and "we will see Him as He is." That keeps us on course. That is our goal.

Do you get the point how important these tools are in going through this wilderness wandering that we have to experience before we are put into God's Kingdom? All of these are tools, and tools have to be used, and they have to be used correctly for them to be effective and profitable. For us that means we have to use the tools of prayer, and fasting, and meditation, and study, and fellowship, and service, and what other ones there happen to be to produce the character of God in us. We have to do them not just by rote, not just because we have to, but with the correct attitude so that we profit from them. They may be exercises, but they are exercises that we have to learn to do properly and in the right attitude, because they are important in forming that character. Otherwise, if we just do them by rote, Jesus says we are yet unprofitable, and we want to be profitable servants, not unprofitable.

A sermon is really too short to cover all these tools. I would not dare to try to do all of them in one sermon. Many sermons could be, and have been done, on each one of the tools, so I am going to confine myself to "prayer." I have an angle that I think you may not have thought of, and I hope it will be interesting and instructive for us as we re-focus for this year on overcoming and growing.

Let us start out in I Peter 2. I want to pick up a principle here. This will set the stage for the rest of the sermon.

I Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

I John 2:6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

What is the principle that we pick up? Jesus Christ is our example. He is the One that we should follow. We are to walk in His steps. We are to walk just as He walked. He is our supreme Standard, our supreme example of the way of life that we are to live to be in God's Kingdom. We are called "Christians," are we not? Christians are simply those who are "of Christ." So what He did, we should be careful to do also, because He showed the way. He blazed the trail, and we are to follow that trail to wind up where He wound up—at His Father's right hand, glorified, exalted, God. So we have to at least attempt to do these things until we get them right, or at least keep on trying to get them right.

Combining this idea of prayer as a tool and the principle that He is the One we are to follow, we are going to look at the prayers of Jesus Christ.

Luke 11:1 And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

This is really interesting to me. For three and one-half years the twelve disciples had His personal example before them, and I would say it was pretty much twenty-four hours a day. They were travelling, they were eating with Him, walking with Him, sleeping in the same inns or same homes, on the side of the road. They were constantly in His presence.

They were constantly seeing His example, and who knows how many times they saw Him in prayer. I would say that they probably saw Him in prayer daily; at *least* daily. I did the math. That comes out to 1278 times at least that they saw Him in prayer, if He only prayed once a day. Maybe they did not just see Him pray, maybe they knew that He was going off some place to pray. That is a pretty powerful witness, a pretty powerful example.

What is amazing is that it took this long for them to ask Him to teach them to pray. Do you know when this occurred? Luke 11 looks like it is in the middle of the book, but if you would go check out just about any harmony of the gospels, they will tell you this took place only four to six months before His death. He was already three years into His ministry before they asked Him to teach them how to pray. It is kind of amazing, is it not? A headscratcher.

He had taught them before in the Sermon on the Mount near the beginning of His ministry. Now who knows how well they understood it at that time, but it took them about three more years before one of them piped up and said, "Lord, would You please teach us to pray like John taught his disciples?" That is a long time. How long have we been in the church? Many more than three years. Just myself, I have been baptized since 1984. That is fifteen years. Have I ever consciously thought, "Lord, teach me to pray"? That is kind of what I trying to do today from Jesus' own example.

Jesus of course obliged them with what is called "The Lord's Prayer." That is really not a very good title. I would prefer to call it, "The Model Prayer," because the real Lord's prayer is in John 17. That is the one He prayed for us.

I do not want to spend particularly a long time on this, but I do want to review it because I think it would be good for us to at least get a refresher on the principles of the model prayer. Maybe some of us have strayed from this the past few years. Maybe some of us have not ever really learned it, never really gone through it. Whatever the case, let us just take a look at it.

Let us go to the model prayer that is shown in Matthew 6. I go to this one because it is a little fuller. The one in Luke is a somewhat shortened version of it. It has the same parts, but the one in Matthew is a little more complete.

Matthew 6:9-13 "In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation.
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

What Jesus gives us here is a template, a model, a guide for our prayers. Many have made this a vain repetition by reciting it over and over and over again as just a rote prayer—kind of like a, "Hail Mary, Mother of grace, . . ."—and it becomes absolutely meaningless.

When I was living down in Columbia when I was a kid ten years old, we played ball at Pine View ball field. It is not too far from where Tiffany Wright lives right now. It is only about a quarter mile down the road. We would go out there for our Pee Wee ballgames. You know how the South is. This is the "Bible belt." We would dutifully march out to first or third base, depending on which dugout we were in. We would get a bat and we would place it on top of the base, and we would all kneel down around the bat and the coach would lead us in reciting the "Lord's Prayer" before the ballgame.

I thought it was kind of silly. Here we were, all sweaty and just getting ready for the game. The kids were just so-called reciting this prayer, and then said "Amen." They did not care. It was just a mindless exercise that we did. It did not mean anything to them. I guess we got a little bit too sophisticated about it, and about the time we got into Pony League we did not do that sort of thing anymore.

I remember that, and it made an impression on me, that this prayer that we did before the game was pretty much worthless. Besides, what did we say in the "Lord's Prayer" that had to do with the ballgame? I do not know. Maybe "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We were all hoping that God was on our side. It would have been more appropriate for someone to have come out and asked for us to play fair and that nobody get hurt. But they just mindlessly went through the "Lord's Prayer," I guess because everybody knew it. I could just imagine them going out there and saying, "Now I lay me down to sleep." It was just as mindless as that. This mindless is something that Jesus says specifically not to do.

Matthew 6:7 "But when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words."

I am sure God had a hard time understanding all that muddled talk that they did, and I am sure they were not heard. Not really, because they did not say anything. They did not mean anything. They were just mindlessly repeating it, hoping to get something from God, I guess. I do not know. Maybe they were just making it an exercise that meant nothing.

Jesus says, "Pray in this manner," or after this format, or by this formula. What I have drawn out of here is 9-step format that He uses. We will go through these nine steps.

1. *Salutation*: "Our Father in heaven." (Matthew 6:9)

We are to come before Him as a child comes to his father. That is the sort of affection and closeness that we are supposed to have to Him, to be able to come up to Him and say, "Dad, this is what's on my mind," or "Dad, this is what we need at this time for this situation."

The word was probably originally "*Abba*," like Paul uses there in Romans 8:15. Some people have said that this word *Abba* is very similar to "daddy." It may be closer to "dad" or "pa"—an affectionate reference to the Father. "Abba." "Dad." "Father."

2. *Section of Praise*: "Hallowed be Your name." (verse 9)

During this section of praise we hallow God's name by extolling His attributes. His names contain the attributes that He has revealed to us as part of His character, and so we extol His name by repeating back to Him His attributes, His titles, and giving Him thanks for being who He is—thanking Him for Himself, thanking Him for His existence, thanking Him for His power and all the things that He has revealed to us about Himself.

3. "*Your kingdom come*." (verse 10)

This states to us, more than to Him, where we stand as far as His goals and His purpose. His goal is to set up His Kingdom once again on this earth, and we have to show Him that is our goal too, and that we really want it, that we are eager for His rule to infuse this earth and set things right.

4. *Submission*: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (verse 10)

We are reminding Him, and we are reminding ourselves that our will is subservient to His will, and that whatever He decides to do is all right with us. We know His will rules supreme in heaven, and we are asking Him and telling Him that it be that way here with us on earth. We are also telling Him that we know our place, that we are under His will.

5. *Our Daily Needs*: "Give us this day our daily bread." (verse 11)

This is where we ask for food, water, clothing, shelter—whatever we happen to have a need for on that particular day, or in the very near future. This is not to contradict anything that is said later on about, "Don't worry about your life." He wants us to ask Him for these things. He wants us to remind Him that we have these needs. Of course He knows we are flesh and we are dust, and that we will have these needs. We have to continue our life. But it is at this point that we let Him know what they are. It is not only for ourselves, but it may be best at this point to pray for others' needs so we do not show a selfishness.

6. *Forgiveness*: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (verse 12)

We always, everyday, just like food and water need grace and mercy, because we are all human, we all fail, and we all fail almost all the time, it seems. So we have to ask Him for that on a daily basis.

Notice "and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" hinges on our ability, our willingness to forgive others of what they have done to us. In Luke it says pretty much the same thing in the English, but the Greek actually says, "Not those who are indebted to us, but those who injure us." And it could be injury of a physical nature, of an emotional nature, any kind of slight or snub, any kind of sin against you—any fault they would have that effects you in some way.

7. *Guidance*: "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (verse 13)

We are supposed to seek help to live circumspectly so we do not succumb to temptation. We want His strength, His guidance, by His Spirit so that we can avoid the temptations that Satan lays in our path. We do not want to give in to that spirit of anarchy—that spirit of accusation, of deception. This is another thing that we daily need to ask for: protection from Satan, and guidance in living the right way.

As a little sidelight on this, in the one in Luke it does not say, "Do not lead us into temptation," but rather "Do not bring us into temptation." There is a slight change in meaning, because it sounds like if you say "lead," that God's out in front pulling you into temptation. The "bring" changes the meaning to say, "God, please help me avoid anything, unless I really need it." He is going to allow us to go into temptation if it is going to help produce better character in us. But we can ask Him to have mercy and not to allow that to happen. He will not tempt us Himself. It says that very clearly in James 1, but He sometimes allows it to happen so that we can use it as a springboard for growth.

8. *Praise II*: "For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." (verse 13)

We not only open the prayer with praise, thanking God for His attributes, but we end the prayer with praise as well. We remind ourselves whom we are dealing with. He is the One with all the power. He is the One with all the glory. He is the One with those things forever, and He is the One who is going to bring the Kingdom. He holds all the cards, and we have to remind ourselves time and again just whom we are dealing with.

9. *Amen*: (verse 13)

Amen means basically, "So be it." It means "I agree." It is like we are saying, "This is my seal of commitment to what I've just said." If we were writing this prayer in a letter, this would be your signature at the bottom, binding you to what you have said.

Let us go back now to verses 5 and 6. I want to add a few more details of His teaching here.

Matthew 6:5-6 "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

For the most part, prayer is not a public matter. Prayer is a very private matter between you and your God. It is not a medal to be worn on the chest. It is not that solid gold tool box with your solid gold tool that you show off to everybody to say, "Look at me. I have the best tools there are."—if you catch my drift of the analogy I am drawing there. That is what the Pharisees did. They made prayer a public show so that everyone could see how pious and righteous they were. Jesus called them hypocrites. They did not really mean it. All they wanted was the lauding and praise of men. So Jesus said, "That's all they're going to get."

When we pray, we go in secret, in private, where no one else is around, where we can pour out our heart to God without having to worry about anybody else knowing, seeing, or even realizing that we are doing it necessarily. Some of the most effective prayers are the ones that are done head down in a well, as the story goes, or when we are having our own quiet and private time. There are many

examples of Jesus doing this throughout the gospels. Let us look at one in Matthew 14. This was after the feeding of the 5,000.

Matthew 14:23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on a mountain by Himself to pray. And when evening had come, He was alone there.

Mark 1:35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

Luke 5:16 So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

Luke 6:12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

There are a couple other scriptures that I did not put down in my notes where Jesus is shown to go out and to be alone, to go away from the crowds, to leave and go up to some solitary place and pray, where He was focused, undistracted, where He could set His mind and attitude in the way that they should be.

We will go now to verse 8 of Matthew 6. I find this to be very interesting. Here He is, teaching them about prayer, and He throws this in there.

Matthew 6:8 "Therefore do not be like them [the heathen or the hypocrites], for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him."

Well somebody might ask, "Well, why do we pray? What's the use? If He already knows what we need, why doesn't He just send it Federal Express? I won't even have to bother Him about it. He's so busy, you know. There are billions of people. I'm sure they have needs that maybe He's not aware of. Hey! Why should I do it? He already knows."

The prayer is not for God. He does not need prayer for Himself. *We* need prayer. The prayer is for us. Prayer brings us into fellowship with God the Father and God the Son. They do not need prayer to be in fellowship with us, but we need the prayer to be in fellowship with them. Prayer is a tool that brings *us* into *Their* presence. It helps put us on the right wavelength with Them. It is a way for us to adjust our course, to figure out what *His* will is, not our own. It is something that we use—a tool—that helps us to put our hope and trust in Him.

Beth mentioned to me last night, "How many times have we had a problem, some bone we've be gnawing on for a long time, and we've prayed about it, and the answer pops into our head during the prayer? Or maybe a scripture flits across our mind just as we're arranging our thoughts to ask God about this. Or while we're even asking God about it—*Oh! I hadn't thought of that before. Maybe I ought to think about that a little more*—and it's the solution to the problem."

I know that has happened to people. It has happened to me. See, prayer is not for God. He likes it. He likes it when we come to Him and talk to Him and trust in Him, and ask Him for things, but the main reason for prayer is for us. It is a gift of God. God gives good gifts. It is a way that He opens up access to Him through the blood of Jesus Christ. So prayer is a vital means toward forming the mind of God in us.

Here is just a little illustration. Let us say you have a man, and he has a son, and you know that genetics is going to play some role in making the son somewhat like the father, because half the genes in that boy's body are going to be his father's genes, so maybe half the attributes of him physically are going to be very much like his father's. That is in a way how we are. We have been made in the likeness of God, have we not? We kind of look like God.

What if that boy never once in his lifetime ever talked to his father, never experienced anything with his father? Let us say as soon as he was born, he was whisked off and given to another family. Twenty years down the road the father and son are reunited. How much is that son going to be like his father? All the physical attributes are truly going to be there, but what about the character? What about the mind? How much of that young man's mind is going to be like his father's without the contact he should have had over those intervening twenty years?

You see, that is what God is doing to us. That is part of what prayer does for us. It puts us in a position where we can learn the mind of God. We talk to Him, but you would be surprised how much comes back to us in prayer, because we have the opportunity to talk to our Father, to experience some of His character through prayer.

Let us now go to John 14. I want to bring in this point before we go any further.

John 14:13-14 "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

We probably read these verses on Passover evening.

John 15:16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

John 16:23-24 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should pray in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ. It is by Him that we have access to the Father. He is the One that opens the way. He, by His sacrifice, was the One that tore the veil between us and God, and now the Holy of Holies is wide open for us. But that way is, to use a word from Hebrews, "sprinkled" with the blood of Jesus Christ. It is His blood that allows that path to be opened. It is His perfection, His righteousness, that God sees when we come before Him.

Without Jesus Christ's sacrifice you would never even be able to even approach the Father. He would be just as "out of sight, out of mind" as He is to the people in the world who do not really understand, just as He was to Israel, just as the veil was always drawn across the Holy of Holies in the Temple and in the Tabernacle.

We beseech the Father to hear us "in the Son's name." It is as if His Son were making the request of Him. When we take the name of Jesus Christ like that, we are actually speaking "by the authority" of

Jesus Christ. It is like we are His ambassadors, and He has given us permission to say thus and so. That is why we ask God "in the name of Jesus Christ."

Suffice it to say, that does not give us cart blanche to ask for just anything. We have to ask the things that the Son Himself would request. Now that is where things get a little dicey for us, because we are not always so keyed-in to what the will of the Son would be in such a matter as one we are facing. "In Jesus' name" is no magic formula, no Shazaam or Abracadabra that is going to immediately make our request appear before us.

We cannot overstep the bounds of the authority that using His name implies. When we pray "in Jesus' name," we represent the Son before the Father, and that is a very heady and serious responsibility, and we have to make sure that we conform to the strictures that are within the granting of the authority that we have. That is why using the mind of God when we approach Him in prayer is so important. That is why I believe Jesus put "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" so early in that prayer. We have got to make sure our mind is on the right wavelength.

Let us go to one more place before we get into the specific prayers of Jesus.

Romans 8:26-28 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

No. He does not condemn. He is the One who is actually there making intercession for us. See, He is our High Priest. He does not condemn. He is the One who goes between us and God and pleads for us and intercedes for us. He is the One, to put it in modern parlance, who runs interference for us before God because we have weaknesses, and He covers them with His own perfection.

Remember, I said earlier that God sees Him—sees His righteousness—when we come before Him in Jesus' name. We are only acceptable before God because of the blood of Jesus Christ. I get the picture of Jesus Christ standing there next to the Father, and here we are, kneeling down there before Him, and we are asking something, and it is all coming out as gibberish, and Jesus says, "Well, what he really means is. . . ."

He interprets for us before God. He lets God know what we really in our heart desire. He helps us in our weaknesses, and "making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He is the One doing the groaning. We do not even have the capacity to understand the intercessions that He makes for us before the throne of the Father. But He does search the heart and the mind of us, as it says there in verse 27: "He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Even when we do not get it exactly right, even when in our weakness we cannot quite make all the connections, He stands there before God and makes intercessions for us "according to God's will." "You know, Richard didn't get it quite right. This is really what he needs and wants and desires. And God says, Okay, Son. Carry it out." And it is done.

We know that this is going to work out the right way when He does this, because we love God, and we are the called, and He has got our best interests at heart as our High Priest, our elder Brother, and King. That is how that works. He is our Advocate before the Father.

Let us go onto another little section. This is what Jesus actually said, preached, and taught quite a bit about prayer in the gospels. You would be surprised. What I did several years ago, and it really was amazing to me, was that I chose a certain color for prayer. I chose yellow. In every instance where the word "prayer" is mentioned, I would mark it in my Bible. I would either underline it, or make a little block around it, and I would fill it in. If there was a whole section on prayer, I'd outline the entire section on prayer.

Maybe for the teenagers this would be a good assignment. Just go through the gospels and do this in your Bible. Pick a color for prayer. I chose yellow because yellow just seemed like the perfect color for prayer. Just go through the gospels, and every time anybody talks about prayer, or there is any long section about prayer—outline it. When you go through it at any other time in the future, your eyes will be able to always spot the places where prayer is mentioned.

It is really an education just to go through it from beginning to end to see all the times and the ways that prayer is taught. That is what I did when I wanted to prepare this sermon. I said, "Well, I can use all my yellow markings," and I went from the beginning of Matthew to the end of John, and I wrote down every passage where prayer is mentioned in the gospels. It was quite a bit of an education.

A summation of all the things that Jesus taught about prayer:

1. He gave two parables on prayer in Luke 18: The Parable of the Persistent Widow [or *the unfortunate widow*].

As far as prayer goes, the lesson in that one is: Be persistent. Keep asking. Knock. Seek. Ask. That sort of thing.

The other one is right after it: The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. That one is: Be humble.

These are very simple lessons. When we approach God we have to be like the publican who would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, rather than like the Pharisee who was just praising himself up and down before God.

2. He teaches us in many many places throughout the gospels to pray before a meal.

You would be surprised how many times it says, "And Jesus took the food and blessed it," or "Jesus said a prayer and passed the food around." He did this for the 4,000. He did this for the 5,000. He did this after they came to the house after "the road to Emmaus." He did it in many other places. He blessed the bread and the wine at the Passover.

3. He prayed before making a major decision, like choosing His disciples in Luke 6.

Luke 6:12-13 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. and when it was day, He called His disciples to Him; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.

4. He prayed at His baptism. Did you know that? He prayed at His baptism, and boom! The Holy Spirit fell upon Him in the form of a dove.

Luke 3:21-22 Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. and the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well-pleased."

5. He prayed before asking His disciples who men thought He was. Remember that—Matthew 16? It does not say there He prayed, but in Luke 9:18 it says He prayed.

Luke 9:18-20 And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."

He was praying, and then He asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" And then He said, "Who do you say that I am?" But He had prayed for them before doing that. Remember He said, "You haven't figured this out. God Himself has revealed this to you." Maybe that is what He asked the Father to do, to reveal to Peter, or to whomever, that He was the Christ, the Son of God.

6. He prayed before the transfiguration. That is why they went up the mount—to pray, and He was transfigured before them. That is in verses 28-29.

Luke 9:28-29 And it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.

7. He prayed before raising Lazarus from the dead.

And you know, He did not pray that God would raise Lazarus from the dead. At least that is not recorded in the Bible. He prayed, "Father, I thank You that You heard Me." He must have prayed sometime in the past. That is in John 11.

John 11:42 "And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."

8. He prayed for Peter, for Peter's faith and strength before He told Peter that he would deny Him three times before the cock crew.

Luke 22:32-34 "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day before you will deny three time that you know Me."

9. He told the ministry that fasting and prayer is often needed to cast out demons.

Mark 9:29 So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

10. He told them also, by His example, that prayer is needed during the blessing of the little children.

11. His example of His baptism also shows that prayer is necessary at baptism, and so also would be necessary at other rites such as ordination. We use it at marriage as well.

12. He says that we should pray for our enemies.

Matthew 5:44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

13. He also says that we should ask God to send laborers into the field so that they could reap the harvest that is now white and ready to be reaped.

Luke 10:2 Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

14. He instructs us to pray in faith, believing God will hear and respond to what we ask.

Matthew 21:22 "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Mark 11:24 "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

15. He even talked about prayer in a prophetic sense.

Matthew 24:20 "And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."

Luke 21:36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

16. Believe it or not, He also said three prayers while hanging on the cross.

Prayer 1 on the cross:

Luke 23:34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Prayer 2 on the cross:

Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Prayer 3 on the cross:

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

The man was a prayer machine. Now we know where Paul got the admonition: "Pray without ceasing."

Now we are going to look into what Jesus actually said in His prayers.

I was inspired to begin thinking about this sermon more than a month ago when I read an article by a Protestant writer, whose name is Philip Yancey. Many of you may know who he is. He is the one who wrote the book, *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, which he wrote in coordination with a doctor, I believe.

They go through the body and they show just how wonderful the human body is, and behind all this is the wonder of God's creation of man. He writes for *Christianity Today*, and I just happened to run across this when I was doing a search for something else on the Internet. He called this article "The Prayers of Jesus," which is also what I titled this sermon. He quickly went through some of what Jesus prayed for, and I thought it was interesting and worth repeating to you because he brought out some things about how the Father responded to Christ's own prayers that I thought was kind of intriguing.

The first one we are going to go to is one that doesn't tell us what Jesus actually said, but I think we can assume a few things about it.

Luke 6:12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

Have you ever done that? Darryl talks about sleepy-time prayers. I do not think Jesus ever succumbed to them, not like I do. This was a time when He went out into a solitary place, up a mountain, and He prayed all night. Other times it shows Him getting up early in the morning to pray. He would go out, and His disciples would have to find Him, probably.

Luke 6:13-16 And when it was day, He called His disciples to Him; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles [ambassadors for Him; ones who went in His name]: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.

Like I said, we do not know what He said to the Father during this all-night-prayer session on the mountain, but we can assume that His primary topic was the choice of these twelve men. I would think so, because it is all there right in one little section, that He went up to pray, He wanted to discuss these men with the Father, and He came down and He chose the twelve that He wanted to be His apostles.

Just look at the motley crew that He received. Look at the answer to His prayer. Peter(!)—who went where angels feared to tread, who would later deny Him three times. And just before he was about to do this, he pulled a sword and cut off the high priest's servant's ear, which Jesus had to heal immediately to keep things from totally going out of hand.

James and John—"the sons of thunder!" They were more than willing to call down fire from heaven to blast any and all sinners. They also connived with their mother so that they would sit on Jesus' right and left hand, above all the other apostles.

Boy, out of the first four, we get three doozies.

What about Philip? Do you know that on that last Passover night Jesus turned to Philip and said, "Philip, have you been so long with Me and you still don't even know Me?" Even being with Jesus three and one-half years, Philip really did not understand a thing, it seemed. That was Jesus' reaction. "Don't you understand?"

Matthew was a publican—a hated tax collector. I bet all the other apostles were sticking their noses up. "Ooh! We've got to be with him! Who knows how long this is going to last."

Thomas was so stubborn he would not let the ten others convince him that Jesus had risen from the dead. Now when he found out, he was very faithful, but he stubbornly stuck to what he believed, to his detriment, and it is recorded in there. He later turned that to a great strength, but at this point you kind of wondered about the man.

Simon was a zealot—a political reactionary. He probably wanted to hang all the Romans, and as soon as possible.

Judas, of course, betrayed Him.

Eight out of twelve had something not to be desired in them. Now if you would have gotten an answer like this, how would you have reacted? Eight out of twelve ringers—meaning you would like to wring their necks.

We do not know very much about those other four. They are kind of in the background. What was there about Bartholomew that we do not know, what he had to overcome? What about the other Judas?

All the gospels have nice things to say about Andrew. He kept bringing people to Christ. He brought the boy with the loaves and the fishes. He brought Peter to Christ. The first thing we see about him is that he is always bringing people to Christ. So Andrew seemed like a good guy, but we do not know about the other eleven for sure.

I think we can safely say this was not the kind of response to a prayer that we would expect, especially from the Son of God Himself. God did not send His Son out to battle with the cream of the crop. He sent Him out with the "cream of the crud," as we used to say. God took the best parts of the lower parts of the barrel—"the dregs," to use something from Zephaniah, and look what He made with them. God did not look at what they were. He looked at what they could become. He looked long-term. He saw their potential, and He gave them to His Son as His main helps, His main aids—the ones who would carry on after His death.

Maybe this will give us pause the next time we receive an answer from God. Jesus worked with what God gave Him, and look at the result. Eleven of them, and later there was another, went out and took His gospel all around the world.

Let us go to Acts 17:6. This is specifically speaking of Paul and Silas, but it could just as easily apply to the rest of the apostles, because they did the same things. We just do not have their histories. Paul and Silas are being dragged into a public place in Thessalonica.

Acts 17:6 But when they did not find them [Paul and Silas], they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."

The *whole world* knew of the apostles of Jesus Christ because they had totally turned things upside down. These men, eight out of twelve of which were the "cream of the crud," became "the cream of the crop" because of what Jesus did for them once they had the Spirit.

Let us go to a very interesting one in Matthew 11. This is also found in Luke 10:21-22. They are slightly different, but they are speaking of the same occasion.

Matthew 11:25-26 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

He did not ask anything of the Father in this prayer, but this is a very interesting, maybe ironic, prayer that He did here. It is a prayer of thanks and praise to God, and it centers on things that we have talked about recently—God's providence and His sovereignty. You find the providence in "Father, I thank You that you've revealed these things to the babes and not to the wise and the prudent." That was what God provided.

And then He says, praising His sovereignty, "Even so, it seemed good in Your sight."

God is the Ruler. We can be very thankful that He has set things out according to His will. But the ironic thing about this is its context. Do you know when He made this exaltation? Immediately after He was rejected at Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, when He told them, "You guys are going to come up in the resurrection and be shamed by these Gentiles." He was talking about Tyre and Sidon and Sodom in the day of judgment.

Is that how we would have reacted to rejection? Would we have done the same thing as Jesus did here if we had just gotten kicked out three of the cities around the Sea of Galilee? He had done a lot of miracles and good works there, and they had rejected Him. They had been intolerant of His preaching. They had kind of run them out of town—a fair amount of persecution. They were totally inhospitable. They were very stubborn. They had made other slights and snubs, and Jesus thanked God for that.

We do not think this way. We do not quite have the mind of God yet. But at His rejection there in those three cities, He turned and praised God that such a thing had happened, because it was God's will. "So Father, it seemed good in Your sight that this happened."

Jesus thanked God for what we would consider calamity that had happened to His ministry. The *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary* on this says that word "thank"—"I thank You"—really means "adoring acquiescence." He totally put His will under God's in an adoring way. "Oh Father, I thank You that this is what You've chosen for Me, that You have chosen not to reveal Your way to the stiffnecked of this world, to the wise in their own eyes, to the cagey, to the ones who would try to

make something of this for their own gain, and that You've given it unto the poor, the miserable, the babe-like people, the ones who have an attitude of humility and can be worked with, because Father, it seemed good in Your sight to do it this way."

That is His adoring acquiescence. That is how He prayed. I do not think any of us has yet come to the point where we can so sublimely surrender our will to God. Yet it does say in Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." That is something to shoot for, when we can take the slings and arrows of our daily life and turn them into lemonade (to mix a metaphor), to make something of them, to turn them into a positive, rather than a negative.

Luke 22:39-46 And coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

He knew that He would be dead within about fifteen to eighteen hours of this point. This was His one final plea to God to be spared the agony and the shame and the rejection by both God and men. Remember God forsook Him when He took the sins of mankind upon Him. His flesh, His humanity, cried out with tears for deliverance from this ultimate trial. But it was just as quick that He got control of His will and His mind, and He said, "Father, not My will, but Yours be done. Even though I'm going to be dragged through this awful experience, I will do it because You want Me to do it."

Once again we have that adoring acquiescence to God's will, even in the face of total agony, total rejection, total shame—being hung naked on a cross. He forced Himself to submit to God's will, and it was such a great struggle between flesh and spirit that He actually sweated blood. None of us has ever done that. None of us can say that we have ever prayed with such fervor and earnestness. None of us has faced the same fate either, have we? But we may. Something very similar to that may be down the road for some of us.

Who knows what God will allow His faithful remnant to suffer. I said His "faithful" remnant; not the ones who are lukewarm who need tribulation to wake them up, but His faithful remnant—the ones who do what is right, the ones who grow in His character.

Some will face martyrdom as witnesses for God in those final days. It is more than just the Two Witnesses that I am talking about. They will have to suffer something very similar to this, but others will have to suffer as witnesses for God beyond them. You have read the prophecy there in Revelation 2 about the church in Smyrna. They are actually promised tribulation and death—"ten day's worth" it says—whatever that means. But they are spiritually rich, and God promises them a crown of life if they are faithful.

So Jesus tells His disciples—and by extension to us—"Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation to depart from this way." The struggle will be tough, but if we use the tool of prayer we can avoid that temptation to leave it.

I did not even broach His words in John 17. I did not even plan to, because that is a whole sermon in itself. That is where Jesus intercedes for us, for our sanctification and protection and unity. That is a great study looking at it from those three points: our sanctification, our protection, and our unity. A whole sermon series could be devoted to that.

I hope this has been a helpful review of this vital tool in our spiritual toolbox. I hope it has inspired you to re-evaluate how you are using this tool, because it is a very important one in our arsenal. We could all probably make some improvements in one place or another.

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.