

## God Invites us to Talk to Him

Matthew 6:9-14, Philippians 4:6-7

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567)

Part one of this series focused on the fact that God does not change and still performs miracles for His children who pray in accordance with His will and have the patience to wait for their appointed time! Since most Christians do not see the power of God unless they pray, this sermon is going to begin by stressing the importance of creating heart building habits of prayer into our lives. Carving out the time to pray and finding a special place free from distractions is key to developing heart felt prayers that allows one to hear and reflect on the gentle whispers of God! While one should not legalistically follow a regime for prayer, there is much to be said about intentionally and joyfully setting aside time for spiritual growth through prayer. The second part of this sermon is going to focus on a model of prayer called ACTS. When we pray we are to begin with reverence to God, then confess our sins, give thanks and lastly ask God to help others and us to handle life tribulations and to become more like Jesus. The sermon will finish with a brief look at mountain moving prayer, the kind that one is so busy rejoicing in what God is about to do that all mountains of doubt are crushed!

### Heart Building Habits

**Carving out the Time to Pray Daily.** Our Spirits, like our bodies, have requirements to grow spiritually healthy. If we want to grow beyond the spiritual babies (1 Corinthians 3:1-5)



that we start off as, Paul says we need to use the freedom God has given us to no longer allow life to merely happen but are to instead use our freedom to choose to run the race with the intent of winning the crowns of righteousness that will last forever!<sup>1</sup> Christians are not to waste time and effort aimlessly living their lives but are to go into strict training, constantly striking a blow (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) to the number one killer of spiritual growth, complacency! Someone is not going to wave a magic wand and we will instantly be transformed into mature Christians.<sup>2</sup> Spiritual maturity comes through persevering the testing of one's faith by the tribulations of life.

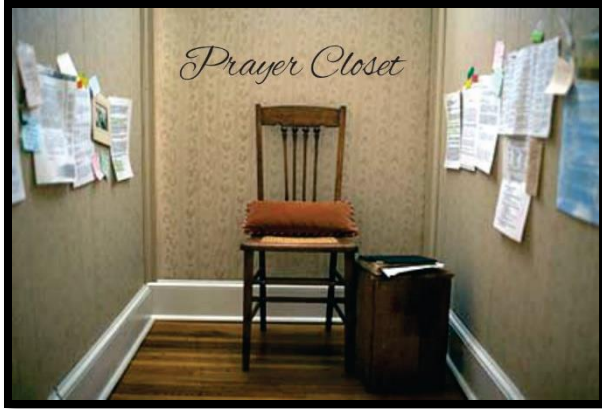
This of course requires wisdom and the power to act in accordance with God's will that can only be had through deep spiritual discussions with our Creator.

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<sup>1</sup> Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 196–197.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not to Pray*, 46.

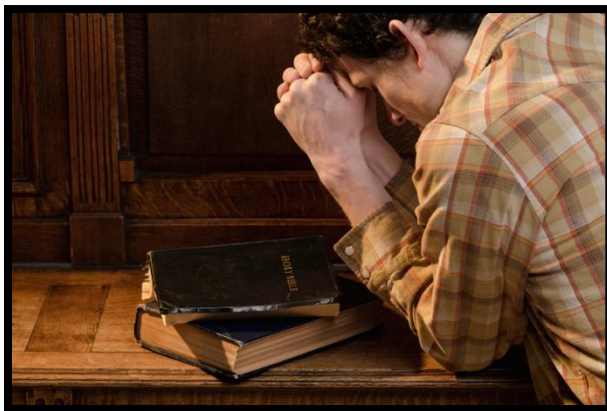
**Finding a Special Place.** Life changing conversations with God are easier to have when in the right attitude and environment. For some Christians the only time they pray is in a public setting such as Sunday School, church, a restaurant or any place where they might receive human praise for “appearing” to be so holy. Prayer is not to be a spectator sport!<sup>3</sup> While there is



nothing wrong with public prayer that is done to praise God and not ourselves, to foster a personal relationship with God Christians also need to have one on one time with their Creator. For some Christians their prayers are ineffective because they choose the wrong environment. He who knit us in our mother’s womb knows that we get easily distracted. A sound of a car, wind in the trees, television in the background, ongoing conversations, and yes even a fly being near by can send our minds into a frenzy of fragmented thoughts!

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told the people to find a secret place to pray. If you truly want to hear the whisper of God then choose a quiet place such as the laundry room, closet, office or the basement of your house and He “who sees what is done in secret will reward you with His voice” (Matthew 6:6)!

**Praying from the Heart.** “How easy it is to use sanctified jargon while praying!”<sup>4</sup> You know the words that sound impressive because they are the repetition of some of the greatest theological terms and phrases known to humanity! For example:



O thou blessed creator of heaven and earth how we praise thee for thy bountiful provisions for us thy mortal kin.<sup>5</sup> Thank you, Lord, for my sanctification and reconciliation through the atoning sacrifice of the sinless Lamb of God. Your omnipotence and omnipresence are never far from my mind even though my sinful natures remain!

God is not interested in babbling phrases that sound good to others. What He is interested in is heart felt prayers of those who cry out “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15)! Since God knows everything about us, why try to hide our emotions from Him? In our prayers we are not to use words intended to promote our glory but words that

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<sup>3</sup> Bill Hybels, 53.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 56.

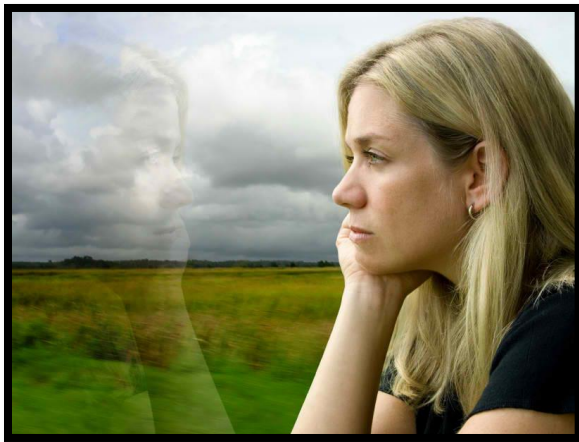
<sup>5</sup> *Deepening Life Together*, Baker Books, Parable #4.

convey our desire to have a conversation with He who loves and sincerely wants to good to those who love Him. An example of a good prayer might sound like this:

Lord this is how I feel today, I am really stressed out because my bank account is in the red and my car is making a whole lot of weird noises. I know I am to trust You with all my heart but truthfully right this moment I feel that pit in my stomach that I often get when fear overwhelms me! Lord please help me with my unbelief!

This does not mean we have a license to use disrespectful language when we talk to God, after all He is holy and our Creator! The words we pray should sincerely reflect our heart's desire to get closer to Him!

**Reflection.** The problem with saying the same prayers repeatedly is that they are mindless.<sup>6</sup> How disrespectful it is to mindlessly express sanctified jargon to the Creator and sustainer of this universe! Equally disrespectful is to have a one-way conversation with our



Father! Ever try to become friends with a person who never lets anyone get a word in edge-wise? Prayer without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) does not mean that we do all the talking! To get closer to God one also needs to hear and reflect on His gentle whispers. If we had all the answers to our prayers before asking God, then there would be no purpose to talk to Him. While we are to examine ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5), looking inwardly, we often only see the reflection of who we think we are! As it is we often lack the wisdom (James 1:5) on how to be holy in many situations in our lives and are

always in desperate need to have our hearts examined by Him who knows our “blind spots” of sin! And even if we had the wisdom of Solomon we could not obtain the righteousness of Abraham without asking and receiving the power of God to transform and renew our minds!

## Model of Prayer

While we are to avoid repeating sanctified jargon this does not mean there is not value in adhering to a specific model in our prayers! Carelessness and one-sided conversations with God often lead to feeling guilty about praying, then faint-heartedness and finally prayerlessness.<sup>7</sup> In response to the depth of fellowship Jesus showed when He prayed to God the Father, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. Jesus responded with what we know today as “The Lord’s Prayer” (Matthew 6:9-14). Jesus gave us this prayer not to be vainly repeated, but

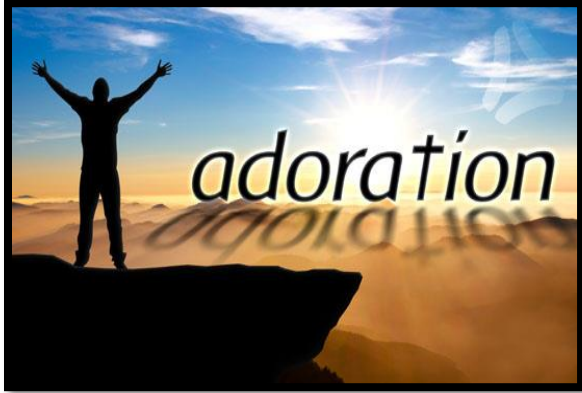
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<sup>6</sup> Bill Hybels, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 64.

to illustrate a specific model of prayer that we are to emulate.<sup>8</sup> This model is often called “ACTS” which is an acronym for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

**Adoration.** Jesus started off His example of a good model of prayer by adoring and showing submission to the will of God the Father (verses 9-10). Adoration reminds us of whom we are addressing, God who is the Creator of all things seen and unseen. Starting off a prayer with a genuine desire to submit to God’s will goes a long way towards balancing our conversations with God to be both speaking, listening and obeying! Adoration helps us to boldly approach the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16) not as those entitled to mercy (Ephesians 2:8-9) but as those bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20) and dearly loved (John 3:16)!



**Confession.** Jesus then told the disciples they should ask for forgiveness of our sins which God provides based on the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ (verse 12).<sup>9</sup> While many Christians are willing to confess their sins in general terms this does little good for it usually does not elicit embarrassment or shame<sup>10</sup> for having missed the mark of holiness. It only takes a few days in a row of calling out one’s sin by name that the desire to repent will be firmly etched into one’s heart! Once repentance occurs one’s sins are removed from that person, as far as the east is from the west (Psalms 103:9)! With the same forgiveness that you have received be prepared to offer it to others who sin against you (verse 14-15).



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<sup>8</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 98.

<sup>9</sup> James Montgomery Boice, 100.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Hybels, 67.

**Thanksgiving.** Even though Jesus does not specifically include thanksgiving in this prayer,



Jesus thanked God for the food in the feeding of 5,000 (Matthew 14:16-21) and the 4000 (Matthew 15:35-38), thanked God for the cup and bread at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26-27) and thanked God for hearing His request to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41). Others in the Bible also made the practice of thanking God in their prayers. The Psalmist wrote “praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (103:2) and Paul wrote “give thanks in all circumstances, for it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus: (1 Thessalonians 5:18).<sup>11</sup> Not only

are the words of thanks to be spoken to God, but in love the comfort we have received is to be given to others (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

**Supplication.** Asking God for help should be the final step in one’s prayer. Since we are to consider others better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3), this section of our prayer should start with



requests for God to help other people. It is helpful to write down a list of people and their concerns and track them over time to see and rejoice when God answers these prayers!<sup>12</sup> And lastly, we are to pray for ourselves. In the Lord’s prayer Jesus said “give us our daily bread” to show it is ok to ask God to provide for the necessities of life<sup>13</sup> if we don’t worry but believe God will provide what we need to physically survive (Matthew 6:25-34). For all circumstances in life we should ask God for help and know that whatever we ask for will be received if it is in accordance with His will

(Matthew 7:7-8)! Those who are weary from life burdens are to cast them upon Jesus<sup>14</sup> who promises to give them rest (Matthew 11:28-29)!

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>13</sup> James Montgomery Boice, [The Gospel of Matthew](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 99.

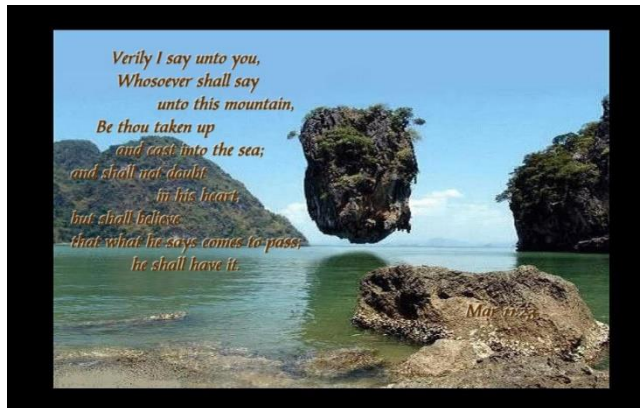
<sup>14</sup> Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 295.

## Mountain Moving Faith

**“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup>“Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. <sup>24</sup>Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.**

**Mark 11:22-24, NIV**

Prayer is not “empty wishes, vain hopes or feeble aspirations” but about asking God to move the mountains in your life that blocks your way or immobilizes you from becoming more



like Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Prayers that focus on how to serve in the kingdom of God are truly powerful when the person praying no longer looks at the size of their mountain but on the sufficiency of the Mountain Mover, the creator of all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16). We have spent so much time in the darkness of life relying on our own abilities and subsequently failing that taking that first step to overcome our mountains can be quite frightening!

Remember, no mountain is too big that God cannot remove, and no mountain is too small that God will ignore. But with the glory, power and faithfulness of a God who only wants to do good to those who love Him (Romans 8:28), we are to step out in faith and watch Him conquer whatever mountain is in our path!

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<sup>15</sup> Bill Hybels, 75.