

# Spiritual Rhythms | Prayer

## #4: Matt's Prayer

Genesis 18

Dr. Matt Cassidy ---- January 26, 2025

Hello there! Good morning, Grace Covenant Church! Hey, we're on week four of our series called *Spiritual Rhythms*. And the first part of the series is about prayer. We've made January the month of prayer. We're trying to learn how to pray more effectively and more often, more consistently. We've put together these prayer cards for you. I don't think we have any left, but you can access them on the web and download the cards. (Melinda did that and cut them to size.)

But the cards are not just for this one month of prayer. It's to help you have a pattern, a rhythm, of prayer subjects, and help you pray more effectively. Two weeks ago, we asked Jesus, "Teach us to pray." And we looked at the Lord's Prayer and how we can pray that more effectively and purposefully. And then last week we asked Moses in the Old Testament, "Moses, teach us to pray." And he showed us the Shema out of Deuteronomy 6—that famous prayer.

Today it's "Matt, teach us to pray." I know, I'm lowering expectations here. I looked at the Wednesday prayer card, and it was about how to pray for friends and family. And that's what I'm going to look at today. I have found two principles or values that have been very helpful in my prayer life and have changed it significantly. I have these two values in the way I pray for myself and for my friends and family, and even for praying for enemies, for that matter. Two values ... two principles ...

### **Principle #1: Pray About What God Cares About**

The first principle is this: pray about what God cares about. What this means is that you're going to be asking God to do something that He would want to do anyway. You're making an appeal to God Himself using the values that you know about God.

Another way of visualizing this is this: I visualize myself being in a courtroom, being an attorney, and having a list of all the reasons that the court should let my client go. And the reasons are based on the nature of God. I'm appealing to the judge on His own nature here,

arguing (you can say that, right?)---you're arguing with God, wrestling with God, about the things that you know are going to win an argument, because you're appealing to His values or His nature.

### Abraham Argues for Sodom

It's the model that I stumbled across reading through the Bible on prayer. And if you look, this is how a lot of the saints pray. It's especially pronounced in the Old Testament. Think of the founder and the father of our faith, the original Jew—Abraham. And this one prayer story was very profound in my life. When God comes to Abraham and after He has a meal with him, He says to him that He's going to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because their vile and consistent sins are calling out for justice.

And God turns and starts walking towards that ambition. And Abraham says, *Wait ... my nephew lives there with his family.* And Abraham is rather convinced that there are other righteous people who are living in Sodom and Gomorrah. So, how does Abraham pray? He barter with God, using the nature of God as his chief reason. He's saying, *Wait ... You're just and You're righteous, and it would be beneath Yahweh to treat the righteous in the same way that He treats the wicked. You can't be just if You do that.*

#### Genesis 18:24

**Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will you then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? <sup>25</sup> Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be it from You! Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?"**

So, look what he says in chapter 18 of Genesis. *Let me just negotiate here.* **“Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city. Will You then sweep away the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare the same as the wicked! Far be that from You! Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?”**

*You're a just God. You can't do this. If there are fifty people who are righteous, that's not fair. He's appealing to God and His nature.*

*And it says that he changes God's mind. He says, Well, if I find fifty there, I'll spare the whole city for their sake.*

*He turns to start walking towards the city, and Abraham says, Wait ... what if there were just five less than fifty? What if there were forty-five righteous people in those towns? Would You spare them then?*

*And the Lord says, You know what? I would ... for justice, for me.*

*Abraham says, Well, listen, while I have you here, how about forty? Would you do it for forty?*

*And the Lord says, Okay, I got this.*

*And then Abraham doesn't let Him go. This is where it all starts, as Jews. This is how he's working his way down. How about thirty? Would you save it for thirty?*

*I'll save it for thirty.*

*How about ... what about twenty? Would You save these two towns for twenty righteous people?*

*And the Lord says yes. He relents. He turns to face Sodom and Gomorrah, and then Abraham says, Wait, wait! One more chance ... for ten. Would You save them for ten, for Your reputation's sake, for the sake of justice and for things that are true?*

*And He says, For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.*

**“And then, when they had finally finished speaking, they went their separate ways.”**

He reasons with God using God's attributes, God's nature, as the means of motivation for God to change. He's appealing to God's justice. He's relying upon God's love, so that in two days, when Abraham looks over the hills and sees the downpour of hellfire and brimstone raining down on Sodom and Gomorrah, he'll know this. He'll know that there weren't even ten righteous. And he'll know that Yahweh is just, Yahweh is righteous, Yahweh is merciful-- because he had this prayer time, this argument.

## Moses Argues for the People of Israel

In the life of Moses ... go over a few pages. After the famous golden calf cultic orgy that took place when Moses left for a while, God tells Moses, *Look, I'm done with these stiff-necked people. They don't deserve to be brought into the Promised Land.*

Then Moses steps in and prays for them. And how does he pray? He's praying about all the things that God cares about. One of the things God cares about is His reputation. So, one of the first things that Moses says is, *No, no, no, You can't destroy them all, because the Egyptians are going to say that You are evil and You had no intention of saving Israel. You just wanted to take them out in the desert to do this. You're not a good and loving God. The second reason I think this is a terrible idea, Lord, is because You made a covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do You remember? You're the covenant maker and the covenant keeper. You made a promise; You have to keep it.*

And the passage says, **“And the Lord relented.”**

They're appealing to God about God and His values.

## King Hezekiah Argues for His Life

Here's one last one, showing how to pray for yourself, even, using what you know to be true about God. In this story in 2 Kings 20, Hezekiah is one of the very few good kings in Israel or Judah. These are two different countries, and he's one of the good kings of Judah. And he is going to die. He's in a hospice bed. And the Lord sends Isaiah to visit King Hezekiah, and he pronounces his death and says to him, **“This is what Jehovah says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.”** That's it.

## 2 Kings 20:2-3

**Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord,<sup>3</sup> “Remember, O LORD, how I have walked before You faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in Your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.**

And Hezekiah turned and prayed. **“Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to Jehovah.”** Here’s his reasoning. **“ ‘Remember, O Jehovah, how I have walked before You faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in Your eyes.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly.”**

He doesn’t say, *I’m a popular king*. He doesn’t say, *You know, if You let me live, I’ll give all my possessions to You*.

He says this: *Lord, I have ruled and I have lived my life like you say to live life. I have loved You with all my heart and my soul and my strength. And I have led the kingdom—Your kingdom—on earth as it would be in heaven. I think it would be good for You to let me live and let me continue to be king.*

And here’s how God responds. Isaiah is not even through the inner courtyard and God sends him back to Hezekiah. **“ ‘Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, “This is what Jehovah says, the God of your father David: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.”’”**

*I’m going to give you fifteen more years. And I’m going to save the city for my reputation, for my sake, in that promise I made to David.*

I mean, does prayer change lives? Hezekiah would tell you, *Oh, yeah, it makes a difference*. It gave him fifteen years. Prayer can change the mind of God. *Thus saith the Lord, You are going to die. You will not recover*. But here’s something else the Lord said: *You’re going to be okay for fifteen years*. You can change God’s mind.

## Application

### 1. Pray the Attributes of God

So, here's an application for this first one. How do you pray about what God cares about? How do you pray that? The first one is that you pray the attributes of God. And ladies in the women's Bible study, take good notes. Write these down. When you're studying the attributes of God, you use the attributes of God kind of against Him. You're saying, *This is who You are. You need to be that way.*

And this is how you reason in a reasonable prayer. I wrote a prayer:

*Holy Father, please, dear God, step into this marriage in a mighty way. Turn this into a redemption story. Use it to show others about Your patience and Your lovingkindness. Look, I know the Wilsons, and You know the Wilsons, and they're going to brag about Your grace to everyone they encounter. Their marriage is famously bad. Make it famously godly, and You will be the talk of the PTA for years.*

### 2. Pray the Names of God

Another way to pray about what God cares about is to pray for His name. Pray the names of God. In the Old Testament particularly, names are descriptions of the character involved. So, one of the names of God is Jehovah Jireh, which means "the Lord provides." And so, you can appeal to that attribute, that title. It's more of a title than a name. And make a prayer out of it.

Here's a prayer I wrote:

*Jehovah Jireh, we are asking that You would provide a job for Bob. He's a righteous man, and he brings Your glory into the way that he works. Put him in a place of work that would make up for the months of income that he's lost. Put him in a place where he can make the most for Your kingdom and Your influence.*

Look at the names of God—look them up on the internet, and then pray the names of God. Hold Him to His values.

### 3. Pray the Prayers of the Bible

So, you pray the attributes of God and the names of God, and then a third way to do it, which we talked about last week some (I'm giving you an example here) is to plagiarize Bible verses. You plagiarize Bible prayers. Because you know that's what God cares about by definition. It's another way of praying what God cares about. Here's a prayer where I've inserted my own part into a prayer that Paul prayed. It is a gorgeous prayer.

#### Colossians 1:9-10

**For this reason, since the day [you left for college], we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,<sup>10</sup> so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way.**

It says in Colossians 1:

**“For this reason, since the day [you left for college], we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way.”**

Wouldn't you want to pray something just like that for your child going off to elementary school or junior high? Or if your son or daughter is packing up a duffel bag and going overseas with the military? Oh, that's a great prayer.

You pray what God cares about.

#### Principle #2: Pray About Everything You Care About

*So, Matt, teach us to pray.* Here we go. One, you pray what God cares about. Two, you pray about everything you care about. Just keep that in mind over here. I need to explain to you what it means for God to be sovereign for just a second, and then we'll get back to the details of what that means.

When we talk about the sovereignty of God, it usually feels like it's in conflict with the free will of a human being. But sovereignty is complicated. If God is sovereign, it doesn't mean that everything is fixed. It doesn't mean that we're just kind of playing out fate, and everything's kind of set for us.

## The Different Wills of God

When we say that God is sovereign, we need to understand that there's at least three wills of God. Really, there's four, but we only have three to talk about today. There's a providential will of God. There is a prescriptive or moral will of God. And then there's what is called a permissive will of God. Let me explain each one.

### 1. God's Providential Will

The providential will of God—that's sometimes what people are thinking about when they think of the sovereign will of God—is the past and the present and the future. It's the aspect of His plotline that is absolutely going to happen. For example, there's no doubt about the plan of salvation. It's going to work itself out. Ultimate justice, eternal rewards—those are set. It's going to happen. No one can stop it. So, we can kind of see God's providential will when we look back, especially when we look back and the Bible says, "This is God's will." But sometimes we can look back even in a short time of history and say, "Yeah, I think that was God's providential will. That was going to happen."

In the current time, where we are in the present, sometimes it's just a fog. And in the future—sure, we know how it ends in Revelation, kind of (we don't even understand that book). But we definitely don't know how God is going to get there. But whether we know or don't know doesn't matter. The providential will of God is going to happen.

When I was in college, or actually in the Cassidy household, there was the providential will of Jerome Cassidy. He ran the house. And one of the providential plotlines was that you go to college, and you graduate from college. Twice I came home during the summer and tried to quit college. And my dad looked at me like *Oh, you have no free will here. You're going back to college and you're going to graduate from college.* The providential will of Jerome Cassidy was his kids graduated. And they did, because we didn't have a choice.



The reason I'm bringing this up is because in our prayer life, sometimes we can be praying for something, and unknowingly, because we don't know the details of the providential will of God, we unknowingly are praying against this providential will, and the answer is an absolute no. Because you can't change that part.

You can see this in the life of Peter. Two times he tries to stop the providential will of God from happening. He's trying to stop Jesus from going to the cross. One time with a knife, and before that happened, another time with a conversation.

Jesus is telling the disciples, "Here's what is going to happen next. I'm going to get turned over to the religious leaders, they're going to turn me over to the Romans, I'm going to be beaten, and I will die. And then I'll rise again."

Peter hears that and it says that he pulls Jesus off to the side. Oh my—so you tell Jesus the way it is—good. So, Peter pulls Him off to the side and He says twice, "Never ... this is never going to happen, Jesus." So, that's Peter's prayer.

### **Matthew 16:23**

**Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."**

Here's Jesus' subtle response. "And Jesus turned to Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God's providential will, but merely human concerns.'"

Peter has drifted into the providential will of God, and you can't change that.

Later Jesus is going to pray to the Father, *Listen is there some other way so that we don't have to do it this way?* And then He comes to realize, *Not my will be done, but Thy will be done.*

## **2. God's Moral Will**

The second will is what is called the moral will. Sometimes it's called the prescriptive will, because God is prescribing this. This is the way God would want all of us to live. The moral will is found in the commandments that are in the Bible, and in our conscience. And it is

fundamentally this: there's the moral way to live, and then there's the hard way to live. Live the moral way, within the boundaries that God has set up for us.

At the Cassidy house there was the moral will of Jerome Cassidy. I found out in eighth grade that this is one of the top three commandments, that you will always respect your mother. One afternoon I was rather disrespectful to her and my dad jumped out of his seat and said, "That woman is your mother. She's my wife. And you'll never treat my wife like that." Message received. The moral will of Jerome Cassidy was "Thou shalt always respect my wife."

### 3. God's Permissive Will

The idea of the sovereignty of God is that it includes the providential will of God, the moral will of God (the way He would like us to live), and then finally, what is called the permissive will of God (what He allows).

This is the biggest one. It includes the most of life, because this is human freedom. This is where in human freedom the rubber meets the road. It's how we express ourselves, for good and for bad. This is the reason there is evil in the world, because God respects human dignity and gives us freedom. This is why there are heroes in the world, because God respects human dignity and gives us freedom to express heroism. The essential, existential purpose of freedom is this: that in all your choices you declare to all of creation, seen and unseen, whom do you serve?

Or you can put it another way. Who has a right to rule all of creation? Every choice you make is permitted by God so that you can show who's king.

A bumper sticker goes like this: *The life we have is a gift from God. What we do with our life is our gift back to God ... using freedom.*

So, let's go back. The best way to pray, point one, value one, is to pray about everything that matters to God. The second one is to pray about everything you care about. Now listen—this is going to hurt—I've been thinking about it all week, and I can't come up with another way to say this. But most of what you care about, God doesn't care about. I mean, He doesn't. I mean, a majority of the permissive will things just don't matter to Him.

Don't leave, okay? There's a chance that this could be a good sermon, okay? Right now, it doesn't look likely. But just hang in there, okay? I'm going to appeal to the parents. You care about your children. You care about your child. But, come on, man—right? Most of what your child is asking for you don't care about. I mean, I'd say a majority of what they want to do or

**what they want to have, you don't care. You just don't care. I mean, listen, there are things you** do care about and maybe they care about too. That's the important stuff. But what they care about is not so important, and so you don't care. I mean, you're not bad for that. I mean, listen, if you had a three-year-old named Becky and she comes in and asks you (that's like a prayer), "Hey, can I put this marble in my mouth and then jump on the bed?"

"No—no, you can't do that! That's an important thing, and you have my attention now."

If three-year-old Becky says, "Can I wear my princess Snow White dress to church today?" you say, "I don't care. Sure, yeah."

*Well, if she's an only child, then you do care and you want to get her all dressed up.*

*But*

if you have three other kids, you won't care anymore. Let me tell you, you're going to care a lot less about a lot more. "You can wear your pajamas to church---I don't care. Wait, you know what? You can't wear the ones with the holes in them, because that makes me look bad. But just wear something."

### Application

### Pray About Everything that's Important to God and to You

So, you pray about everything that's important to God and to you. This is part one of this second section, part A. So, if it's important to God, it's important to you; yeah, pray about that. Pray, *Dear God, bring a righteous Christian man into my brother's life so he could have some kind of influence and maybe introduce him to Christ.*

*Dear God, I'm lifting up my neighbor down the street, that I'd have a chance to be able to talk about something spiritual.* That's of value to God.

*I pray for my sister's child who's in the hospital. I mean, who knows? You might heal that child.*

## David Argues for His Son's Life

There's a wonderful story like this in the Bible in 2 Samuel 12. King David's newborn infant son is deathly ill. And David goes and falls down on the floor and for seven days won't eat, doesn't talk to anyone. He just prays to God. I'm sure he's reasoning with God, using God's attributes and the things that God cares about. And he's calling out to God. And after seven days, his son dies. And the servants are all around, and they're afraid to tell David, because they figure, *Listen, if he's acting this way when the child is alive, he is likely to do something desperate if he finds out the child has passed.*

David sees them murmuring and says, *My son has died, right?*

And they say, *Yes.*

And here's what is strange. Hearing those words, David gets up, washes up, puts on lotion, changes clothes, goes to the house of the Lord, worships, comes back, and has a big meal. And so, now his servants are extremely perplexed. And they say, *Wait a minute ... when the child was alive you were fasting and wailing and praying. And now that the child is dead, you worship and you eat?*

### 2 Samuel 12:22-23

**David answered, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, 'Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.'<sup>23</sup> But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."**

And here's what David said. **"David answered, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, "Who knows? Jehovah may be gracious to me and let the child live." But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.'"**

So, you pray about everything that is important to God and important to you, because you don't know what is part of God's providential will. Who knows? This could be a Hezekiah story. It's not. Oh. But who knows? Maybe the boy would live another fifteen years.

**Pray About Everything You Care About,  
Because if You Care, God Cares!**

So, that's part A of section two: praying for everything that you care about. Part B of that is to pray about everything that you care about and God doesn't care about. What about the stuff that you care about and God doesn't care about? This is why you stay until the end. I hope it's worth it. You pray about everything that you care about, because if you care, God cares. You pray about everything you care about, because if you care, then God cares.

How does Jesus tell us to pray? First line: "Our Father ..." You fathers and mothers, all these things from your children that we talked about that you don't care about---then you start caring. If it matters to them, it starts mattering to you. And it's because you love them.

Your little boy Biff, eight years old, says, *Hey, I've got a birthday coming up. I want a blue bike.* You don't care. I mean, it's just a blue bike. He's singing about how he's going to get a blue bike in a month. *I want a blue bike.* What are you going to get little boy Biff for his eighth birthday? You're going to get him a bike, aren't you? Can I ask you what color the bike's going to be? Oh, it's going to be a blue bike. There are no blue bikes in all of Austin. There's a blue bike that's really nice in San Antonio. What are you going to do about it? Oh, you're going to do whatever you have to do about it, because you're going to get that blue bike in that living room on his eighth birthday, not because it matters to you. You don't care. But if it matters to him, it matters to you.

You pray about everything you care about, because if you care, God cares. And if you can do that with a blue bike, Jesus would have said, **"Look at you, fathers. When your son asks you for a fish, you don't give him a snake."** Then He says this. **"And you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children. Then how much more---how much more---would your good Father in heaven give you good gifts, if you'd just ask Him. So ask, seek, knock."** Why wouldn't you do that?

Twenty-five years ago or more, we bought the house we were going to live, the one we're living in right now. I've got to tell you, it's a huge God story because of me coming to understand this second principle. I'm praying for a house, and God doesn't care. He's got cattle on a thousand hills. And so, He doesn't care. But since I care, He cares. So, I felt like He was saying, *What do you want?*

*I want a one-story house with three sides of white stone so I don't have to paint the thing, and I'd like a sidewalk on my side of the street, because my kids are tiny and I don't want them to get hurt.*

*Is that it?*

*Sure.*

It would take half an hour to tell you the six God stories that got us into the house that I live in. Can I tell you what it looks like? Yeah, it's a one-story with white stone on three sides and a sidewalk on our side of the street. I mean, it is crazy the way this whole thing happened. I'll just tell you one thing. We had one day to sell our older house, and it hailed that day. We had three people come to an open house. Two left before they even came in. The third one, as I was opening the door (because the open house was over and I was going to take the sign down), a lady was standing there with her husband, saying, "This is going to be our house, honey." And it was. So, we were able to buy our new house.

You have not because you ask not. And do you know why you ask not? Because you're probably thinking, *Oh, it doesn't matter to God.* And it doesn't. He doesn't care. But if you care about it, He cares about it, so now He cares. So, you'd do this for your kids, and He's a good, good Father. Give Him a chance.

One more thing—a little prayer hack—it's just me, but when I prayed for a one-story, white stone house with a sidewalk, I'd say, "Or better." [Laughter from the congregation.] I mean, I want to leave room for that "more than you could ever ask or imagine." And I don't want—*You know what I mean, God.* And I've got to tell you, the house that I live in, I got the "or better" part. It has this huge backyard and all this fun stuff. "Or better"—I honestly did that.

You pray about everything you care about. You pray about everything you care about, because if you care, God cares. It's one of life's great mysteries.

I was so proud of my daughter during COVID. We were all just laying around the house. She had moved back. She needed to get a new car, and God knew it. He didn't care about the details, So, she understood how to pray about this. So, she prayed for the year, make, and model, color, exterior and interior. And so, we're all laying around helping her look, and I said, "Hey, here it is."

She said, "That's not black. I want black exterior, I want white interior."

"Okay." You know?

“Well, God doesn’t care. I care, so He cares. So, it’s going to be black.”

Guess what kind of care she drives? Year, make, model—anyone want to guess the color? Oh, it’s black. Interior? It’s white. Because God doesn’t care. Well, He cares because she cares; and so, He cares.

Jesus said, **“Give us this day our daily bread.”** That’s kind of what He’s talking about. All the other stuff ... the daily bread ... *Could it be rye bread?*

*I don’t care, sure. Yeah. By all means.*

Here’s a whole passage that Jesus is teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, and it’s about stuff. But it’s about worrying about stuff. And when you’re worrying about stuff, you’ve crossed the moral will of God. You’re caring too much about stuff that’s temporal. And that’s what God cares about. The other stuff, He doesn’t care about, so ask away. Get the values right and see where everything else lands.

That’s why, before He even starts the whole section on worrying and manipulating and conniving, He says that you could pray instead. He says, **“Look, no one can serve two masters. You’ll either hate the one and love the other, or you’ll be devoted to one and despise the other. You can’t serve two masters. So, choose: God or money.”**

*Let’s talk about your stuff.* And then He launches into this whole thing about worrying. **“Therefore I tell you this. Do not worry about your life, what you’re going to eat or drink. And do not worry about your body, what you’re going to wear. Is life not more than just food and the body more than clothes?”** Listen to His appeal.

### **Matthew 6:26b-27**

**Are you not much more valuable than the birds? <sup>27</sup> Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?**

*Let me give you an illustration. The birds are everywhere. “But they don’t sow, they don’t reap, they don’t store things up. But the heavenly Father takes care of these little birds. Aren’t you”*—actually, the “you” there is emphatic in Greek—**“Are YOU not much more valuable than the birds?”** I mean, you believe that He loves you. You believe that He’s a good Father, right? **“Can any one of you by worrying add a single day to your life?”**

*I'm not through yet. The clothes that you keep worrying about—"have you seen the lilies of the valley? I mean, they don't spin or toil. And Solomon is all of his splendor and grandeur never looked as good as these flowers. And they're going to be here today and gone tomorrow and thrown into a fire."* That's how he dresses the fields.

**Matthew 6:30b**

**...will He not much more clothes you—you of little faith?**

Then He appeals to the goodness of the Father. **"Will He not much more clothe you, oh you of little faith?"** There are things He cares about and things He doesn't care about. Get the things right that He cares about, and then just ask for anything and everything.

**Matthew 6:31-33**

**So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

Look, here's a summary of the whole point. **"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What shall I wear?'** For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."

Here's His moral will: **"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."** First things first, the things that God cares about. **"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."** Then ask for everything. He doesn't care. But if you care, He cares.

I hope this has been helpful—Matt, teach us to pray. I'd say here's how to pray. Pray about what God cares about. And then, using His nature and His attributes and His prayers, pray about everything you care about. Because if you care, He cares. He's a good, good father.



I remember the day vividly that changed my prayer life. I was in the old auditorium on the second-to-last row, and I was at a funeral that I didn't want to be at. It was for a friend who was a godly and righteous man, and he took his faith to work with him. He was married to a wonderful woman who was completely surrendered to the Lord. They had three daughters. The oldest was just entering the teen years. And he had cancer.

So, I think I prayed every day for maybe nine months. And I had a list. I went into that courtroom and had nine bullet points. I could have put them on a slide, a Keynote slide. And they were all reasonable, and they were appealing to the nature of God. And they were appealing to the things that I wanted too. I said that he was a godly man, and we're running out of them. This could be like Hezekiah—*Let him continue to live*. I said that he was a wonderful husband and their marriage could be used for mentoring and helping younger couples learn how to live a godly life. And he could mentor young men as to how to live in the marketplace. *And what about the girls, Lord? They're going to need a dad. They're going to desperately need a father, right now.*

And there I was on the second-to-last row at his funeral. But there was something deeply strange about my grief. Most of my grief is putting out a fire of rage. And this time I was quiet. I was subtle. And during one of the worship songs, I felt like I heard God say—because I was still negotiating—*I heard you. I heard everything you said. And it all made perfect sense. Those were good reasons. But there was a better reason.*

And I questioned, *What?*

And He said, *I don't have to tell you. Because you can't understand on this side of eternity. But I heard you.*

Does prayer change lives? Sometimes you get a Hezekiah story out of it. Sometimes you get a David's little boy story. Sometimes prayer changes circumstances. But this time, that prayer changed me. I've never prayed the same since then. Because at that funeral, I had no regrets. I argued the case in the way that God would answer. And His answer was no.

Pray—all the time, about everything. Why wouldn't you? He's your heavenly Father, and He's a good, good father. Talk to Him, all the time, about everything. That's what I wanted to teach you about prayer. Let's pray.

*Lord, we are grateful that You would even commune with us. And it is a mystery that all the things that we care about and You don't, and You change. You care about things because we care about them. And I'd ask that You would help us be a house of prayer, a church of prayer warriors, people who pray together because they know that You love us, and we desire Your glory, and we hope for Your kingdom to come and Your will to be done in our lives, as it will be done in heaven.*

*We are grateful for the opportunity to commune with You, talk with You, to enjoy You—about significant things, about nothing—just to spend time with the maker and the creator of the universe, because You allow us to and You enjoy it.*

*Lord, I'd ask that we would enjoy our prayer life with You. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*