

Victory of the Lamb – March 12, 2023 - How to Talk to God
Matthew 7:7-11– Supplications – From A to Z (As You Please) - Pastor Bill Limmer

One of the many productivity hacks out there is before you leave your work for the day, write out your to do list for tomorrow and then rank the items A B C. With A being the most important items for you to do. My issue with this is when I know what I am going to be doing, I can go so excited the night before thinking about what I am going to be doing that I can't wait to go to bed so I can hurry up and get up tomorrow and do it.

Whether that is you or not, here is the thing that maybe connects us: Have you ever started your day off without taking the time to pray? What is it that keeps you from having a heart-to-heart talk with God who loves you? Is it pride? I got this. I know what I am doing. Is it forgetfulness? I just got carried away and forgot to put first things first? Is it laziness? I know I should I just don't. Or is it, you don't think it will do any good? Or is it I don't know what to pray for? Or maybe you have never prayed before and you wonder if you should start now? Or where should I start.

Why should you pray? The answers may differ from person to person but it can give you peace, hope, strength no matter who you are or what you are going through. Prayer can help you pause and turn to God no matter what is going on.

Today we are wrapping up our series **How to Talk to God (sermon series slide)**. And this week we are going to see: Just a reminder and to catch us all up. Here is where we have been so far: week one – was **WOW** – praising God for what he has done and who he is! Week two – was confessing our sins – **I'm sorry** - from the depths of our hearts – not like a six year who parrots his or her parents saying I'm sorry to sibling so they can get on with it – and last week Pastor Ben showed with us part of our prayers is **Thankfulness** to say thanks God by meditating on his wonders. If you missed those message or want to review go to our youtube page or website.

Today, let's see what Jesus says about prayer. **What two ways does Jesus encourage us to pray?** Matthew 7:7-9⁷ **"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.** Literally these words mean, keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking because prayer is a relational lifestyle with God. And depending on who you are, these words of Jesus might be super shocking because what Jesus is saying is your prayers are not just bouncing off the ceiling. But that God is already in your life, already listening, and he will always answer!

And since prayer is a lifestyle, it means we are to bring our whole life to God in prayer. **1 Thessalonians 5:17 says, Pray continually.** It's appropriate to pray for our physical needs. It's appropriate to pray for our relationships, for our marriages, for our families. It's appropriate to pray that we might be able to do our work with effectiveness and integrity. So no matter what is going on in your life, whether that is a health issue, a financial issue, a parenting issue, an end of life issue, a mental or emotional issue, spiritual issue – or whatever it is you can pray for God to meet your heart and your circumstance with comfort, hope, peace, love. As you know, you don't have control, but God does so lean on him. He is always listening, and he always answers.

But prayer requests are not just for you. You can pray for others as well. **1 Timothy 2:1-4** says it this way: **I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior,⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** God encourages us to pray for all people. And we can sum that up like this: The people you are closest too. This is your family and your closest friends. You know them the best. You can think of the next group of people as your friends, co-workers, classmates, acquaintances, those who are in your sphere of influence. And the next group of people is everybody else from those in your neighborhood and city to those in your state and country to the government to Imagine if all the time spent complaining about the various political parties in our country was spent in prayer for these people. Pray for people all over the world. You can pray that their daily needs get met and that they remain in faith of come to faith. It is one of my favorite things to do is to pray for people of other countries that God would move in their lives, use me, use anybody to share the good news of Jesus with them. Understand you are here today in person or online because someone prayed for you. Prayer is powerful and effective.

We have a lot going on in our lives. We are all so busy. There is always something to do. A reformer once said, I have so much to do, I have to spend all morning in prayer. Here is a productivity and blessing hack: **Pray**. We sometimes think: I am so overwhelmed. I am so anxious. How am I going to get it all done? There are clothes to be washed, the house to be cleaned, work to do, prepare a healthy meal, exercise, maintain relationships, serve others, Here is what to do: **Flip the script. Seek God first. Pray**. Pray for calm, for wisdom, for balance, for peace.

Here is a guide. If it is worth worrying about it, pray about it. If it is worth thinking about it, pray about it. If it is worth doing it, pray about it. Nothing is too small to pray about, nothing is too big to pray about.

What two ways does Jesus encourage us to pray? 1. Jesus says in your life keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking, pray continually: So the first way: **Pray like Amazon (Amazon logo) from A to Z**. Nothing is too big or too small to pray for.

Why are we to pray to God for everything from A to Z because as his followers we want align our hearts with his because we know that God's pleasure is for our best. **Matthew 7:9-11** **"Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!** Like a human father, who gives us good things and not bad so also we go to our heavenly Father. I know some of you didn't have great fathers, but here is the thing, God our heavenly Father is in a whole other league than even good earthly fathers. He is always a good father and so he will give us the best answer. Sometimes because we are sinful we will ask for stone and scorpions but God give us bread and fish instead. He gives us something different than we ask for because he loves us and knows what is best for us. Imagine if you were a kid and every night you asked for a cupcake for dinner? You want the answer yes, but the best answer is different. If God gave us everything we ask for right away, we would all realize that some of what we asked for was harmful, maybe even disastrous. And then we would be afraid to pray. God is too good to you something that will hurt you. God is too good to give you a yes when you aren't ready. God is too good to leave behind when you have blown it. He is a loving Father.

Sometimes it's hard to understand God's answers to our prayers. You ask for something but don't get it or it doesn't happen. You're upset because that is what you wanted. But maybe five years from now you will realize God said no because he had something better planned. We can pray for God's will in our lives because it really is the best way. We can pray to God, **if you please** (if it is your will) because God has already given us the most precious gift of all, his Son Jesus to be our Savior from sin. Because of that we can pray in confidence that he will provide for all of our lesser needs.

What two ways does Jesus encourage us to pray? Jesus encourages us to pray, **from A-Z, if you please**. Let's repeat that.

Your life will radically change when you stop making prayer a to do list or a backup plan.

There is also a super amazing surprise with prayer. Here it is. Hebrews 7:25 ²⁵ **Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save^[a] those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.** Do you know what "intercede" means. It means to pray. And do you know what that means? That means Jesus lives to pray continually for you!

Isn't it surprisingly wonderful to consider that God is always, all day, every day, praying for you. What an incredible reality – all day, every day, right now God is praying for you. He never stops thinking and praying for you. Take a few big breaths and allow your brain and your body to accept the reality that God is always, forever praying for you.

Let's open our palms to heaven as a sign of surrender and say these three statements to God – repeat after me: God idk what to say: God idk what to do: God idk what is next. This allows us to give our days, plans, and future to God who is already everyday forever praying for you.

Thank you God for the overwhelming strength that comes from the thought the truth that you are always praying for us. Thank you for hearing all our prayers and answering them in the best possible way always!

Prayer time – I am going to give you a little time and a little space to open up your hearts and pray to God **from A-Z, if you please** – (time to let worshipers pray)

Closing prayer: What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer! Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Ev'rything to God in prayer