

### “Find Out About Prayer”

A Princeton doctoral student once asked Albert Einstein, “What is there left in the world for original dissertation research?” Einstein replied, “Find out about prayer. Somebody must find out about prayer.” Einstein wasn’t the only one who was desperate to learn more about prayer. Through the centuries, when people have had nowhere else to turn they cried out to God. The word “prayer” comes from a Latin word that is closely akin to our word “precarious.” Prayer seems to be a universal experience that is born out of basic human need. Thomas Merton put it, “Prayer is an expression of who we are...We are a living incompleteness. We are a gap, an emptiness that calls for fulfillment.” Jesus’ disciples felt that sense of incompleteness. Yet when they considered Jesus’ relationship with God the Father, they saw completeness and wholeness, so they became desperate to know what Jesus knew and to pray the way Jesus prayed. They asked him, “Lord teach us to pray.”

Few of us would claim to be experts on prayer. In fact, almost universally, people experience great dissatisfaction with their prayer life. Yet, we must press on into this vast world we call “prayer.” As we begin this season of forty days of prayer, may our hearts cry out, “Lord Jesus, teach us to pray.”

? Note: Each day during this season of prayer we will explore together what the Scriptures say about prayer. A **Prayer Focus** will then be suggested for that day. In no way is the prayer focus meant to restrict or confine your time of prayer. Please feel the freedom to pray as the Lord leads and enables.

#### Monday – Praying with Jesus

1. Please read Matthew 6:5-15. What part of Jesus’ teaching on prayer jumps out at you? Why?
2. What types of things do you usually pray for or pray about? How do those stack up against the things Jesus is saying?

**Prayer Focus:** Let’s begin by asking God to hallow (glorify) his name in our congregation during these forty days of prayer. Ask him to teach us to pray, to seek him with all our hearts, and for the strength to press on when we feel powerless to pray.

#### Tuesday – Real Praying

*“The prayer preceding all prayers is, ‘May it be the real I who speaks. May it be the real Thou that I speak to.’”* C.S. Lewis  
*“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.”* Psalm 62:8

1. Please read Matthew 6:5-6. Jesus discusses the way the hypocrites prayed, and why we do not need to be like them. What assurance does he give us at the end of verse 6? What does this promise mean?
2. Matthew 6:7-8 is a caution against mindless repetition and inauthentic garbles in our prayers. What advice does Jesus have for praying authentically? What advice does the psalmist have in Psalm 62 (above)?

**Prayer Focus:** Write out a simple prayer, letting the Father know all that is on your heart today. Spend some time praying about your personal walk with Christ, including specific challenges and struggles you are facing.

#### Wednesday – Father Knows Best

*“We think we know. We think we see the whole picture. We think we recognize all the factors involved in our circumstances. We think we understand ourselves, our desires, our longings, our fears. We do not. But our Father does.”* Darrell Johnson – “Fifty Seven Words that Change the World”

1. Please read Matthew 6:5-8. In verses 6 and 8, Jesus says that our Heavenly Father knows our needs before we ask, but can he really understand what’s on our hearts? See Romans 8:26-27 for the answer. What does the Holy Spirit do for us?
2. Look closely at the end of Romans 8:27. How do we know that the Spirit will intercede for us effectively?

**Prayer Focus:** Today, let’s thank God for his many blessings. Thank him for the work of the Spirit in your life. Thank him for the ways he is working at FBC. Thank him for the Spirit’s work of praying on our behalf.

#### Thursday – Following Instructions

*“Jesus is brilliant. Yes, Jesus is good, and kind, and merciful, and strong. But the more I get to know Jesus, the more I am impressed by our Lord’s sheer brilliance. Nowhere is his brilliance more manifest than in the gift of the prayer he taught his disciples to pray...”* Darrell Johnson – “Fifty Seven Words that Change the World”

Matthew 6:9-10 focuses on who God is. Jesus says we should ask that God’s name be honored as holy; that his kingdom reality would break into our lives; that his will would be done, on earth as presently happens in heaven. How will your life be changed when God answers this prayer?

Verses 11-13 address our need for God. What immediate need is identified in verse 11? What past event is the topic of verse 12? What future concern is in verse 13? Are you willing to pray to God about these things, to really look to him for the answers to your needs? Why (or why not)?

**Prayer Focus:** Pray through Jesus’ prayer of forgiveness. Ask the Lord to search your heart (Psalm 139). Ask the Lord for the grace to forgive those who have wronged you and to bring forth his reconciliation.

#### Friday – Jesus’ Prayer

The verses of Matthew 6:9-13 are sometimes called “The Lord’s Prayer,” but we have seen that they are more like our Lord’s instructions on prayer. For another of Jesus’ prayers, read John 17:1-26.

As you see there, sometimes public prayer is appropriate. When might it be appropriate for you to pray publicly? (Hint: look closely at verse 4.)

Though this prayer is lengthy, Jesus does not resort to mindless babbling. What themes do you see Jesus work through, so that His prayer does not evolve into “babbling like pagans?”

**Prayer Focus:** Jot down some ideas of what you would like to talk to God about. Try to identify patterns or themes and then pray through them.

**Weekend Prayer Focus:** Spend some time this weekend asking the Lord to teach you to pray. Pray through the Lord’s Prayer in your own words.