



Love Like Confetti

Part 4 – Pray for One Another

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Today, we are continuing in our series called *Love Like Confetti*. In this series, we are focusing on what Christ gave us in our new command to love one another. In that the way we love one another is what sets us apart from the world. That's how the world will know that we are followers of Jesus, in the way that we love one another.

We talked about loving one another in general and we talked about *Forgiving One Another*. Last week, we talked about *Encouraging One Another*. Today, we are moving onto *Pray for One Another* as we continue to *Love Like Confetti*. Today, we're talking about prayer. We know that prayer is an important part of our spiritual life. We're told very clearly in scripture that prayer should be a part of our spiritual disciplines, the things that we do as Christians.

We read in 1 Samuel that it is a sin not to pray. So, not praying can put us into an act of sin. As Christians, we want to avoid sinning, so we want to pray. Even more important than trying to avoid sinning, we want to look to the promises that we have in scripture of when we're obedient in prayer. For that, we turn to James for our main passage today.

James 5 - ***16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*** So, you see, that's where we are. Pray for one another. Why? It's because the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

There are some, especially this time of year, that become acutely aware of their level of righteousness as they are in the stands watching NCAA Basketball. Their team is down two with one second and they are shooting two free throws. Suddenly, they are concerned about their level of righteousness because the prayer of a righteous person has great powers as it is working.

Basketball is not the only place that we see this. Some people will suddenly become concerned, because of certain situations, about their level of righteousness and they begin to bargain with God. "I'm sorry for all the things I've done; please answer this prayer for me. Or, "I promise to be better, but please listen to my prayer, God." We can become concerned with our level of righteousness, but this right here is key. This key point is, as we talk about praying for one another and that the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working, **Righteousness is through Christ alone**. It has nothing to do with how bad I've been, nothing to do with what I promise to do or anything else, but only in Christ alone and that is where we receive our righteousness.

In our righteousness, we then get to a place where we are able to come before God and love one another in a way that's different from any other way that we love one another. This morning, I want to talk about prayer in general for a bit as we talk about praying for one another, but this is not going to be a complete review of prayer. For that, I want to refer you to our website. Two years ago, in January and February of 2016, we did an entire series on prayer. You may not know this, but our sermons are archived on the website and available for you for about 2 ½ years. If you click on "Latest Message" on the home page, it will take you to our archived messages page and you can scroll down to January and February of 2016. If you want to do a comprehensive study on prayer, that's there for you. You can listen to those messages and follow through that.

Today, I want to give you a brief overview of prayer because I think it's important as we're talking about praying for one another. In that series, we used Matthew 6: 9-13 as our template for how we are to pray. This is what we call the Lord's Prayer. We recite it sometimes; most of us know it. The important thing about that passage is what Jesus says about those words. He said, "Don't pray this, **pray like this.**"

He's giving us a template for how we are to pray. In that, he gives us an outline of the things we are to pray for, how we are to pray. The things that should be included in our comprehensive prayers, the things we do when we pray. There is an acronym to help you remember these things and it's ACTS. The four things that we get in the Lord's Prayer in the Matthew 6 passage about what we're to do when we pray are this: **A**cknowledgement, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, and **S**upplication. This is how we are to pray.

As we look at this and we know that this is our comprehensive prayer, we know that praying for one another is a part of our prayer called **Petitionary Prayer**. This is the part where we come to God, asking for the things that we need. You see in those four parts of our prayer... And this is what my wife and I use to teach our kids how to pray. We say we tell God how awesome he is – acknowledge him. We tell him we're sorry for sinning and ask him for forgiveness – confession. We thank him for the things that he's given us and the things that he's done for us – thanksgiving. And then supplication is asking for the things that we need and the things that other people need. Today, specifically, loving one another, we're talking about our petitionary prayer, asking for the things that other people need.

In the Lord's Prayer, it's "Give us this day our daily bread." That's our supplication. We can become conflicted though as we come to God in our petitionary prayer because one of the things we know about God is that he's omniscient. That word means he knows everything. We're talking about petitioning to him and therefore we're asking him to change events and circumstances. So, how is it that we can ask God to change events and circumstances if he already knows what's going to happen?

He knows your words before you speak them. He knows the number of hairs on your head. He knows where you're going to go to college, whom you're going to marry, when you'll have your first child, if you do. He knows when you're going to have your first grandchild. He knows the outcome of the NCAA Basketball Tournament. He could fill out a killer bracket... and he would not have had Virginia going to the Final Four. How many people's brackets are just blown? God could fill out a killer bracket; he knows everything. He knows the number of your days. He knows the outcome of your new diagnosis that you just got. He knows everything.

So, God is omniscient, but then why is it that we petition to him to change events and circumstances? That brings up the question of which is it? Does God respond to my petitions to change events and circumstances or does he already know what's going to happen? It's a difficult, theological question, but the good news is we are going to answer it right now and here's the answer: Yes. He does both. He is omniscient and yet he is attentive. **God is omniscient yet attentive.** We know from Revelation 22 and Ephesians 1 that he is omniscient. He knows everything. We also know from Psalm 37 and 2 Chronicles 16 that he is attentive to our petitions. Also, from James 5: 16 that we just read. He is attentive to our petitions. This is one of those things that it's very hard for our finite minds to understand about an infinite God, but both are true.

Another way to think about it... Because someone would say you can't change God's mind. I agree. You can't change God's mind, but God can change things. As he is omniscient, he knows everything, another word to describe him is that he's sovereign and his sovereignty means he has all authority over everything. He is sovereign. So, as we know that, and we know that he is omniscient, he knows the future, we need to understand that he is not a passive observer of the future, which he knows. He has authority over that future that he already knows. Again, that's hard for us to understand, but very important for us to understand.

There are other life examples of how we can have an either/or question and the answer can be both. Do I trust that God is going to protect me? Yes. Should I wear my seatbelt? Yes. But because of this, it's not that I avoid that; they're both true. Do I have faith that God's going to provide for me? Yes. Do I get a job and make money to provide and save some of the money? Yes. Both are true.

It is important, as we understand that God is omniscient yet he is attentive and he's sovereign, that we **don't let knowledge of his sovereignty make you complacent in your petitionary prayers.** That's because we can take on an attitude of *God knows everything, he's got everything under control, so I can take a backseat and I don't need to be involved with what's going to happen.* As we just learned, he is attentive to our prayers, we know he is attentive to our prayers even though he is sovereign. We can have confidence in his sovereignty, knowing that the one who is in charge knows what he's doing.

As we have that confidence, it can bring us to a place where our heart needs to be as we petition to him in prayer. As we establish this petitionary prayer relationship with God, our heart needs to be in a certain place. In Mathew 9, in the Lord's Prayer, we get this simple four-word phrase. Jesus describes where our heart should be as we pray to God: **"Thy will be done."** As we petition to God, we pray first according to his will, "God, thy will be done."

God has order, we know that in the four things that we do when we pray. Remember, we acknowledge him, we confess, we give thanks, and we petition. Notice, in this petition that we're talking about today, how with the other three parts of our prayer, part of what they do is get our heart in that position where it needs to be. Acknowledge - you are God. Confess - I'm a sinner, therefore, I am not. Give thanks - God, you know what you are doing because you've taken care of me. Those three things - you are God, I am not, and you know what you're doing - put my heart in a position where I can petition God, "Thy will be done." So, you see it's critical for our hearts to be in that place as we pray.

Let's look at a couple of scriptures. 1 John 5: 14 says, ***And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.*** According to his will is where our heart is as we petition to him.

Next is Matthew 26: 39. This is the night that Jesus was to be betrayed and beaten and crucified and he knew this was coming. This is him as he goes to the Garden to pray and he takes Peter, James, and John a little bit farther. Then we pick up in Verse 39 - ***And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..."*** This is Jesus petitioning to the Father. He's saying, "I don't want to do this. I know what is about to happen and I don't want to do this and ***if it be possible, let this cup pass from me..."*** And then we hear his heart. ***"... nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*** We see Jesus praying to the Father, "Thy will be done."

If our hearts and our minds are not in the right place as we petition, we can come to a dangerous place on our prayers. We can come to a point where even our prayers could be somewhat of an idol. That may sound strange. "What do you mean? I'm to have no other gods before him, he's the one I'm praying to, but you're saying my prayers can be an idol." Yes, and here's how. There is no intrinsic power in the act of prayer. In me praying, there is no intrinsic power in that act, but rather **the power of prayer is in the one to whom we pray.** Amen? This why it's important to have our hearts in this condition of "thy will be done" and realize and recognize that the power is in him.

We may hear people say, "This person is a powerful prayer warrior." Or "There is great power in her words as she prays." The response to that really is, frankly, no. He's not powerful. Her words are not powerful. The power of prayer is in the one to whom we pray. Now, I'm not saying anyone who says that has bad theology; I'm just saying we have to acknowledge the fact that if we're not careful in the way we think about our prayers, they can become an idol. If we start to focus on the act of our prayers, it can in fact become an idol.

Here's the good news of that as well. For those of us that may say, "I'm just not strong enough to pray. I'm not a powerful enough Christian to pray for him, to pray for her, to bring petitions to God to effect change." Well, I'll point you back to the power of prayer is in the one to whom we pray. It's not in you, so that gives us liberty to bring our petitions to God in our righteousness.

We approach him with an attitude of "thy will be done," recognizing that the power lies in him, not in us, and we come to a sacred place. I believe that petitionary prayer is a sacred place as we bring our requests to God. And if we don't recognize that, we can become very distorted in how we understand our petitionary prayers and how this exchange happens with God. What can happen is we can say "I've prayed for him for healing for two years and it hasn't happened." "I've prayed for her. She's a single mother that needs employment and she's been out of work and I've been praying for her for a couple of years and God hasn't answered." "I've been praying for this young couple that has been trying to get pregnant and God hasn't answered."

We can start to become jaded in our petitionary prayers and have a distorted view of how this is supposed to work between us and God, and we can become confused and start using this phrase: "They are just a bunch of answered prayers, the things that I've been praying to God and he's just not

answering me.” This brings up an interesting question. Are there such things as unanswered prayers? We do know that in the gospel according to country music there are. Garth Brooks. I’m pretty sure he wrote a book in the gospel of country music. He sings about unanswered prayers. And if Garth sang it, it must be true.

If you're not familiar with the song, he sings about going back to his home town with his wife and he runs into his old high school sweetheart. He recalls a time when he used to pray that she would be the one for him. He’s thankful for that unanswered prayer because now he’s with the wife that has and he’s so grateful for that. So, that’s his unanswered prayer.

It reminds me of a story of George H.W. Bush and Barbara. They visited Barbara’s home town. They went into a gas station where they ran into her old high school sweetheart who was working there. The president said, “Just think, you could be married to him, but instead, you’re married to a president.” She said, “Don’t kid yourself. If I married him, he’d be the president.”

Let’s look into this a little bit deeper. Yes, there is deeper than country music. Let’s look deeper as we look at this question of unanswered prayers. I think it depends on how we define this phrase *unanswered prayers*. We kind of think of it almost like God has a phone and we’re sending calls to him. We think of it like an unanswered call. Our cell phone screen doesn’t show up when we pray to God. He doesn’t have a decline button. We think of a prayer as a phone call and he’s going to answer it or not. That’s number one. God doesn’t have a decline button. God hears all the prayers to him. Now, this is important. He hears the prayers of unbelievers that are not following Jesus. He hears it, but his first response is “I hear you, but first I need you to talk to my son. I need you to meet Jesus.” Then, after that, those of us that have received Jesus, he hears, but then he will listen and be attentive because through Christ we have our righteousness. God doesn’t have a decline button. He hears both, but he is attentive to those that have Christ.

In John 14: 6, Jesus said, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** So that’s how we know God hears the prayers of the saved and he is attentive to them.

As we talk about unanswered prayers, I think a term more appropriate would be *ungranted petitions*. He doesn’t not answer our prayers. When we bring petitions to him, he answers. The unanswered prayers are simply assigned to those things we petition him for that he doesn’t grant, but that doesn’t mean he is not giving you an answer. If he grants it, that’s a yes, but if he doesn’t, there are a whole lot of other things that he may be communicating. It may be “no” in our petition. It may be “not now.” It may be “I need you to wait.” It may even be “look, I hear your petition, I understand your heart and what you are bringing to me, but remember that I am sovereign and you have no idea what’s going on over here that I’m dealing with that this is all going to tie together.” So, he answers, we just may not always like his answer, but God answers our prayers. So, I would say there’s no such thing as unanswered prayers. God hears them and he’s attentive to them.

Now, he doesn’t have a decline button, but we can have low signal in our communication with God in our petitions to him. We can have a poor cell signal as we’re trying to communicate with him. We know how frustrating that can be on our phones. As we’re bringing petitions to God, we know from scripture

that our prayers can be hindered, our petitions to him can be hindered. It's like other acts of worship. When we take the Lord's Supper, we examine our heart to see if there is any unresolved sin in our life that we need to address before taking the Lord's Supper. It's introspective into our own spiritual condition as we come to this sacred place of petitionary prayer. Or like if you're in the act of worship and you leave the altar to go be reconciled with the one from whom you need forgiveness like we talked about in the *Forgive One Another* message. We have to prepare our hearts. Our hearts need to be in a right place to approach this sacred place of petitionary prayer.

Our prayers can be hindered when we have selfish motives according to James 4. They can be hindered when we have wickedness in our heart, according to Psalms 6. Our prayers can be hindered when we remain in sin, according to Isaiah 59 and John 9. Our prayers can be hindered when we forsake God, according to Jeremiah 14, or when we do not heed God's law, according to Proverbs 28. Our prayers also can be hindered when we are violent, according to Isaiah 1, or when we worship idols, according to Jeremiah 11. Our prayers can be hindered when we are prideful, according to James 4 or when we are self-righteous, according to Luke 18. Our prayers can be hindered when we are unforgiving – *Forgive One Another* – according to Mark 11. Husbands, our prayers can be hindered when we are dishonoring to our wives, according to 1 Peter 3. Our prayers can be hindered when we have no faith, according to James 1. You see, while God answers the call and he answers our prayers and he is attentive to our petitions, we can have hindered prayers.

I want to address that last one about faith, according to James 1: 6-7. I want to address this because I think a lot of times there is a hyper focus on this issue from some. You may be in that place where you've prayed fervently for someone to receive something or for some circumstance to change and it hasn't happened. You can be sharing this with someone else to say, "I've been praying so hard for this and God's just not answering it."

The response sometimes is, "Well, you just don't have enough faith. If you had more faith, God would give you what you're asking for. God would grant that petition if your faith was a little bit stronger."

There's a word for that and it's called heresy. It's an untruth. To isolate faith as the sole cause of God not granting a petition is heresy. If that's the case, if there is an absolute correlation, cause and effect between my request and what God does because my faith reaches a certain level, then that would put my faith potentially to a level above God's sovereignty and that's just simply not the case. That's heresy; it's not true. In this faith-shaming, we can suddenly back away from our prayers and discontinue to petition to God.

Philippians 4: 6-7 says, ***6 ...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** Look at the order here where we let our requests be made known to God and then we receive peace from God. What this does not say is "Make your request to God. If your faith is strong enough, he will give you what you ask for and then you will have peace." No. It doesn't say that. It says, "Bring your request to God with thanksgiving and supplication. Bring your request to God and he will give you the peace."

Why? Because we know that he is sovereign, he has authority, he works all things together for good. And this is the heart and the attitude with which we bring our requests.

The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. We know that we can't change God's mind, but God can change things. God will sometimes, in his will, choose to change things based on our petitions to him. He will do this in many ways. He will do it sometimes in **ordinary** ways. Sometimes he will do it in **extraordinary** ways. And sometimes he does it in **miraculous** ways. There are a lot of ways that God may change things through our petitionary prayers.

One is **ordinary**. We have an example in scripture where Paul prayed a simple ordinary prayer that his friends would be able to come to him. We read in Acts 28 that that happened. His friends were able to come to him. So, you see God wants us to bring our ordinary prayers to him, things that we consider small. I think we have to be very careful with this because we can get to a place where we think that God wants us to bring every single thing to him.

He wants us to bring our petitions, our concerns to him, but I believe that we can take this too far where we can even get to the point where we bring petty things to him. The issue isn't what makes it petty it's the conditions of our heart that makes it petty. I'll show you this picture again (woman praying for basketball game). The prayer in the bleachers as they're shooting free-throws does seem a little petty. Remember that petitioning prayer is a sacred place that we come to. I don't know what her intentions are as she's praying. She may have a brother on the team or something and praying for him, but if it's simply for bragging rights and so that our bracket can be completed, we have to really guard what we bring in the way of our petitionary prayers and understand that it can be petty if it's for selfish reasons.

God also will change some things in **extraordinary** ways based on our petitions to him. James reminds us that Elijah was a man in our own nature. He was a human being just like you and me. He prayed to God that it would stop raining. Evidently, in God's will, God chose to change things in an extraordinary way based on Elijah's prayers because it didn't rain for 3 ½ years and then Elijah prayed to God again that it would rain, 3 ½ years later, and then when he prayed, it rained again. Sometimes God will change things in extraordinary ways based on our petitions.

God will also sometimes change things in **miraculous** ways based on our petitions. We read in Acts 9 about a woman named Tabitha who was a disciple full of good works and acts of charity. She had died, and Peter came to where her body was and, with her friends, knelt and prayed petitionary prayers after which Tabitha was raised to life again. We have examples in scripture of how God will change things in miraculous ways based on our petitions to him.

I have been the doctor who has told the patient, "I have no earthly explanation as to why you're better." I've been there and it's happened multiple times. One particular instance that stands out the most to me was a gentleman who had a swallowing condition. He needed a surgery to improve his swallowing. It was something that only surgery was going to fix. There's no medicine and it's a progressive condition; it doesn't spontaneously resolve itself and you 100% have to have surgery for this condition.

He came to the hospital and he was in the holding area before we were to go back to surgery. He was in the curtained area, with his rear end-exposing gown and everything, ready to go to surgery. I was talking to him and his wife before hand and he said, "Doc, I've just got to ask. Do I really need this surgery? Is this really necessary?"

I said, "Well, you're going to continue to have problems with your swallowing until you have this surgery. The problem is that you're starting to become malnourished; your organ systems are having difficulty because of your malnutrition and so we really need to get you to where you're swallowing. You're going to have difficulty swallowing until you have this surgery."

He said, "Well, I'm not really having any difficulty swallowing."

I said, "Well, a few weeks ago when we met and we looked at x-rays and we went over things and we talked about this and we set up this surgery, you were having extreme difficulty that had been on-going and progressive."

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "How long?"

He said, "A couple of days now I haven't had any problems."

I said, "So let's be very clear. You're telling me that you have been eating three meals a day with snacks and everything that you want to eat and everything is going down with no problem?"

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "Wow, the answer to your question then is no, you don't need this surgery."

His wife, sitting right next to him said, "This is an answer to prayer."

I said, "That's the only explanation I have because this condition doesn't just go away." I said, "You're free to go, you can go home. You don't need the surgery. Better yet, go to Cracker Barrel and get some pancakes. But, you might want to change out of that gown before you go."

You see, God will sometimes change things in a miraculous way through our petitionary prayers. And that, Christians, that, Woodland Hills, that, church, is why we are to pray for one another. We know that we are commanded to pray for one another.

In 1 Thessalonians 5: 25, Paul says this to the Church of Thessalonica in his letter, **Brothers, pray for us.** It's just a simple request. We have several examples of New Testament letters and a lot of them from Paul that say pray for us or pray for them or pray for each other or pray for me, instructing us to pray for people.

In James 5: 16, again, the reason we do this is because we know that prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Here at Woodland Hills, we take this seriously. As a matter of fact, we have an entire ministry for this. We have our prayer team. You've probably heard us talking about the prayer team. We have our prayer team that has the shirts that say, "I will pray for you." This is something we take very seriously because we know that we have a bunch of righteous people who want to pray for you and your needs and to pray for God to affect things in ordinary, extraordinary, and miraculous ways from your petitions.

Corey has put a great video together. I want you to watch this video; it will tell you a little bit more about the team.

[Video plays]

Shirley (Prayer Team Leader): So, I've had prayer in my life ever since I can remember. I've not only seen my life change through prayer, I've seen lives, over and over again, changed through God answering prayers. I think what holds people back is I think they're afraid they're going to be judged and that sometimes we've just got to let our pride go and humble ourselves and say, "I need someone to pray for me; this is more than I can just handle on my own." And that's why we're there. We're there to pray with them, to lift them up, and to go through whatever they're going through with them. It's not like we pray for them for a few minutes and then it's gone. Our prayer team will continue to pray with them throughout that week.

Kirk (Prayer Team Member): I recently prayed with a man who was recently divorced and had moved to this area and he was feeling lonely. I was able to ask God to help him connect with the community and be a friend to him and that's the way I think our church should be in that we need to reach out and be the church ourselves and not expect somebody else to do it.

Shirley (Prayer Team Leader): Even though prayer is very valuable as an individual, the Bible speaks frequently about praying together and praying for one another. We've never had anybody come forward for prayer and go, "Well I really wish I hadn't done this." Sometimes we think we only need to go to God when things are really bad and what God asks us to do is bring everything to him. We just always need to remember that we pray that his will be done. And that we openly and honestly pray for everyone, to pray for each other. There's nothing more powerful than praying for another person.

Shelley (Prayer Team Member): It's really a thrill to be able to pray for people. And we love it when people come forward. It's actually cool. When somebody comes forward, there are a lot of people up there and I think God draws certain people to certain people and they are meant to pray for those people. I don't think that there is ever a reason to be intimidated or to hold back about coming forward because prayer is really mighty. And so we would just love to pray for you and whatever need you have whether it be simple or whether it be big because God's there for all of us.

[Video ends]

So, that's our prayer team and they are here for you, for us. They're here every Sunday and they're available throughout the week because we recognize the importance of prayer because we know there are a lot of us in this room and in the chapel and online and in our church and around us even outside of our church that need prayer, so we should be praying for one another.

There are people who have sickness or injury that need prayer, people who have marriages that need prayer, those in their parenting, those with financial struggles, those in jobs. Our church has several ministries inside of it that need prayer. We have missionaries that we support that need our prayers. The leadership of our church, the future of our church. There are other churches in town that we can be praying for. Parachurch ministries outside of the church that are teaching the gospel are also needing our prayers. We have our government leaders, city, county, state, national that need our prayers. Our military. Our enemies. We are to be praying for our enemies. Those in homelessness and poverty in our area and far and wide. Those caught in addictions of all different kinds. Those who are stuck in sex-trafficking. And yes, it is on our community. Those suffering from depression, anxiety, and other psychological stresses in their lives. So, you see we should be praying for one another.

There's a phrase that we throw out a lot as we're around Christians particularly and it's "I'll be praying for you." Someone might share a concern, maybe something from this list, which is by no means comprehensive, or something that's going on that they need prayer for and we say, "I'll be praying for you." As one who has been guilty of this, I know that sometimes we can say that and not really mean it. We can say, "I'll be praying for you" and have the thought that they need prayer, but then, as we leave the conversation, it doesn't really happen.

I just want to encourage you. Don't say it if you don't mean it. Don't say it and not do it. Don't say something that's not true, that you don't really mean. That's like telling the Brookstone salesman that you're actually interested in buying this massage chair. Y'all have sat in those chairs. You're not really interested; you're just saying it. So, be careful about the things we say that we don't really mean.

I would say that the fix to that isn't to stop saying it. Keep saying it, but do it, follow through on it. It can be hard because we have a lot going on and we have conversations here after we're done this morning about things that are going on. We'll say, "I'll be praying for you" and then we'll leave and forget about it. When you say I'll be praying for you... We all have little note pad on our phone. Make a note of the thing and the person you said you're going to be praying for and when you are in your time of comprehensive prayer and you're in your petitionary prayer, take it out and read through the list and petition to God on their behalf for the struggle or the thing that they have shared with you that they need prayer for.

As you follow through on your prayers for others, it important that you don't get distracted by the language of prayer because we can really get caught up in this, especially when we pray as a group. Again, the power of prayer is in the one to whom we pray, not in the words that are said. But, don't get distracted by the language of prayer. It doesn't have to be fancy; it can be very simple. As a matter of fact, sometimes it's better that it's simple.

My wife is not very good at directions and she'll admit that to you. She doesn't like when I use complicated and highly technical navigational terms like east. Every now and then I throw in west. Highly complicated.

So, I'll say, "You need to go east on F Highway."

She's like, "Wait, wait, hang on. So, when I get to the car dealership, do I go left or right?"

I say, "Well, that depends on if you're coming from the north or the south."

"Okay, never mind; I'll ask Siri. Siri gets me. Siri understands left and right."

So, don't get distracted by the words of our prayers. Simple or complicated, here's the good news. God knows what we're asking, God understands our words, he understands every language on earth. Did you know there are almost 7,000 languages on earth today? He understands every single one of them and he understands complicated or simple phrases. He understands everything.

Sometimes, you may feel like you don't even have the words to pray, like you don't know in this moment. There is something that is so dark and so distressing that you are praying for someone and you don't even know what to say. They are such deep aches that you don't know how to pray, and you don't have the words. In that I want to give you two scriptures of reassurance in this.

The first one is Romans 8: 26 - ***26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*** That is very intense to me that I can be in prayer and not know what to pray for someone and call upon God... This is how powerful he is. The power is in the one to whom pray such that he gives me the Holy Spirit. When I don't even know what to pray, he prays for me with groanings too deep for words.

Last year, my sister, Jill, and her husband... They have two girls and they were pregnant with their first son. They are overseas right now. I got a text early in the morning as I'm in prayer and study. She texted me and said, "I have no other words except for that the baby is gone."

In that moment, I turned to Romans 8: 26 and it's just that I've got no words. What reassurance we have in that. I don't even know what to pray. How do I pray for them in such loss and aching? I don't know what to pray, but the Holy Spirit prays for me. Praise God that he gives me the words and he prays for me.

The next verse is this when we don't know the words to pray. Matthew 6: ***8 "Do not be like them..."*** meaning the Gentiles who heap up empty phrases. In other words, words for just the sake of words. ***"...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*** As we are petitioning for one another, God knows everything. He knows what they need before you even ask him. So, when we don't even have the words, we just come to God, praying for them, knowing that he knows what we need before we even ask him.

I want to close with one last thing here this morning as we talk about praying for one another. Let's consider even a different way to pray for one another. You see, Paul gives us a couple of examples in his writings in the New Testament that as he prays for the church... You see we've been talking about the list of things that we need, the things that other people need, and the things we can pray for one another. We get examples in scripture of how Paul prays for the church in a completely different way. This one I'm going to read to you. It's not on the screen, but it's Colossians 1: 9-12. I just want you to listen. I want you to listen to how Paul is praying for the church.

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. 11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

What an amazing way to pray for someone. Paul took praying for others to a whole different level. He prayed not just for things of our physical needs, but he took it to a spiritual and heavenly place as he prayed for them in this way. We are to be known by the way we love one another. We're to pray for one another. As we pray for one another, I would challenge you, as you're praying for people, particularly if you pray like Paul did for the church, that you're not going to be able to stay angry at the people you're praying for. You're not even going to be able to harbor bitterness because of the love that you're expressing. The way that you are approaching the sacred place of petitionary prayer for others will take you.

As we pray for one another, we remember that the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. And we remember that we have our righteousness in Christ alone. The only place we become righteous is through Christ. As we approach God in our petitions, we first pray "thy will be done." That's where our heart is, what our posture is. As we lift our petitions to him, we're remembering that "Lord, you are God; I am not, and you know what you're doing." We then bring our petitions to him because we know that God can and will change some things within his will in ordinary, extraordinary, and miraculous ways through our petitions to him.

We're going to close today in the same way that we always close. With the prayer team here at the castle and over at the chapel. I want to encourage you that if there is anything ordinary, extraordinary, or miraculous that you have in your life that you want prayer for, our prayer team is here for you. They take this very seriously and this is something they get very excited about. You've got righteous who, through God and his power... He is magnificent in the things that he wants to do through their prayers.

Sometimes, you may have thought *I want to come forward, but I don't want the stigma of someone that needs prayer.* Can we put that aside because there's not a person who's listening right now that doesn't need prayer in some capacity. So, I want to encourage you to come forward. They want to pray with you and as they pray with you, after their finished, they've got some cards they're going to give you with their name on it as a reminder that they are going to continue to pray for you throughout the week. your prayer request doesn't stop right here at church on Sunday.