

“Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)



If you'll recall, on December 2 of last year, 14 people were shot by a couple in San Bernadino, CA. The immediate response to this tragedy was basically every politico in the nation to get on a social or traditional media platform and make sure everyone knew their “thoughts and prayers” were with those who had been shot, their families, their cousins, their dogs, their goldfish and their favorite teddy bear Rufus. It was sickening to hear how these adulterers, fornicators, fags, dykes and baby killers don't have one ounce of religion in them until it serves them politically.

In the face of this faux religion, the day after, the New York Daily News proclaimed with their front page headline that

“God Isn't Fixing This”, and called prayers “meaningless platitudes”, sparking a few days' worth of debate over the effectiveness and importance of prayer between the talking heads on CNN and Fox. This whole thing got me really fired up and made me put some thought into prayer

Let's be clear on a couple of points. First, I fundamentally agree with the Daily News – God isn't going to just “fix” this mess. Not because He can't, but because He sent the mess in the first place!!! This nation has long since left God, ceased keeping His commandments, and does everything it can on a regular basis to give Him a double-fisted super pumped helping of the middle finger. God has sent this terror to them, and I say hallelujah, praise Him for it, and let it hopefully scare some soul into seeing His truth. He sent it here for a purpose, and until that purpose is achieved, this terror will remain. I also agree that these men-pleasing politicians throw these ideas of prayer around to see what sticks against the wall; I agree that they are meaningless platitudes intended to make them look pious and thereby endear them to the faux Christian voters that permeate this nation. We know that God will not hear these prayers

*“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, **that he will not hear.**” (Isaiah 59:2)*

And God specifically told Jeremiah

*“Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: **for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble.**” (Jeremiah 11:14)*

He also told Ezekiel

“The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will

break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.”
(Ezekiel 14:12-14)

Yes!! Though three of the most righteous men ever to walk the planet, and whose prayers God had heard on behalf of others in the past, though all three of those men stood in front of God and begged His wrath be stayed, the only people they would save from His indignation and wrath is themselves! These are grievous and terrifying words!

Now, I ask, were the men of Judah in any less of a spot than the men of America are? No, I think the evidence shows that they were in precisely the same spot as America is today – debauched promoters of every form of sin and filth, refusing to hear the kind counsel of His servants and persecuting them for their words. They were (and are today) in a state of complete disregard for the kind way that God nurtured them from their beginnings, caused them to prosper as a nation and become a supreme global superpower; today America has come to the point of defiantly declaring that God hasn't made them to prosper, that they instead have lifted themselves up by their own bootstraps, and “united they stand” against a “bullying” God in bold, arrogant defiance. Not one whit of difference between Judah in the days of Jeremiah and America in our days, friends. They have degenerated themselves into a state where – as a nation – God will not hear them.

Will He hear them individually? If they are His sheep, He will hear them, but I am firmly convinced we live in a country which has no hope of national repentance and a returning unto God. I temper that thought knowing that Nineveh seemed to be in a similar state to Jonah. The evidence on the ground in front of us is that we live in a modern Sodom, poised for ultimate destruction, not a modern Nineveh, poised for repentance. Nineveh was a great city of three days' journey and Jonah's message was taken notice of before he'd gone a third of that. It was taken notice of by the common citizenry, the nobles and the king. The leaders of this nation, from the White House to the smallest village and all her citizenry have resoundingly refused our warning and go so far as to take up cause and argument against it, calling it hate. We have to take the evidence as we see it – we are inspectors, watchmen on the wall, not interpreters of the thoughts and hearts of men. We must take action based upon what we see right in front of our eyes cast in the light of Scripture.

The New York Daily News and all the talking heads their front page brought out of the woodwork demonstrate how the generation we live in treat prayer like it is, at best, a conversation with yourself, and at its worst like you're in a drive thru ordering a sandwich and fries. They call prayer “meaningless platitudes”, and they don't just mean the Tweets that these politicians put out. They look at it and treat it as if it's not a powerful way to commune with and to worship God, deriding it in a flippant, careless

manner. They have no gravitas toward their position or what prayer really is. And why should they? The so-called religious leaders treat prayer like a coin generation machine! There is no possible way for people not to see it as so much hot air. Do an internet search for “prayer request” and see what comes back. It’s amazing how these who claim to be the defenders of Truth in this generation treat prayers like Pez candies they just dispense willy-nilly. You’ve got everything out there from prayer request pages that take PayPal to drive through prayer windows and offers to take prayers to the West Wall in Jerusalem. Prayer is a chit, a vulgar thing in this day and age that is the ultimate demotion of God to the position of super bell-boy, and it is enough to make you sick when you dig into it closely. A headline about drive through prayer windows sums it up nicely – “Pastor Compares Drive-Thru Prayer to Dunkin’ Donuts Convenience”; there you have it friends, prayer is as convenient as a 20 pack of assorted Munchkins and an iced coffee – who wouldn’t want some of that? If saying those words doesn’t make you throw up a little bit in the back of your throat, I don’t know what will!!!

The servants of darkness increasingly make prayer a national and even a global conversation. In this discourse I seek to shed some light on what prayer is and how we should look at it. There are many, many aspects of prayer and it is a subject I am more and more convinced that even with a lifetime of study you will not thoroughly understand it or plumb the depths of it. Over the next two weeks we will look at prayer at what I hope is a foundational level. What I’m trying to do is get the basics well understood. I encourage you to approach this conversation without preconceived ideas about prayer. I want to establish a strong foundation to insure we are considering this blessed tool and commanded activity Scripturally, that we are using it properly, and that we are as far away from this pot of death that modern religion calls prayer as we possibly can be. It is our responsibility to rightly divide the word, and this topic of prayer is on this nation’s, and indeed the whole world’s lips in a way that it probably hasn’t been since the days of Elijah. Show me any traumatic event that doesn’t immediately get a hashtag with the word pray or prayer in it today! Should we sit by silently while this blessed concept and tool is bastardized to the point of being unrecognizable as a Biblical commandment? I think not! But we must be sure we have the right view of it and are using it properly as best we are able so that there is no hypocrisy or false teaching in our approach.

Nothing in this sermon is intended to call out anyone’s faults or mistakes from the past or highlight some specific improper thinking. What I’m trying to do here is encourage us to tear down what we think about prayer and rebuild it from scratch from a fully proper perspective. I may not have everything right about this, there may be more things to talk about in regard to prayer, and I am open to continued discussion on the topic, but I am endeavoring to lay a foundation of where we should be to exhort all of us to look at this for ourselves, in the light of Scripture, and if we need to course correct

do so. Sometimes you just have to mentally tear a thing down and rebuild it, rather than try to adjust little pieces, just like we find when we're building onto our homes. I encourage everyone who reads or listens to this sermon online to do that with this topic. Tear down what you think about prayer and try to set a firm, level foundation upon which you can build expertise through practice and diligent soul searching. The fundamental reason I encourage you to think in this way is that if your views of prayer are not aligned with Scripture, God will not favorably hear the prayer, and it is you who must align yourself to God, not God who must align Himself to you.

Throughout this sermon, I will address the following questions and provide Biblical thoughts about them for consideration:

1. What is prayer?
2. Why do we pray?
3. To whom do we pray?
4. When should we pray?
5. How should our prayers be framed?
6. Is there a minimum prayer?
7. With what spirit should we pray?
8. What is it proper to pray (or not pray) for?

What is prayer?

Be very clear on this point, as it frames the entirety of the discourse. Prayer is not a conversation with God, it is not just a word, it is not an element of your personal relationship with Jesus Christ (whatever that is). Prayer is not a general reaching out to the universe seeking justice. It isn't a conversation with the dead or a reason to count a bunch of beads.

Prayer is the bringing of a petition before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19:16). This is the crux of the matter, the critical point upon which the entirety of our discussion will pivot. If you do not frame your heart and mind properly and look at prayer as a petition brought before not only a king, but The King, how can you possibly offer up prayers that are seen favorably by God and are, most importantly, answered?

Now when I talk about a petition, I don't mean some goofy thing like they have on whitehouse.gov or change.org or a piece of paper you sign outside the courthouse or at the mall thinking someone in the government really cares what a bunch of people think about an issue or a question. You bring a petition to a king because you have no other way of getting what you're asking for. You don't have the power to produce whatever result it is that you're after, and the only person in the realm who has the power to provide it is the king because they alone are sovereign in the land and no one can tell them no. Having no experience with a dictatorship or monarchy, I think the gravity of this can be a difficult thing for us to grasp. Especially in this country that

loves to brag about this idea that “all men are created equal”, the idea that another person could be considered inherently superior to us just because of their birth is foreign and repugnant. The notion that our leaders are appointed by God has so left the collective conscience that there is no daily perspective on the absolute power of a monarch. Let’s be clear on this and keep a proper perspective. This governmental form we have is the lowest possible rung on the ladder of governmental forms. Not to put too fine a point on it, but it’s crap. The people of this nation walk around cloaked in a covering of cow pies, calling it the superiority of “democracy”. They worship at the idol of “getting out the vote” and turn these political parties into quasi-religious outfits. Just watch a political rally and tell me they don’t worship at the altar of “democracy”. It’s sick. There’s a reason in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream the feet are made of a weak, sloppy, barely held together mixture of iron and clay. We are saturated, surrounded and drowning in this arrogant notion that monarchs are unenlightened, despotic and oppressively tyrannical by default, and that line of reasoning causes most people to never stop and consider the need to treat God as The King. That lack of a living example in front of our eyes all the time can make our ability to develop and maintain this perspective difficult as a practical matter. We must regard God as The King, not just in words, but in our very marrow, and be reverent toward Him in that role.

As in all things, there is a wonderfully instructive example of how this looks provided for us in Scripture.

“Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.” (Esther 5:1-3)

Consider this series of events very closely as I believe it establishes a foundation of understanding for us of the situation with the King of Kings and requests made of Him. I think it helps us to maintain a perspective that is virtually impossible to maintain without considering it closely.

Ahasuerus, king of the Medes and Persians, is at least one of if not the most powerful man alive at the time of Esther and Mordecai. He has just been duped by Haman into passing a law that declares death to all Jews. Esther, as a Jew, is seeking to undo this horrific thing, and risks her own life just in the act of making the request.

Consider the import of this, the Queen, wife of the King, is risking her own life by going in front of him to make this petition. Don’t underestimate this – it isn’t a part of the story being told for dramatic effect. The law of the Medes and the Persians at that

time, and from my research for some time before this episode, was super simple. You didn't stand before the king unless you were expressly invited to, or you died. The only people who were allowed to make requests of the King were his direct advisers, and you were supposed to work through their bureaucracy to make your petitions known. If you made a request of the King without proper permission, or if you came into the audience chamber uninvited, you were subject to immediate execution – no trial, no evidence presented, just summary execution, unless the king shows you mercy. That kind of power is rather uncommon in our experience, but there it was. Esther was doubly taking her life in her hands by appearing un-bidden and coming with a petition out of turn, even though the petition was nothing more than an invitation to lunch. Don't underestimate the tension and import of this drama.

Ahasuerus, as we know, whose heart was in the hand of the King of Kings, doesn't order her executed and instead extends his scepter to her in a gesture of peace and acceptance. It isn't noted here in Scripture, but some historians say that once he extended that scepter to you and you touched it, you were in the clear and could ask for anything and were allowed to stay in his presence until he ordered you to leave.

This event gives us a view into the context and gravitas of prayer.

Our King, who is truly King of Kings gives the kings and rulers of the earth their power

“By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.” (Proverbs 8:16),

our King alone has power to grant any petition presented to Him, but He will not be inquired of by just anyone.

“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

If you do not have permission to approach His throne, i.e., the Mercy Seat, your petition, prayer, supplication, inquiry, request, etc., **will not be heard**, much like we see with a petition brought before Ahasuerus without his leave.

Prayer is serious business. We are making a request of a King whose power is so vast that nothing is too hard for him (Genesis 18:14). If we do not approach prayer with this mindset, it quickly devolves into just so much vain babbling. If you do not approach your prayers from the perspective that God can grant to you any petition you make, He will grant nothing. This isn't about 'give it to me because I asked for it, Lord', but about making genuine petitions of The King – these are asks, not demands. Remember, you make these petitions because you cannot fulfill the need on your own. Everything we need we can and must ask of our King with full expectation that He is capable of granting any request made of Him. We must have no doubt about that and approach Him in a state of complete submission.

Prayer is an approaching to the mighty Creator of all who has the righteous ability to be its destroyer as well; like Ahasuerus, He must be approached with respect, humility, and a sense of needfulness. We cannot approach the throne with a spirit of arrogance, entitlement or ambivalence. Remember that as you frame up a prayer and it will help you do so properly and with the right spirit. Don't look at your petition as needing to be of a specific size or level of importance. Sometimes we need to pray for things of a great magnitude that may have serious world-wide ramifications, sometimes we need to pray for things of a small magnitude that only affect us personally. How we perceive the magnitude of the prayer doesn't limit God or set some requirement for how the petition is addressed by God. Our King receives the prayer and decides for Himself whether it is a prayer of great magnitude or small import, but remembering always that His people are declared to be the "apple of his eye", I submit there is no "small" prayer made by God's people because He sees them all as being of great and grave importance. Therefore the view we have of prayer – any prayer – should not change, and we should treat them all with proper gravitas and faithful understanding that we approach The King of Eternity with the request.

As we make requests, we must express thanks and praise in our prayers to The King who alone in the universe has this power. One of the worst things we can do is be thankless. Thanklessness is a slippery slope that is tied up in the depravity of men, and acknowledging God's power, His sovereignty and submitting to Him, including in the matter of prayer is an absolute requirement.

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21)

Praying to and declaring our thankfulness to God in our prayer is the ultimate acknowledgement of and submission to His authority over us as our King. Pay attention to how Esther addresses the king

"If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request" (Esther 5:8)

She's asking for a tiny little thing – essentially "come to a small dinner party", and before she even asks for what she's asking, she makes it about him. If she has found favor, if it pleases the king, etc., not "I want this". She lessens her importance and the importance of her request to give honor and respect to the king himself in recognition of his power. We would do well to remember such humility when we make our requests, even those we deem insignificant or small.

Prayer is, I think, the ultimate declaration of and obedience to the Sovereignty of God. It is the public and private acknowledgement of our own worthlessness, helplessness,

and weakness before God. To pray is to sacrifice our pride fully, if done correctly and in the right spirit.

Why do we pray?

I think David answers this question quite succinctly

“Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.” (Psalms 119:108)

We pray as a part of our worship of God, and to seek His acceptance. To pray is to submit to our dependence upon God and fully acknowledge His sovereignty. This is a hard thing to do, and Man has resisted it since The Fall. The pride of man is too great, and he is too fleshly minded to acknowledge our dependence upon a Sovereign God. In the garden Satan played on that pride, and planted the seed that God is not truly sovereign

“...Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4)

In prayer we find a sacrifice that we make no differently than Moses sacrificed the blood of bulls and goats:

“O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.” (Hosea 14:1-2)

Why must sacrifice be made? As an atonement for sin, and a remuneration for iniquity. Here we see an indication that our prayers are a form of sacrifice. What is it that we sacrifice in the act of prayer? I think if you look at how this world treats prayer you begin to see what a sacrifice it is to bring ourselves before the throne to pray. Think about what we're doing here. Consider these ideas:

- we abase ourselves and freely, readily and unabashedly admit that there is no power in us in total contradiction to what our pride tells us on a minute by minute basis;
- we sacrifice our will to submit ourselves to God's;
- we sacrifice the attractions of this world to acknowledge and declare our love for and obedience to a King which we cannot see;
- we readily condemn ourselves with the confession of our sin; as we seek forgiveness and force ourselves to look at our sin squarely in the face, seeing our wretchedness in the most honest way it can be seen;
- we sacrifice the false belief that the things of the earth can produce any part of happiness;
- we set aside ourselves to thank our Creator for the seemingly most insignificant things, which requires thoughtfulness and focus;

- we expend great amounts of energy and time in service to Him, while continuously seeking favor and acceptance of that work, and refuse to use earthly standards to judge that work;
- we bring ourselves into a state of humility to praise a God which we cannot see and must exert a great deal of energy, effort and resiliency of heart to have faith in.

In essence, we must repeatedly and continuously slay all that it is to be Man in search of God's acceptance, confident in the faith that these sacrifices are necessary and pleasing.

So we pray, not to ask things of God, but to pay obeisance to Him, to worship Him, to glorify Him, to sacrifice to Him and seek His acceptance of us. The requests and petitions we bring to Him are simply a natural extension and aspect of our service. We are sacrificing our perceived strength and our personal pride to God. Consider the mercy and kindness of a God that as part of our worship and service to Him gives us leave, and indeed commands us to bring to Him our every need. That is a God of great mercy, indeed.

To whom do we pray?

This question might seem superfluous given all that I've said about God as our King, but I think this is an important issue. We pray to God. No one or nothing else. No saints, no angels, not to the "spirits of just men made perfect" not to any human alive or dead, and for crying out loud not to Mary.

"For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14)

One of the definitions of that 'worship' is to humbly beseech, which is the same concept as prayer. Prayer is a critical part of our worship of God, and no part of it should be done to any single thing in the universe except God. This is what I've never understood about Catholics praying to Mary. It is so clear that praying to anyone or anything except God is going to provoke His jealousy. Why would you provoke God in such a blatant and unseemly manner? When He clearly tells us to worship, and therefore pray, only to Him!

Jesus lays it out for us pretty plainly, too

"...and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret" (Matt. 6:6).

How much clearer can you get than that?

We pray to our Father by adoption, that He may fulfill our petitions and hear our pleadings, the same way a father hears the requests of his children. If we are busy praying to anyone or anything else, we will not be heard by God when we make requests of Him. Look at this nation, beset by terror all around, having spent decades

spiraling into lustful decadence, expecting God to answer their prayers when they find themselves in dire straits. If you aren't going to be dedicated to Him and His ways, He isn't going to dedicated Himself to you! It's a very simple thing to remember. Do honor to God and God alone in your prayers.

When should we pray?

If it were possible, we should pray at all times.

“Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)

This is not meant to direct us to be on our knees constantly. It is a direction to us that in our minds and hearts we should, as much as it is physically possible, be in a state of supplication and inquiry to God. Is there any situation in our lives, any moment where we are not in need of the mercy, guidance, and favor of our God? Of course not.

Are you in the height of glorying at some victory? Give thanks. Are you in the throes of despair over the victory of an enemy? Pray for deliverance. Are you suffering under the affliction of bodily weakness? Pray for healing. Are you elated after seeing God's righteousness in the earth? Praise His name.

But, you might say, the vicissitudes of life do not always allow for this ceaseless prayer. Be careful not to dwell too long in that way of thinking, though. It is a challenge we must rise to meet. To pray without ceasing requires us to bring ourselves into a state of subjection to the sovereignty of God so that our petitions can be heard, and that is a difficult thing to do at all times. Even when in the maw of persecution it can be difficult to bring ourselves into that state properly. Consider this example:

“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” (Matthew 26:36-45)

Christ exhorts His Apostles to watch and pray with Him, but they couldn't do so for even one hour. No matter how willing our spirit might be to wait and pray, our human frailty of mind, body or both will overcome even the most zealous of our worship. The most fervent of Christ's followers were not strong enough to wait with Him in His hour of trial. At times the testing is great and while never more than we can bear, it certainly can cause us to be stretched to our limits.

This event also shows us that times of great duress are key times to pray. Our Redeemer reinforces for us where to turn in our deepest and darkest hours of need. The Son of God, who could have set aside His human emotion and fears, turns to the Father for comfort and relief from His distress. We have access to and a need for turning to the Father in the same manner when in our deepest distresses.

I think it is important that we don't get into some sort of rote way of praying that has us praying on some schedule. No praying 5 times a day toward Mecca sort of thing or declaring that prayers must occur at specific times of the day. Prayer is constantly appropriate and always to be done, not prescribed to be done just for the doing of it. That is so important. Rote praying for the sake of saying some words isn't praying, it's vain babbling. If your heart is not in the prayer, what kind of prayer can it possibly be? Remember, these are petitions made to The King and require diligent attention.

How should our prayers be framed or structured?

I'm not going to tell you that your prayers need to take a certain singular and strict structure, a defined format, or use specific language. I don't think that's Scriptural, and it potentially leads to an idolatrous way of thinking and an arrogancy toward prayer – that God MUST listen to me since I said my prayer just the 'right' way. I don't think using 1600s era English is required in the framing of your prayer. If it's comfortable to you to do that, great, if it's not, that's okay, too. It doesn't require some specific sequence or order of language. There are key elements to remember in your prayers, such that we are praying to God, in Christ's name, but I do not believe using specific phrases is found anywhere in Scripture, and using the same words in every prayer has a potential to lead to rote mindlessness, so I caution against them. Framing our prayers is about humility, meekness, and proper reverence to The King, and that doesn't come from using thee and thou or a seven point outline making sure to hit all seven points every time – it comes from a heart filled with obedience.

Christ laid out for us some instruction and an example that is to be used as just that – an example – not some rote token or pseudo-prayer, and it does us good to look to it for help in understanding this question.

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter

into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” (Matthew 6:5-13)

I don't intend to dissect this in terrific detail, and I encourage you to read John Gill's piece on the "Lord's Prayer" in his book on Practical Divinity for more insight into this passage. While I think some of what he says is a little simplistic, overall it is an educational piece that is well thought out and strives to help explain this example of prayer.

I submit to you the following points on this text:

1. Prayer is a private matter, and though there is a time and place for public prayer, it is not the order of the day. Prayer should never be made a spectacle, and we should avoid that at all times. We should not partake of it, nor lead such scenes of prayer where it is a performance and not designed to genuinely ask the Lord to aid us. Our prayers as a body are more than appropriate, but to stand on a street corner and make a show of praying is improper. We do not seek the recognition of men or for them to answer these prayers, so why should we make them in their sight or hearing? These petitions are brought to an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent King who doesn't need us to speak into the microphone or alert everyone around us we are praying so that He can hear them.
2. Our prayers ought to be brief. Brief is subjective, I know. There is no word count minimum or maximum I'm speaking to here, but be aware, especially it seems to me, in our prayers of worship when we're together, that you aren't trying to cram everything you can think of into a prayer to demonstrate to those in your hearing how scripturally smart you are, how well you can turn a quote from the Bible into a free-flowing phrase in your prayer, how observant of all the events of the day you are, or how meticulous you are in your praying for every single issue and person present at that meeting. That isn't necessary, and it is a show, not a prayer. Remember, the Lord is not limited in hearing and understanding your prayer by the actual sounds you make with your tongue and lips! He is the discernor of the "thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12)! He knows a fervent and effectual prayer by what is in the heart, not just what comes out of the mouth. You can pray a great sounding prayer, full of eloquence and Biblical

knowledge and have rotten fruit in your heart. You think He hears that prayer? Think again. At the same time, He can be magnificently pleased by the most stumbling, silly sounding, bumbling-around of a prayer that comes from a heart that is full of meekness, humility and love. Further, no one in this house is interested in judging you more or less righteous based on the words you say with some great pretense. We are interested in genuine, heart-felt leading of the Body in prayer as part of our praise and worship of God. Less is generally more here. Pray for what you feel, not for how Bible smart you think everyone should think you are.

3. Do not use vain repetitions. Prayer should, again, be conducted from the heart, fervently, effectually, and remembering that it is the presentation of a petition to The King. Vainly repeating words is none of those things. Prayer is not a contest to see who can say the same number of words over and over again the most times, and vain repetition is not pleasing to the ears of our Father. Not to minimize this, but parents, how many times does it take hearing one of your little ones go “Mommy. Mommy. Mommy. Mommy. Mommy” before you want to stuff cotton in your ears? How often does it take before the always dulcet sound of “can I have that, can I, can I, can I, please, please, please, please, please, please” makes you wish they’d waited just a little longer to learn to talk? How much more magnified then is a blind repetition to God going to be?
4. God knows our needs better than we know them. He has set the bounds of our habitation, and doesn’t actually need us to remind Him of what it is we need. It is an act of humility, subjection, and honoring of God’s sovereignty when genuine prayers are brought before Him by His people, and He has established for us intercessors that assist us with these matters. It is our duty to avail ourselves of them and to come to our spiritual Father to have our needs addressed, acknowledging our own powerlessness and lack of strength in so doing.
5. It is our Father to whom we pray, not some ethereal, theoretical being that has no name or place in the universe. He has both. He is our Father and is seated upon His throne in our future and most sought-after home – Heaven. Never lose sight of this. He is omnipresent, but it is on His eternal throne we see Him in our prayers, and it is on that throne, that seat of mercy, that we plead with Him to see us with the imputed righteousness of Christ and all His resplendent glory, not our filthiness.
6. We should openly express our submission to God and His will, knowing that by it and it alone all things are done, and that He is the author and finisher of all things. We pay obeisance to The King here, and must remember His majesty and glory in all that we do, even, and perhaps most especially, when we are making requests of Him. This isn’t a vainglorious stroking of the ego, here, as you might do with men. This must be a genuine submission and recognition of His infinite superiority over you as a lowly creation and He as your Creator.

Submission and acknowledgement of His sovereignty are at war with the carnal mind, and to submit to them in prayer is a great setting aside of your pride and arrogance.

7. We should pray for our needs to be fulfilled, not only today, but as an ongoing and continual supply (see the Luke account of this prayer). This bread is not just the temporal feeding and supplying of our physical needs, but also the spiritual, for our bread is truly Christ. God is under no obligation to provide us a single thing. This is especially important in this day and age where we are surrounded by this great sense of entitlement. It is an easy thing to have rub off on us, and if we keep this request in our prayers, with the proper perspective of God's ownership of all things, this helps us to maintain a necessary level of humility.
8. We owe a debt – For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23) – and we must acknowledge that as we bring our petitions to The King. That acknowledgement is a direct and continuing recognition of God's sovereignty and our inability to pay that which we owe, therefore, we should beg forgiveness of that debt and commit to the forgiveness of those debts of offense owed to us.
9. We should not forget to acknowledge the true nature of The King we are petitioning, as all powerful, glorious, and the owner of all that ever has been, is or ever will be. He is the Creator of all, and should be rightly acknowledged as such by His subjects. It is our duty to acknowledge the superior position of our King, and to openly declare His rule over us and our subjection to Him, as well as joyfully proclaim how appropriate that rule is. Because all power and glory and majesty belongs to Him, we have no right to seek any of those things or arrogantly believe any of those things falls to us, and it is only appropriate that as we present a petition which we have no entitlement to, that we declare His power and excellency.

Lord willing, next week I will undertake to answer the three remaining questions I've laid out. There is much to be said about what spirit we should approach prayer with and what we should pray for, especially, and I look forward to exploring those matters with you next week.

I hope these words and the undertaking of this topic has been useful to you, and I welcome feedback and commentary as to where we can study these things more and help one another in greater ways.