



Prayer (Part 1) – A Call to Prayer

Mike Dsane – January 4, 2015

Good morning, and Happy New Year. I'm Mike. I'm one of the ministers here at the Flower Mound Campus. If we haven't met, it's good to meet you. If we have met before, allow me to reintroduce myself. It's good to see you. It's good to be here with you.

I'm just going to start from the top with where my heart is. I have a dilemma. Let me say it this way. We're at kind of the end of the holiday season. We've been through it, or for some of you, you have that family member who doesn't realize they should have left, so they're still there, so you're kind of at the end of the holiday season.

It seems like when you get together with family or even a group of friends, there's always that person who has deemed themselves the family or the friend historian or the scribe or the storyteller. It seems like the only stories they tell are the stories that seem to embarrass you the most. Let me give you a scenario.

It could be any life scenario. It could be a graduation. So you graduate. You wear your cap and gown. Everybody is excited, and they're like, "Man, we're so proud of you. Back when you were a little kid, you used to eat glue, and we thought, 'You're not going to make it through the second grade.'" You're like, "I don't know what makes you think this is the time to tell that story. Everybody already knows that, and it's not making me feel any better. It's inducing shame and guilt."

Or you get engaged. You meet that significant other, and you want to introduce them to the family. They're like, "Wow, you're getting married? We thought that would never happen." You're like, "That doesn't make me feel better." I say that because I don't want to be that family member. So here's where we're going. For the next four weeks, we're going to talk about prayer.

Here's what I know. If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you know you should pray, so I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. Here's the truth. A lot of our lives, when it comes to prayer

and our prayer life, are marked with failure and guilt and shame because we don't tend to do it as much as we should or as well as we should or as often as we should. So even in that, there's this feeling of I don't want to be that uncle. I don't want to be that family member who makes you feel shame over the lack of prayer or the prayerlessness in your life.

Here's the other part of it. You know this if you've been around The Village for a while. We do this every year. Back in 2012, we started doing a prayer series. The first week it was a call to prayer. Then the next week we talked about racial reconciliation. Then we talked through the nations. Then we talked through how we are going to look at life with the sanctity of life and the value of life and the way the Lord looks at it.

Then in 2013 we did a prayer series, and we started with a call to prayer. Then we did racial reconciliation. Then we talked through the nations, and then we talked through the sanctity of life. Then in 2014, that was the rhythm. So no surprises, in 2015 that's the rhythm. Today I'm going to call us to prayer and remind us of the good gift of prayer that has been given to us. Then next week we're going to talk about racial reconciliation. Then we're going to jump into talking about the nations. Then we'll finally end talking about the sanctity of life.

So not only do our prayer lives tend to be marked with failure or guilt or some level of shame because we don't pray the way we feel like we should, but on top of that, you've heard this stuff. So I feel like I'm that family member who's going to put before you what you already know and probably don't want to hear. But in that, I'm going to ask the Lord to bless it. Beyond what I can do, beyond what I can say, I'm going to ask him to move in and take his Word and apply it to our hearts in a way no man can do. So if you will, will you pray with me?

Lord, I thank you. I thank you that you are good and kind and gracious and compassionate and that, Lord, you love us enough to apply the Word to our hearts, even at times when we don't necessarily want to hear it or want to walk under it. So Lord, I thank you for that gift of your Word and the privilege to declare it boldly to your people.

Lord, I pray that you would be with us. There's nothing my ability to string sentences together or my ability to study a text can do without your Spirit. So Lord, I pray that you would move on the hearts of your people, that they would understand not just with a mental knowledge, but deep in their hearts, your invitation for them to be people of prayer and that, Lord, we would live that out faithfully. It's in your name I pray, amen.

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. We're going to be in Ephesians, chapter 3. If you do not own a Bible, in the seats in front of you there should be a hardback black one, and that's our gift to you. If you didn't bring one with you, feel free to grab it, use it, pull it up on your phone, whatever works best for you. Ephesians 3. We're going to start in verse 14.

Let me give you a little background of Ephesians. I think it's going to help us frame what we're reading and help it make a little bit more sense. Some theologians would call Ephesians, next to Romans or with Romans, the most influential book on Christian thought and spirituality ever written in the New Testament. But Ephesians is different than most of what Paul writes. Most of what Paul writes, he's addressing something directly.

He's either addressing those who were in the Jewish camp who were trying to add the legal demands of the Jewish law to the righteousness of those who were Gentiles who had just become Christians, and he's trying to combat that and say, "No, that's not where righteousness is. Righteousness is in Christ, and then you obey him out of that. There's a joy of obeying him that makes you want to do these things, not because you do these things to make you righteous," or the flipside, that there was some level of false teaching that was seeping into the culture that was starting to pull the church astray.

Ephesians has neither of those things. Ephesians is not dealing with those who are trying to add legal demands of the Jewish law, nor does it have this idea of false teaching. Instead, it's just this grand book. It's divided into two halves. You have chapters 1-3, and it seems to be this grand scope of the plan of God, what he has decided from eternity past, what he predestined to do through his Son for the reconciliation of all creation to himself. On top of that, he begins to talk about, "This is what it looks like when he takes two classes of people, the Jews and the Gentiles, and makes them one new man."

So it seems like there's this grand scope of cosmic reconciliation and unity that happens under Christ. Then chapters 4-6 seem to shift from this large grand narrative down to, "This is what it looks like for you to live that out. This is what it looks like for you to walk with wisdom before those who are not believers. This is what it looks like for you to have submission to one another. This is what it looks like for you to live this unity and this reconciliation out in your relationships, whether that's in your marriage or with your kids or with your boss. This is what it looks like to walk before God and to war for the things of God, even putting on the armor of God."

So there seems to be this grand scale and then this much smaller scale in Ephesians that goes from, "This is what God has done throughout all of eternity with this grand plan that he formed through the Son before the foundations of the world," to "This is what it looks like for believers to walk this out." Ephesians 3 seems to be this great transition, this place where it hinges, the work of God and what it looks like. Paul starts verse 14 with this phrase. I'm just going to read to you from verses 14-21.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Paul starts by saying, **"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named..."** In that day and age, that phrase, "I bow my knee to pray" would have been a little odd, because the Jewish custom of prayer in that day was to stand and to have heads looking toward heaven to pray. To bow to pray was a position of submission.

That was a position of somebody who was a servant. That was a position of somebody who was a slave. There was something different about what Paul was saying. It wasn't the wrong position; it just wasn't the customary position. Even in that position, I think it communicates something about the humbleness with which Paul was approaching the Father.

He is going before him in humble adoration, in a bowed-down position. I just want to say there's a posture that should mark our prayers. I don't think our physical position matters all that much, whether you stand or walk or bow your knee or lie down to pray. But I'm just going to advise you. If it's early in the morning and you're lying down, prayer is not going to go well.

There is a posture of prayer that has nothing to do with the body but everything to do with the heart. We know the difference between a humble request and a bold demand. We know the difference between when somebody comes before you boldly and says, "I want to lay this before you, and whatever you choose to do with this, I'm going to count that to be good," versus somebody who's entitled, who demands that they get what they feel like they should deserve.

Scripture even gives us a great picture of this in Luke, chapter 15. Luke, chapter 15 is multiple parables of Jesus. He starts out telling a parable about the lost sheep. Then he moves into a parable about the lost coin. Then finally the third parable is the parable of the lost son or the prodigal son. There is a father who has two sons, and one of his sons comes to him and says to the father, "I want everything that is mine."

Now for all of you who are parents in the room, that right there gives you pause, because you're like, "If you're my child, there's nothing that's yours." Like, "I don't care whose name was on the Christmas gift. That's mine, and the batteries that go in it. I don't care if the clothes fit me or not. Those are my clothes. Every morsel of food you eat, every stitch of clothing you wear, the electricity that powers up your PlayStation 4, that's all mine.

The fact that you talk to me like that, I would ground you and send you to your room, but you don't have a room, because you don't pay rent here. So go stand in the street and breathe your free air, because you own nothing." There's a realization for every parent who's like, "That would offend me." "You have nothing."

But he wasn't just saying, "Give me my stuff." What he was saying was, "Give me my inheritance." Literally, what he was saying was, "I wish you were dead. I want my stuff. I would rather have my stuff than have you." I would say to us there is a danger in our prayer life if our prayer life comes across like this to the Lord, that "I would rather have what I want than have you."

The humble position of prayer says I go before the Father, and I say to the Father, "Whatever you say is good, is good. I'm going to lay this before you, but before I ask, you know what I have need of. Before I open my mouth to utter my desire or request, you shape the desires of my heart. So if you say this is no, then no is good for me. If you say this is yes, then yes is good for me. Whatever it is, I don't want the stuff; I want you."

I think there's a danger in our culture that thinks we can treat God like a genie in a bottle, that we can demand whatever we want and get the stuff and we don't get him. Paul starts out with this humble position that says, "I will bow my knee in humility before the Father." Then that word *father*. The original language of our text is Greek, and English doesn't do service to the way the Greek is written.

That word *father* and that word *family* come from the same root. It builds this idea that the family comes out of the father, that the father is the creator and leader of the family. We get some of it, but we don't get the full measure of it, because we think of *father* as an affectionate term. For those of us who have had a good relationship with our father... We love our father. We think well of our father. There's an intimacy there. There's an affection there.

On the other side, in that culture, it wasn't just affectionate and intimate. It was this idea of authority. The father was the one who was sovereign over the family. He directed the course of the affairs of the family. He delineated resources. He guided the wisdom of the family. He was the one you went to humbly and asked him to give a decision or a judgment of where we were going to go next. So yes, there is intimacy and affection, but there's also a recognition of the sovereignty of the father.

"From whom every family in heaven and on earth has been named." He has placed his name and his value on them. It's just another statement of the *imago Dei*, that everything in creation comes from him. Paul is laying out this framework of, "This is who we go to: the Father." I want to pause here and remind us we have a good Father. We have a loving and gracious Father, who knows all and sees all and does what is for our good, and we can trust him in that.

The next thing Paul says is that he would grant us through the riches of his glory that we would be strengthened by his Spirit in the inner being through Christ Jesus, that Christ Jesus may dwell in our hearts. I want to pause there and notice the Father is strengthening through the Spirit with Christ Jesus. The full weight and full measure of the Trinity is focusing on strengthening the inner being. The full attention of the Trinity is being prayed for to strengthen somebody in their weaknesses.

Let me pause for a second, because we're talking about inner being, and I love that Paul prays for the inner being. Let's just be real. It's the start of the year. We've probably done some resolutions, and for many of us, those resolutions have to do with being healthier, so eating better, working out more. For me, I worked out like four times last year, so if I make it till tomorrow working out, I've

already accomplished the goal. I feel like those low hurdles of success are going to buoy me for the rest of the year.

There is this understanding of, "Yeah, we work on the outer being. We want to be stronger and healthier." But here's the truth. We all know that ultimately the outside is going to waste away. I've really enjoyed laughing at Chandler when he talks about, "Man, I'm getting older, and my body fails me. I'll go to sleep, and I'll wake up and I'm injured." I would just laugh and be like, "Man, life must be really rough at 40, but down here in the 30s, we feel good."

Then the other morning I literally woke up and I think I separated my shoulder. Some of you laugh because you're in your 20s and you're like, "It's not going to happen to me." I'm just going to tell you what my body is telling me. "Father Time is undefeated, and he's coming for you." You just need to know that. (That really had nothing to do with anything. I just wanted to confess that my body is falling apart.)

There's a realization there that investing in the outside is kind of a wasted investment. Paul even tells us this in another text. He uses that language of inner being or inner self, and he talks about that in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 16. Here's what he tells the Corinthian church. **"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day."**

This is in the context of he is talking about them being persecuted but not crushed, struck down but not abandoned. He's walking through what they are going through in persecution and challenge, but also just the reality of what they're going through in a very physical sense. Then chapter 5 breaks out that, yes, while we're in this fleshly body, it will break down. We will groan, and we will long for the day where mortality is swallowed up by immortality, where this body is swallowed up by life.

There's a realization that all of this is breaking down, but there's something eternal that can be invested in, and that's the inner being, the inside of us, the essence of who we are, the core of our person. That thing can be invested in. What Paul is praying for is that the Lord through the Spirit would strengthen that, that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

Now in that moment we might be thinking, "Wait a minute. When we prayed that prayer, when we had that moment of salvation, didn't the Lord already come and live in our hearts?" But let's just be

honest. There's a difference between living somewhere and somewhere being home. Maybe the best way to illustrate it is this.

There is a book by D.A. Carson called *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, and he uses this analogy of a young couple moving into a brand new house. When they move into the house, there's black and silver wallpaper and trash everywhere and leaks in the roof. (That house would intimidate me. Jesus came and lived in my heart, but he did not bring his carpentry skills. I can't fix anything. If I buy a fixer-upper, it's just staying a fixer-upper, because I'm not fixing anything.)

They move into the house and pull down the hideous wallpaper and paint the walls a cool color and remove the trash and patch up all of the deficiencies in the ceiling. After a while, the home becomes theirs. All of a sudden, their personality has changed the complexion of the dwelling. Paul is saying when Christ comes to dwell in our hearts, our hearts are in much need of repair. There are some things that need to be torn down and some trash that needs to be cleaned up and some brokenness that needs to be patched up.

But there's a day when Christ dwells in your heart so much the essence of his being has now changed the environment of his dwelling place. Now what emanates out of the center of your being, out of the core of who you are, out of the essence of who you are, is the nature and character of Christ emanating and flowing out of you. His hope is that the Spirit would strengthen you to become that.

Then Paul says, "That you would be rooted and grounded in love, that you would be strengthened by the Spirit to be able to comprehend, to grasp, to get your arms around, the breadth and length and height and depth of the Lord's love for you, and that you would have a knowledge that surpasses knowledge of his love."

We all know there is a difference between knowing something and *knowing* something. I understand we live in a day where Google and YouTube have made idiots think they're experts. You can look up anything and have information on it. Let me put it like this. My favorite TV show of all time is *House*, almost obsessively. If it's on like just randomly... You know, USA does those marathons or whatever.

If an episode comes on, I could probably watch it for about 30 seconds and be like, "Oh, this is the episode with the kid who has night terrors. He freaks out, and when he's falling asleep his leg jerks."

People are like, "That's really weird." I just really love *House*. On *House*, oftentimes, when somebody is sick, it's not like you have a cold or the flu. It's like you might have lupus, but they really don't know, so they have to figure out what's going on with you and do an MRI and a CAT scan.

That didn't figure it out, so they have to go in and do what they call an LP or a lumbar puncture or a spinal tap. They put the iodine on your back, and then they take the little needle and put it in your back and drain out the fluid from your spine, and they go and test it. Here's the deal. If you're sick in the hospital and I show up and they can't figure out what's wrong with you and I'm like, "You know what? I brought my spinal tap kit," nobody is going to be like, "Pastor Mike watches *House*. I'm in." Nobody wants that, because though I know, I have no idea.

So there is a mental knowledge, and then there's an experiential knowledge of something you walked in. Paul is saying, "There's a cognitive understanding, but I want you to go past the cognitive understanding of the love of God and walk in an experiential understanding of the love of God for you." There are two dangers here, because I think there is a mystical being led by our experiences and our emotions that tries to overrule the Word and says experience is better than what the Lord has said through his truth plainly in his Word.

So I want to guard against making experience the primary thing, but I also want to guard against the other response that says we're going to remove experience, and we're not going to feel anything, that it's going to be everything our mind and intellect can attain, and everything else is going to be trash. Paul says, "I want to marry both. There is a knowledge you can hear about the love of God, but I want you to experience this and know it's not just something somebody read or preached or prayed over you, but it's something you actually walked in, that you would have a knowledge of the love of Christ that surpasses just knowledge."

He says, "That you would have the strength to comprehend, to grasp, the breadth and length and height and depth." So what does the Word say about those things? As we look through the Word, many faithful authors speak to those things. Revelation 5 speaks to the *width*, the scope, the far-reaching range of Christ.

Revelation 5:9 says, "**And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation...'**" Feel the span of that. The far-reaching

implication of the love of God when seeing a heavenly picture is that every people, every *ethne*, every generation, is going to be represented, the idea that his love reaches that wide.

What about the *length* of his love? What is the duration? How long does that love go? Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 31:3, "**...the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.**" Jeremiah quotes what the Lord says. "There is no expiration date in how I love you. There is no expiration date on my faithfulness. There's no time stamp. This will not go out. This will not ruin. This will not end. My love never fails. My love never gives up. It will never run out on you."

What about the *height* of his love? The psalmist writes in Psalm 103:11, "**For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him...**" "As far as you can conceive of where the heavens would be, that is the height of my love. That's how high it goes. That's how far it reaches. That's the height of my love."

Then the *depth* of his love. Micah says in Micah 7:19, "**He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.**" As the deepest point of the sea, as deep as it may go, that's how deeply you are loved by him. But here's the thing. I don't think the apostle Paul's hope is, "Hey, you get out the tape measure, and you can measure the surface area or the square footage of the Lord's love for you." I think he wants you to know the comprehensive nature, the completeness of the Lord's love for you.

Let me say it this way. I heard a fable once about a Native American chief. In that tribe, there came a day where there tended to be a ton of theft, so there was this anger, this angst within the tribe of, "What is going on here? Somebody is doing this. They're violating us personally as well as they don't care for us as a society, as a group of people. Chief, you have to do something about this."

So he declares, "If this person is caught, they will be publicly scourged and punished. They will be beaten and whipped." The days roll on, and they find out the actual person who's doing this is the elderly mother of the chief. So now there's this conflict within the tribe, because he has to keep his word; otherwise he can't be trusted and people are going to just do whatever they want. But on the flip side, who's going to punish their elderly mother who may not survive this?

The day comes of the public judgment, and the chief is sitting on his throne. As he sits there, they bring her out, and he motions to the person who's going to do the flogging and says, "Tie her to the

post." Even as I say that, you probably feel that anxiety of, "How are you going to do that to your mother, especially if she may not survive this? There's no way."

As the punisher reaches his arm back to begin the flogging, the chief stops him. There's a sigh of relief. Of course he's not going to do this. But he at least wanted to show what should happen. Then he steps up and wraps his arm around his mother and asks the punisher to continue and just receives the scourging she was supposed to receive.

I tell you that because I want you to understand the breadth and length and height and depth of the Lord's love for you. Though we were guilty, though we deserved to be punished for our sins, though we were rebellious against the King and the Father of all of creation, he says, "Yes, I am just enough to punish sin, but I love you enough to receive the punishment for your sin."

In understanding the depth of his love for us, the width of his love for us, the height of his love for us, I hope it stirs in us a permission to come pray. Regardless of how poorly we've done it in the past, regardless of how much we've failed, regardless of how inconsistent we've been, he is inviting us in. He loves us so deeply he's saying, "I'm giving you permission to come to me, because I love you that much."

Paul goes on to say, "That you would be filled with the fullness of God, that you would grow into maturity, that you would reach your full potential in godliness." Here's what I want you to know. It's the strength of the Lord and the love of the Lord that gets you there. Paul doesn't say, "My prayer is that you would love the Lord better." He doesn't say, "My prayer is that you would figure out how to do these routines better, that you might become more mature."

He says, "Where you're weak, that you would receive the strength of the Lord, that you would be motivated by the love of the Lord, that the love of Christ would compel you into more godliness and maturity." Let me say this. As we step into this year and think about how we are going to respond to this call of prayer, I want you to know what will make you more consistent and more faithful in prayer is the strength of the Lord and the love of the Lord.

If you don't do this well, you're in good company, because none of us do this well, but the Lord is inviting you and saying, "I will strengthen you through my Spirit by my Son. I will also love you and show you that regardless of how many times you stumble, just stumble forward. I am inviting you into this. You can come to me. You can pray."

The last thing I want to deal with is the perspective of prayer. Paul says, "For this reason..." We didn't deal with the "For this reason," but I've already talked a little bit about the scope of Ephesians and what he is talking about in the first three chapters and how he deals with the cosmic scope of all God is doing. Actually, in verse 1 he starts with "For this reason," and he interrupts himself and just says, "Well, let me explain to you why I am doing this ministry."

Let's back up to what he says even before that. In chapter 1, he deals with, "This is what God has done to reconcile all things to himself. This is his plan from eternity. This is what he has ransomed and earned with his blood." Then in chapter 2 he moves into this great work of bringing people into one new humanity. He even says that now that they have obtained access, they have the right to go before God. Then he gets into chapter 3 and says, "So for you, the Ephesian Gentiles, this is what you need to know." Verse 7:

"Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him."

He says, "This is what I'm called to. I get to be a minister of the gospel to tell of the unsearchable riches, and this is why I bow my knee. This plan of God from eternity to reach people who have not known, who have not heard of his love and his grace... This is why I bow my knee, because he has made me a minister of this gospel. This is why I bow my knee. There is a Lord who is bringing things together and bringing people together that we cannot do on our own, and he has invited me into that. He's creating access and one new man."

That idea of obtaining access is something Paul says in Romans. It's something he says earlier in Ephesians. It has two implications. There is a sociopolitical implication. It's like going before a king and having the right to make a request. That we get. But also in that day and age, where you could go in the temple was dependent on your ethnicity. There was a certain level of access you had as a Jew that as a Gentile you did not have. There was limited access for Gentiles.

Paul is saying, "Now that there is one new man, we have access together to go before the Lord." He's saying, "This is why I bow my knee, that the Lord would continue to do this, that people would be reconciled together, that there would be a racial reconciliation." Then he even says it. "The Father of all things is bringing things back to himself. That he would reconcile things, that he would teach us the value of life around us. This is why I bow my knee."

Let the perspective of our prayers be eternal in scope in the same way Paul's were. Let our prayers not terminate just on what is before us daily, but let them be part of the eternal plan of God that was realized in Christ Jesus to reconcile what seems to be broken and draw near what seems to be afar. Let that shape our perspective. May our posture be humility. May love inform our permission, and may eternity inform our perspective of the way we pray.

I want to stand under the authority of the Word. The authority of the Word says there is a knowledge that surpasses knowledge. So instead of just talking about prayer this morning, I want to pray. If you've never been to an elder-led prayer, this is typically how it operates. This is what we're going to do this morning. An elder will come out and teach us through the Scripture. Then they will give us some specific prayer points, and we'll group up in groups of three or four or five and just pray around that prayer point.

I want to invite you into that. As I spoke to you out of the Word this morning, one of the things that has landed on my heart is to confess and repent of my apathy in prayer. Online we have a prayer guide with prayer points for each week. There are several of these, and this is one of those points. Where have we neglected the good gift of going before the Father who loves us and strengthens us to just pray?

In prayer there are two components. There is a kingdom component. There is an eternal component and eternal perspective of prayer that we just talked about. Yes, it is my call. It is my duty. It is what I'm supposed to do. But there's also a communion element to it. I get to be with the Lord. I get to spend time with him. I think there are times we've become apathetic because either this doesn't seem to be working or it just seems to be too costly in time or resources or whatever to pray. I think we've been unfaithful and apathetic in that.

So I want us to group together and for the next couple of moments just go before the Lord and say, "Lord, I confess and I repent that I've neglected a good gift, the ability to go before the King of the

universe who does not need my wisdom and has not asked for my counsel. You've allowed me to speak into your eternal plan, and you want to hear me." So for the next few moments, will you just group together with those around you and pray?

Here's the second area I want to press us to pray. I said it earlier in the message. Guilt is a terrible motivator. Duty is a terrible motivator. But delight is a great motivator. I'll say it this way. The things I love doing, I love to do them. I know that doesn't seem very profound, but I enjoy doing the things I take delight in. It does something. It raises something up in me.

I said it just a moment ago. There *is* a kingdom component. This is what believers in Jesus Christ are called to do. We're called to press in. We're called to pray. We're called to say, "Lord, work your power through me, that you might achieve your eternal purposes you've already realized in Christ Jesus." But there's also a delight component. "I just want to be with you."

I hope you know that if the Lord loves you that much, as was described by the apostle Paul in what he was writing, that he enjoys being with you and enjoys hearing your voice... My hope is there would be a delight that rises up in you that says, "I enjoy being with him. I enjoy hearing his perspective of the way my life should be. I enjoy seeing what his Word says and how it shapes my mind and my heart. I just want to be around you more. I just want to spend more time with you. I just love the gift. I don't *have* to pray. I *get* to pray. I get to spend time with you. I get to press in and be in your presence and know who you are."

There's a great book by Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Just the way he talks about spending time with the Lord, it's as if he and the Lord are close, close friends. One of the things I want to pray is that the Lord would take us on this journey from duty to delight, that we would enjoy spending time with him, that we'd enjoy being able to carve out a few minutes or 30 minutes or an hour to just get before him and say, "Lord, I just want to know you more. I just want to be near to you. I just want to spend time with your presence."

It's like back in the day when you were dating and you'd just sit on the phone and there would be times where you really wouldn't say anything, but you just liked being together. So here's my hope, that the Lord stokes affection and desire and just an attention toward, "Lord, I just want to be with you. I just delight in being near to you." So for the next few moments, will you pray again with that group and just say, "Lord, I delight in being with you. Just do something in my heart to make that more of a delight and less of a duty"?

Lord, for this reason I bow my knee. For this reason, with a humble heart and in a humble posture, Lord, I just come before you. Lord, I ask you to strengthen my brothers and sisters where they're weak. Lord, I ask you to lavish your love upon them. This message, this call to prayer, these next few weeks, Lord, I pray it achieves two ends. First, Lord, that there would be an understanding of permission to come before you. Lord, we are not children who are in trouble, trying to avoid punishment from our father, but Lord, we're loved by you.

Lord, I pray you'd grant my brothers and sisters a knowledge that surpasses just knowledge, but they would feel and experience and know your love for them and that would invite them in to pray. Lord, I pray that you would also do this, that out of that delight, this would not be a four-week season, but it would be a shifting mark in our lives, that we'd go from being people who are reminded yearly that we should pray to people who yearly celebrate what you've done through prayer.

So Lord, strengthen us where we're weak. Love us where we feel unlovable. For this reason I humbly call on you, who is able to do more than we could ask or think. It's in your matchless name I pray, amen.