Praying With Fire
Matthew 6:7-13 // Craig Smith
August 12, 2018

Craig // Welcome to all of our campuses including church online. So glad you are with us for part number two of our two-part miniseries, “Praying with Fire,” where we are taking a look at this famous prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. We call it The Lord’s Prayer, and for literally thousands of years now, followers of Jesus have looked to this prayer to gain an understanding of what prayer is supposed to be like, so we are going to be digging into that prayer, but before we do that, let me tell you what we are not going to do today. That is, we are not going to go looking for a pattern in The Lord’s Prayer. We are not going to go looking for instruction on specific things to pray or the order you are supposed to pray them in.

There's nothing wrong with that, okay? I'm not in any way saying that's a bad thing to do, but I believe that The Lord’s Prayer is meant to teach us an attitude, not a strategy. It's meant to teach us the attitude to come to prayer with, not so much a strategy for exactly how to do it. It's not a fill in the blank or follow this particular sequence of things. It's about the heart we come to God with in prayer. So we are kind of on a treasure hunt to understand what that heart is, so if you want to grab a Bible and make your way to Matthew 6, we are going to be picking up in verse 7. While you are going there, let me do a quick review. Last week we saw Jesus teach us important things about prayer. One of those is that he expects prayer to be a regular part of our lives.

He says “when you pray” expecting when you are doing it, not if you pray or on the odd occasion that you might pray, but when you pray. We also saw that prayer is supposed to be to an audience of One. Prayer is to be directed to God and God alone. Even in a public setting, you are not performing for other people, you are praying to God, and then third, when we do that, when we actually pray to an audience of One, we have this incredible privilege of getting to enjoy our father’s undivided attention.

Those are all things that Jesus has set in place. Now he begins to tell us a little bit about what it looks like. He says this in verse 7. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think that they’ll be heard because of their many words. He says don’t babble like the pagans do when they pray. The word “pagan” is a way to talk about the people who didn’t know the true God. So for the Jewish people in the first century, that would have been the Greeks and Romans around them who didn’t know the true God. But they had gods, right? They had false gods. They had gods that they believed in. What’s true about the pagan gods, interestingly enough, is that they are very different from the true God. One of the ways that we see that difference is, the pagans didn’t believe that their gods were all powerful or all knowing. They believed that they were some powerful. If you think about the Greek god Zeus, he’s powerful. He’s the most powerful of all of their gods, but he’s not all powerful. There are limits on his power.

Zeus might be knowledgeable, but he’s not all knowing. What that meant for the pagans when they prayed to their gods is, they had to fight for the attention of their gods because their gods couldn’t pay attention to all of their worshipers at any given time. They couldn’t necessarily pay attention to all of their prayers they were praying because they were limited gods, so for pagans, prayer sort of naturally meant that you have to fight to be heard. You have to fight. You have to cut through the clutter to get those gods to pay attention to you, and one of those techniques was basically to barrage the god or goddess they were trying to get the attention from, to barrage them with words. Which is a natural human strategy. Anyone that has ever had small children in their lives knows exactly what I’m talking about, right?

Sometimes to get our attention they just talk and talk and talk and it’s faster and louder until you are finally like, what? Oh my gosh, what? I’m paying -- you see what they did, they captured your attention. They won the fight for your attention, and that’s how the pagans prayed. Jesus says, it’s not like that with the real God. You don’t have to fight for God’s attention. There are a couple of reasons for that. One is that God is the ultimate multi-tasker. How many of you think you can multitask? You are wrong. Science says you are wrong. Science, all kinds of studies confirm as soon as we begin to divide our attention between two or more things, our accuracy and efficiency goes down between 70 to 80%. Like immediately. We are not that good at multitask, but God is. God is infinitely powerful and infinitely knowledgeable, so God doesn’t have to go, you can have this portion of My attention and you can have this fraction. He doesn’t have to subdivide His attention. As we said last week, God can give each of us His undivided attention because He’s the ultimate multi-tasker.

The other reason Jesus says we don’t have to fight for God’s attention is because God’s attention is already on us. We talked about this last week. Psalm 33:18 says the eyes of The Lord are on those who fear Him. God’s eyes are already fixed upon you. God’s attention is already on you. You already have God’s attention. We don’t pray to capture God’s attention; we pray to return God’s attention back to Him. We pray to enter into that relationship when the God who has been paying attention to us suddenly gets attention back from us. That’s prayer, not to capture God’s
attention but to return it. God’s eyes are already on you. You don’t have to fight for God’s attention to pay attention to you because He’s already done it. He’s already been doing it. He’s always doing it, so Jesus says, we don’t have to fight for God’s attention. You don’t need strategies to capture God’s attention. It’s just not necessary, so don’t pray like they do.

And my guess is that probably, there’s not many people who come into a place like this on a day like this who come thinking, no, no, no, I do. I have to fight for God’s attention. He can’t pay attention to me and everybody else, so I have to cut through the clutter. I have to somehow rise to the top. Most of us don’t really think that consciously, that we have to fight for God’s attention, but we often pray like we think we have to fight for God’s attention. We have strategies in prayer that basically boil down to, we are basically fighting for God’s attention. I think sometimes we fight for God’s attention by using old time “church” language.

I mentioned this last week, sometimes in a public setting when a normal person suddenly turns into Shakespeare. Like they used to normal, but now they are praying in public and it’s thees and thous and arts and those kinds of things. That can be a sign that you are performing for the people around you, but I have talked to a bunch of people even over this past week that say, I do the same thing when I’m praying by myself. When it’s just me and Jesus, I still end up using thee and thou and arts, and what’s happening there is there is a lie that has somehow snuck into our hearts that unless we talk in a particular way, unless we pray with particular language, God isn’t really going to listen to us, and so we are fighting for God’s attention, but we don’t have to. You don’t have to fight for God’s attention with using old time “church” language or any other kind of language. You can just talk regular with God. He’s cool with it.

Another way I think we sometimes fight for God’s attention is, we fight for God’s attention by repeating requests. Now, I’m not talking about persistence in prayer. I’m not talking about praying for the same thing day after day. That’s one thing. That’s a totally different thing. I’m talking even in the moment we sit down to pray we fire the same request to God over and over again, just different language. God, I need healing. Healing, God. That’s why I’m here for you, God. I’m looking for healing, God. Lord, if you would just heal me, would you just heal me, heal me, heal me. And maybe that’s an exaggeration, but I think it’s a temptation a lot of us face to kind of slip into this, if I just say it once, God’s not going to think it’s important. He needs to understand how important this is to me, and so we repeat requests. What we are doing is that we have bought into this lie that somehow we have to fight for God’s attention through this technique, but we don’t.

You don’t have to fight for God’s attention by repeating requests. Sometimes we fight for God’s attention by repeating His name. This is another little kid’s strategy, by the way, right? If you have little kids in your life, especially if they are your kids, you have heard this. Mom? Mom? Mom, mom, mom. Dad? Dad, dad, dad, what? Hi. Oh, you got nothing.

[laughter]

But you won, right? You fought through the clutter. You got my attention. My kid actually -- I have sharp kids. When my kids were little, they realized if they were in a setting where there’s a lot of people kind of vying for mom and dad’s attention, they try the dad, dad, dad -- but then they would switch to my name. They would be dad, dad, dad, dad -- hey, Craig?

[laughter]

It would cut through the clutter. They would grab my attention at that point, right? Sometimes people will do that in prayer. Have you ever heard somebody praying, you know, Father, we are just so glad, Father, that Father, we get to come to you, Father, and Lord, it’s so good, Father God, that we can be here Father, and Lord -- and you are like, okay what are -- what’s happening here?

In public settings, sometimes that can actually be nerves -- a nervous tick, actually. They are replacing uhs and ums with the name of God, but some people do that even in private when it’s just them and God, and it’s this lie that somehow has gotten in there that we have to fight through the clutter to get God’s attention, and maybe if I say God’s name enough that somehow that will happen, but it’s not necessary. You don’t have to fight for God’s attention by repeating His name over and over again. And sometimes we fight for God’s attention by manufacturing emotion. And I’m not talking about genuine emotion. If you feel genuine emotion in prayer, that’s totally fine. You are being honest, and that’s great. But sometimes, and I struggle with this one, sometimes when I’m praying I feel the need to like almost ramp up the emotion, and like I wouldn’t say this in my head, but I think there is a part of my heart that believes it, unless I’m really emotional about it, God’s not going to take me seriously, and I know it’s not true, but I find myself kind of manufacturing emotion.

That’s this lie that’s crept in that says you have to fight through the clutter. You have to fight for God’s attention, and Jesus says you don’t. You don’t have to fight for God’s attention by manufacturing emotion. We don’t have to fight for God’s attention at all. So, he says, verse 8, do not be like them.

Don’t pray like that. Don’t pray as though you have to fight for God’s attention. For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. And on one level, all Jesus is saying is, you don’t have to fight for God’s attention because He’s already been paying attention. He already knows what you need, even before you thought to ask Him, God already knew it. You are never going to pray, God, hey, I need this, and God goes, oh. I’m glad you brought this up, otherwise that would have totally slipped through the cracks. I had no idea.
That's never going to happen. God's already been paying attention. His eyes have already been fixed on you. He knows exactly what you need even before you start praying so Jesus is saying. hey, you don't have to fight for God's attention. But what he says here raises a question, doesn't it? A very natural question. If God already knows what I need before I ask, then why do I -- why do I have to ask, right? If God already knows what I need, and He's a good Father, then why on Earth would I have to ask Him for these things that I need? Why wouldn't God just already do them? And that's a very natural question, but it's also a question that betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of what prayer is. Let's clear this up because this is so, so important. We don't pray to tell God what we need. We pray to declare that we need God. Do you hear me? We don't pray to tell God what we need. We don't inform God of our needs because He already knows.

We pray to declare that we need God. We are praying to declare that we are dependent on God. That's really what prayer is. It's an expression of dependence on God. So we have these kind of interesting things. James 4:2, it's a very interesting statement that says, you do not have because you do not ask, or you do not ask God. I mean it's just black and white. There's no getting around it. It's not like it's a weird translation thing. It's just straightforward. God says, hey, you know sometimes why you don't have the things you are asking -- or the things that you want? Sometimes you don't even have the things you need, and you know why? It's not because I don't know. It's because you didn't what? You didn't ask. You didn't express your dependence on Me. You might go, okay, hang on a second. Why does God care if we express our dependence on Him? Why does God sometimes force us to demonstrate that dependence? Why is that important to God? And the answer is because He's good. It's because God loves you too much to let you continue living as though you are independent. He loves you too much to let you continue living as though you were self-sufficient because when we live as though we are independent, when we live as though we are self-sufficient, that becomes the way we do life.

Maybe that works most days. Maybe we can get through most days thinking that we have it all together, and that we can take care of ourselves and we'll meet whatever challenge. Maybe most days that work, but the reality is we are always, every one of us is going to get those moments where we are absolutely insufficient. We are absolutely unable to handle what is coming our way, and if we have been living our whole lives in this track of self-sufficiency, we're not going to know what to do at that moment, so God is preempting those moments. He's setting us up so that we face everything, whether it's big or small, in the understanding that God is necessary for us, that we are dependent on Him. Sometimes we don't have because we don't ask because God's like, you need to ask so that you will remember that you are dependent on Me. And that's a hard thing.

Expressing our dependence on God is a very difficult thing. It's partly difficult because sin pushes us in the other direction. The essence of sin is basically to say, I got this God. I'll take care of it. So, our natural, sinful tendency is basically to go, I don't need anybody. I definitely don't need God. I can do this, so expressing our dependence on God is hard because it just goes against that natural way we have been doing life for so long. It's also hard because the reality is that we live in a world that constantly gives us things that trick us into thinking we have got what we need. For instance I think our education makes it hard to recognize our independence. This is a very educated congregation. It's easy for educated people to go, I have degrees. I have diplomas. That means I'll be in demand. I'll be able to get a job. I'll be able to do all of these things, and our access to information can make it hard to recognize our dependence on God. Think about it. 30 years ago, if you wanted information, it was hard to get. For a lot of us, if we wanted information, we had to go to this building called a library, and we had to get these things called books, and the kind of book with the information we needed, we had to get into these long drawers with these little pieces of paper, and they would tell us where in the building to go to get that particular book with information, and we would go, and sometimes the information would be gone. Somebody had taken the information away for two weeks, and you would have to wait for the information to come back, and that's not the world that we live in anymore, right?

This happens to our family constantly. We are at dinner, and somebody says something, and somebody else goes, I'm not sure that's true. I'm not sure that's accurate. And they are like, well, I think it is because of this. They are like, well, I don't think it is because of this, and that usually goes for about 10 seconds now, until someone goes, why are we talking about this? Ha, ha. You're wrong! That's the way it works in my family. You see, we have instant information to all of the information, right? And that makes us feel independent. I mean think about it, the respect that we have for doctors has plummeted in this country. It's plummeted in the western world. Why? Web M.D. In spite of the fact that no matter what symptoms you put in, Web M.D. is going to tell you that cancer is a real possibility. The point is, we have access to all of this information, so we don't need these experts. We don't need these people, and what that can do is just create a general sense of anything I need to know, I'll be able to find at any moment, and that can make it hard to recognize our dependence on God for wisdom. Information is not the same thing as wisdom.

Sometimes I think we'll find that -- our accumulated stuff makes it hard to recognize our dependence. The stuff that we have gotten, and we have well-funded 401Ks and retirement accounts. We have reliable cars and good houses, and they are mostly paid off. My stuff gives me a sense of security, and my stuff can make it hard to recognize my dependence on God. It insulates me from my dependence. I think success that we have had can make it hard to recognize our dependence. We can look back. I have a good track record. I have dealt with challenges that came my way. I have overcome obstacles. I have got a really good track record and what that can do is not only give us confidence for the future, but it can actually give us an arrogance that goes, I'm going to be able to handle anything that comes my way. No matter what happens, I'll be able to figure it out because that's who I am. My success proves it. But the thing is, in life, as in the Stock Market, past performance, no guarantee of future success, but our success can make it hard for us to recognize our dependence on God. So, what does God do?
He forces us to come to Him. Sometimes He withholds even the basic things that we need until we come to Him expressing our dependence. It's a hard thing for us. I have a younger sister. She was adopted into our family when she was three years old. She spent the first three years of life at an orphanage in Brazil. I can't even imagine how difficult that was. I had just a glimpse of it because I saw the number it had done on her even at three years old, when she came in, she lived in a way that I couldn't even understand. She clearly felt like, I'm responsible for everything. If I'm going to get food, I have to get it. If I'm going to have food for tomorrow, I'm going to have to get it, and so she would steal. She would hoard food. She would store it in her bed -- because she didn't understand what it was like to be in a relationship -- to be in a family with a loving father and mother who she could just go to and say, I need this. She had been taught by living three years as an orphan there was no one you could go to, and so she was doing what she had been taught to do, and it was such a hard transition for her to make. But the reality is that we are all born as spiritual orphans. We are all born because of sin, separated from God, and in a world where the truth is we have to go get it. If we are going to get it, we have to be the ones to do it. So we have to take it whatever the cost. We have to get it for ourselves. No one else is going to look out for us, and then by faith in Jesus, we get adopted into this family with a loving Father who says, I'll take care of you.

But our habit is still, yeah, but I have to do this. I have to grab it. If I don't, then I won't. God says, you can't live like that. So, in His goodness, sometimes He doesn't give us those things that we are desperate for until we ask Him, until we express our dependence on Him. It's not because He's not good, no, no, no, no. It's because He's too good. God is too good a Father to let us forget that we are no longer orphans. You hear me? Why does James say, sometimes you don't have because you don't ask God? Because God's too good of a Father to let us forget that we are not orphans anymore. And if the things that we are looking for just come into our lives, sometimes we'll go, yeah, I got that. I did that. I don't need -- and God says you can't live like this, and you don't need to live like this. He is too good a Father to let us forget that we are no longer orphans.

So, Jesus says, let me tell you what that looks like. Let me tell you what it looks like to come to that kind of God, to come to an expression of dependence on a good Father, and he teaches us this thing called The Lord's Prayer. Now, let me say something about The Lord's Prayer that I think sometimes gets misunderstood or overlooked, that this is not an exclusive teaching on prayer. What Jesus is teaching here is not an exclusive teaching on prayer. He is not teaching us everything we need to know about prayer. To understand everything that we need to know about prayer, we have to look at the whole of God's Word and the whole of the Bible, and there are lots of other prayers that we need to pay attention to. There are other teachings on what prayer is supposed to be like. This is not an exclusive teaching on prayer. Like for instance, this prayer has no praise. There is no praise in this prayer, but if you look at other prayers throughout the Bible, you often find they begin with praising God for who He is. This prayer has no praise.

Some of you who may know the prayer pretty well, you might be going, wait, wait, wait, it says hallowed be thy name, right? Holy is Your name. That's a praise for God being holy, right? It's not. It's actually a request. It's that verb form in the Greek that is a request. It's not God, You are Holy. It's God, make yourself Holy, meaning make Yourself set apart, show Yourself to be different. Show that You are not like those other gods. Show that you are a good Father. Show that You are good and righteous and distinct. Show that You are different. It's a request for God to do that. There is no thanksgiving in this prayer. Lots of prayers in scripture, people thank God for things that He's done. There is no thanksgiving in this prayer. Does that mean that Jesus doesn't think praise or thanksgiving is an important part of prayer? No, not at all. He's not trying to give us everything we need to know about prayer. In fact, if you remember what we said back at the very beginning, The Lord's Prayer is about teaching us a strategy -- not strategy, but an attitude, rather than a strategy. It's not supposed to go, here's the sequence of things you need to do when you pray.

Here's the things you need the get in when you pray. That's not what he's dealing with. He's dealing with this attitude. He's going, here's how you are supposed to come before God. Here is the attitude you should have when you come before a good Father. And so what basically we get in this prayer is a breakdown of two things. Number one, it's a recognition of God as a good Father and number two, the rest of it is basically, depending on God as a good Father, so he says, this then is how you should pray.

How not being here's the sequence, here's the structure. Here's the pattern you follow. No, no, no. Here's the attitude you should bring to prayer. Our Father in heaven. He says, our Father. He doesn't say God, Lord. It's not Master. It's not Creator. All of which are perfectly appropriate words to use when talking to God. The problem is they are accurate words, but they are not intimate. They are not relational. Father is a relational word. He says, you are not just coming before God, before the Creator of all things, you are actually coming before your loving Father, so he says approach Him as a Father, and you know what? Some of us hear the word father and we have good associations with that word. We had good earthly fathers, and so we can go, if God is our Father then He's all these good things that I knew from my earthly dad, but it's a million times a million He's so much better. We magnify the good connotations or associations we have with the word father, but I also know some of you don't have that experience. Some of you have not had a good experience with an earthly father, and some of you the word father conjures up the word fear, because some of you were abused, and some of you the word father conjures up -- just hurt, because you were abandoned or just ignored, and so this word father doesn't say intimate to you. It doesn't say relational. It brings up a host of things that almost pushes you away, but I want you to notice something. He says our Father in where?

Our Father in heaven. This is a very different Father than the one you might have had here. That's why Jesus says, our Father in heaven. Not our father on Earth. Although I don't want to make any mistake, if He's good on Earth, that's great, but God's so much better in heaven. If it was bad on Earth, He's 180-degrees different. This is our Father in heaven. So, what we have to do, if we have negative associations with that word, we have to do whatever we have to, to make sure we set aside the negative associations and understand that we are praying to our good Father.
and do all we can to recognize even in our hearts that, that's who we are approaching. So you have to do whatever you do to set aside those associations. Maybe one of the ways you do that, honestly, you don't use the word "father." Maybe the word father has negative connotations. Maybe there is another word that you could use.

Maybe there's a word that you never called your abandoning or abusive father. Maybe he insisted you call him dad or maybe he insisted you call him father, so you don't use those words when you talk to God. Maybe you use the word Daddy. Maybe that's not a hard word for you, and so maybe that helps you set aside the associations. Jesus basically did. I don't want people to feel uncomfortable, they are like, that feels a little too familial, right? But Jesus did that. He used the word Abba in talking about God. That's the Aramaic equivalent of the word Daddy. So it's perfectly okay to use that word. Maybe it's Papa. But find some other word that allows you to see that this is your heavenly Father. This is your Father in heaven, not your father on Earth. This is a good, good, good Father.

Then he begins to express that dependence on this good Father. He says, hallowed be your name. As we already said, it's not a description that He is Holy. It's a request that He make His name set apart. That's what holy means. It means different, set apart. You are praying, God, show yourself to be different than the gods of the nation. Show yourself to be different from these fathers we had that are not giving us a good picture of You, that are not pointing us in the right direction. Show that You are good and You are righteous and You are perfect. Show that You are different. Show that You are Holy.

It says in verse 10, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. It's two requests for basically the same thing. He says, Your kingdom come -- to where? To Earth. Your will be done. Where? On Earth. So that it is on Earth as it is in heaven. In other words, invade my world, God. God, You are a good Father and You see the world that we are living in, and it's not good. It's broken, and we are battered and bruised and hurt and lonely. Would You invade my world? Would You invade our world, and would You start to make it here like it is there? Because that's exactly the kind of thing that a good Father would want to do. So you are depending on Him to do that.

He says give us today our daily bread. Give us this day our daily bread, and daily bread here does not mean a frequency. He is not talking about bread that comes every day. This is not bread that comes every day, it's everyday bread. It's not fancy bread. It's not gourmet bread -- whatever that means. It's just everyday -- it's the basic in the first century, it's the basic building block of a menu. It's the bare necessities, basically. It's just everyday bread. He's saying God, give us our everyday bread, our normal, plain, simple, everyday bread. He's not looking for anything fancy, just give us our everyday bread, and notice he doesn't say, would You give us enough of it so we can stockpile it for the week so I can make sure I have what I need every other day, no. He says give it to us when? Today. Give us today our everyday bread. Give us our everyday bread, give me the bread, the basic necessity I need for life right here, right now for today. I don't need to store it up. I don't need to hide it away so I can go get it afterwards because I'm not an orphan anymore. I have a Father I can go to every single day to get what I need for -- that day.

And forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors. You might be familiar with the version of this we find in the Gospel of Luke. Jesus used this prayer multiple times. In this case he used the word "debt" rather than the more familiar "trespasses." The more familiar versions say forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us, but in this case he used the word for debt, but understand it's the same thing. It's not a financial debt. We don't owe God a financial debt. It's a spiritual debt. It's a debt because of our sin because we have done wrong, and that creates a barrier between us. There is a price to be paid for that. We have a debt that's owed. What Jesus is saying basically is forgive us our sins, and then he goes on to say, and we are also supposed to say, as we have also forgiven those who have incurred a debt with us or sinned against us, because here's the thing, you can't pray for God to bring heaven to Earth if you are not willing to be part of His mission to do that.

So he says, God, I want You to forgive me in the same way I'm willing to forgive others. You are going to pour forgiveness into me. You are going to pour grace and mercy into me. I'm going to pour it out because I already prayed, Lord, I want You to make it on Earth as it is in heaven. I want You to invade it. I'm your foot soldier. I'm on mission with You. And if I'm not willing to be on mission, then it doesn't make any sense to ask You to make it on Earth as it is in heaven. And the simplest way we begin to do that is if You are going to forgive me, I'm also going to forgive others. He says and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. Which is maybe the most misunderstood part of this prayer, and I get it. We read it on the surface it really sounds like Jesus is saying and pray that God won't tempt you, right?

Has anybody ever wondered why we have to pray for God not to tempt us? Anybody? Yeah. What's really interesting to me, in the book of James, James 1:13, we are told God does not tempt anyone. Black and white. God does not tempt anyone, but Jesus says, pray for God not to tempt you. You are like, wait a minute. If God doesn't tempt anyone, why do I have to pray for God not to tempt me? You don't. It's not what Jesus is saying. Jesus isn't saying pray for God not to tempt you. This is what God is saying here. Pray this way. Please lead us. Please lead us so that we don't fall into the trap set by the evil one.

It's not lead us not into temptation. It's lead us, so that we don't fall into the traps the evil one has set for us. The idea is, it's a big world, and there is evil out there. There is an evil one. There is a devil out there, and he has set up multiple traps in our path to trip us up, to bring us down, to capture us in sin, and some of them we see coming a mile off, and we are like, yeah, I'm not doing that, but sometimes in avoiding that, we stumble into other traps that we didn't even know were there because we don't have the big picture. We don't have the 30,000-foot view, but who does? Our Father. Our Father sees all of those potential pitfalls, all of those potential traps. So this is a prayer that says, God, I don't see them all coming. I could find myself in one without even realizing that, that's where I had gotten to. So God, would you guide me? Would you lead me in such a way that I don't fall into those traps that have been set for me?
You don’t have to pray for God not to tempt us. This is a prayer for God to lead us in a way that only He can -- which is exactly the kind of thing that a good Father would want to do, isn’t it? If we would only express our dependence on Him and let Him lead us, and that’s the harder prayer. Jesus said this is how you should pray. You don’t have to fight for God’s attention. Just pray this way. Pray as a confident child depending on a good Father. Pray with confidence because your Father is what? He’s good. That’s the heart of the prayer. Yes, we can talk about patterns, and the kinds of things that you should pray about, and we can talk about ways to go about doing that, but at the heart of it, at the foundation of all-powerful prayer is a very simple attitude.

It’s an attitude of confidence because we have a -- good Father. So Jesus says, this is what you most need to know. Pray as a confident child depending on a good Father. I want to give you a challenge. For some of you, this challenge will be a possible way of being reminded about the heart of prayer. We can get away from this simplistic child like understanding of what prayer is, so if you are an experienced prayer person, this may be a reminder that comes from this challenge. Some of you, maybe you struggled your whole lives, or you are brand new to faith, or you are here for the first time, and you don’t even know who God is yet, and so this idea of prayer feels really foreign, and if you are on that side of the spectrum, then this challenge is an opportunity to just begin to understand something important about prayer, something foundational about prayer, but I’m going to give you what I call the three-day prayer project, hash tag three-day prayer project. The reason I’m putting the hash tag in is I would love for you to share what God teaches you during the three-day prayer project, so use that tag in Facebook or Instagram or Twitter or wherever you do it, because I would love for us to be able to search on that hash tag, oh here’s what God’s teaching my brothers and sisters about prayer by taking the three-day prayer project.

And the three-day prayer project is really simple. I want you to set an alarm for some time, it will be the same for the next three days. It can be in the morning. It can be in the evening. It can be whenever, but set an alarm and for three days I want you to do three things. Thing number one, I want you to identify the ways that you are still living as an orphan. That’s the first one. Go God, how am I acting like it’s really on me rather than trusting in my good Father? Show me the ways that I’m living as though I’m still an orphan. Maybe share some of those things that God lays on your heart, because you are probably going to find that you share with other people, that’s exactly where I fall into that temptation. I’m not an orphan. You can remind each other by sharing those things that you realize. That’s the first one. Identify places you are still living like an orphan. Number two, recognize that we are praying to a good Father. Just recognize that God is a good Father. One of the best ways to do that is think backwards on all of the good things God does for you. All of the ways God has cared for you, all of the ways God has provided even when you were not expressing dependence upon Him, and yet He went ahead of you, and He took care of you anyway.

Recognize those ways. Maybe share some of those with that hash tag, and then the third thing? Confidently request the basics. Especially if you are new to prayer. Don’t worry about getting a bunch of things into your prayer. Just ask for the basics. Here’s three examples of basics, the necessities of life. Pray God will give you the food you need for that day. Pray for the necessities. Pray for, forgiveness. He’s a good Father when we are willing to confess our sins, He’s faithful and just and He will forgive us. Maybe another one of those basics is guidance. We talked about that. God wants to guide you. There are traps that have been set for you, but God sees them coming, and if you let God guide you, you will find yourself weaving between them without even realizing what’s happened. So maybe that’s the basic thing. God lead me today so that I don’t fall into the trap set by the evil one. There you go. Three things for three days.

I would love for you to continue after those three days, but we’ll see if we can get the ball rolling on this, and let’s share with each other using that hash tag three-day prayer project what God’s teaching us in the midst of that. Let’s do that, shall we? Let’s go confidently before a good Father. Would you pray with me?

God, we acknowledge that You are good. Some of us have no problem believing that. Some of us have a history, maybe with our Earthly father that make it a little harder to recognize it, but at least with our heads, Lord, we declare You are a good Father, and we depend upon You. Thank You for loving us enough to force us to come to grips with that dependence. Thank You for caring for us, sometimes even when we don’t. Thank You for being our good Father. Amen.

Now at all of our campuses, including church online, if you are willing to take this super simple three-day prayer project challenge, will you slip your hand up? Let’s do this together. Awesome. Those online click the button below me and let’s just pray this. God, it’s only three days. It’s incredibly a simple assignment, three days to talk about identifying ways we are living like orphans, recognizing You are a good Father and requesting the basics. Even though it’s simple, Lord, life has a way of getting in the way and keeping us from accomplishing even this simple challenge, so Lord, would You give us what we need to do it for three days at least, and then maybe even beyond that as You lead us. Lord, as we do that, would You give us new insights as to who You are? Would You give us a picture of Your goodness and how we can be confident coming to our Father. Amen.

If you would just continue an attitude of prayer, if you are a follower of the Lord Jesus, if you have been adopted into his family, would you start praying for the people around you who may not have had that experience, who may not know what it means to be a son or a daughter of God through faith in Jesus Christ? On all of our campuses and around the world watching online, people right now are realizing that they are living like orphans because they are still orphans. But they are still doing life on their own, and they have heard, and it’s connected for the first time that they don’t have to live that way. That there is a Father that loves them so much that He sent His own Son to die in their place, to take their sins upon his shoulders, to pay them off, to forgive that debt, to offer forgiveness, and who raised His Son from the dead so we can be offered new life by faith in Christ, by faith in Jesus, and if that’s you, wherever you are as you are listening to this, if you -- if you are ready to be adopted, if that
you are ready to give your life to Jesus, and if you are ready to be brought into this family and into a relationship with your good, good Father and if you are ready to do that, would you just slip your hand up right now? Fantastic. That's awesome. Online, if you would just click that button right below me.

And if you are ready to give your life to Jesus and to be brought into His family, just say this right now. God, I want to be in Your family. I want to be Your son. I want to be Your daughter. Thank You for sending Jesus to die for me. Thank You that he rose from the dead to prove that he had defeated death and sin. Thank You for your offer of new life. Jesus, I give you my life. I receive new life from you. Thank You for making me Your child. In Jesus name. Amen. Can we just celebrate those on all of our campuses who have come into our family?

[applause]