



# deeply rooted



A CALL TO PRAYER

SERMON SERIES OUTLINES

SMALL GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES



We are grateful to the six Covenant pastors who contributed to this sermon series, calling us to become deeply rooted in prayer as a denominational family.

## *Learning to Pray*

JOHN 5:19

**CLAY PECK** is the founding pastor of Grace Place, which he started in Berthoud, Colorado, in 1996. He holds a doctor of ministry degree from Denver Seminary and is committed to communicating the unchanging gospel of God's grace in fresh and relevant ways. Grace Place is dedicated to being an externally focused, multiplying church and has planted five churches and sponsored hundreds of children who are victims of extreme poverty. Clay grew up in Colorado before meeting and marrying his wife, Selene, in college. They have two children—one by birth and one by adoption. Clay enjoys reading, learning, travel, adventure, motorcycles, overlanding, and enjoying God's creation—especially in the mountains of Colorado.

## *Praying for Our Needs*

MATTHEW 6:9-14

**DAVID WILLIAMS JR.** (retired) is the founding pastor of the Abyssinian Christian Church, a Covenant congregation in Fort Collins, Colorado. In 2021, Rev. Williams was the recipient of the Justice and Peace Award presented by the Fort Collins Human Relations Committee. Internationally, he has served as guest preacher/ lecturer for justice, forgiveness, and tribal reconciliation in Bujumbura, Burundi, and Kigali, Rwanda, following the 1994 genocide. He and his wife, Debbie, served as missionaries in the Democratic Republic of Congo from 2012 to 2014 as church development and special assistants to the president of the Evangelical Covenant Church of Congo. Currently he serves on staff of the Covenant Midwest Conference as director of connections and development.

## *Praying for Deliverance*

HEBREWS 4:15-16

**STEPHANIE WILLIAMS O'BRIEN** is the lead pastor of Mill City Church, a community focused on loving Minneapolis in the name of Jesus. She is also a professor of ministry classes at Bethel University and Seminary in St. Paul. She has experience coaching leaders and churches around the United States and Canada with 3DMovements, The Missional Network and as well as through her own consulting content. Steph is a gifted speaker in the areas of missional communities, leadership, young adult and emerging leaders, discipleship, identity, faith and workplace integration, emotional intelligence, and life on mission. She loves to see people begin to join the adventure of what God is doing all around them in their everyday lives.

## *Praying for People*

COLOSSIANS 4:2-6

**EVELYN PEREZ** is a leader who is passionate about advocating, equipping, and raising up young Latino leaders in the church. Originally from Guatemala, she has called the Bay Area home since she immigrated at age two. Evelyn currently serves as coordinator of Latino ministries with the Pacific Southwest Conference. She has decided to pursue her calling to ministry and is now attending North Park Theological Seminary. She experiences deep joy when hanging at the skate-park with her two sons or taking a day at the beach to enjoy God's beauty and creation.

## *Praying to Hear*

MATTHEW 6:5-8; MARK 1:35

**PETER AHN** is the founding/lead pastor of Metro Community Church in Englewood, New Jersey. Metro Community Church began with a humble vision of becoming a community that finds its commonality in weakness. Today Metro has grown into a vibrant, multiethnic church transforming its community and the world. Peter is also the president of Metro Community Center, which serves the people of Englewood through community service and outreach. He travels worldwide to continue his passion for empowering others to embrace their weaknesses. He resides in Northern New Jersey with his wife, Jenny, and three kids.

## *Praying for a Yielded Posture*

MATTHEW 5:1-2

**SANETTA PONTON** is associate pastor of justice, advocacy, and compassion at Metro Community Church in Englewood, New Jersey. Having grown up in Englewood, she is a proud graduate of the Englewood Public School District and has been blessed to receive degrees from Columbia University (BA), Harvard Law School (JD), and Duke Divinity School (MDiv). When she was in law school, God called her to ministry, and she has been on a roller coaster ride with God in formal ministry ever since. Her heart beats for justice, equity in education, and to see the realization of the prayer "thy kingdom come." Sanetta has the most fun when she's with good people, eating good food, and (preferably) while traveling somewhere that requires the use of her passport.

LEARNING TO PRAY



*Jesus gave them this answer:  
“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do  
nothing by himself; he can do only  
what he sees his Father doing,  
because whatever the Father does  
the Son also does.”*

JOHN 5:19





## LEARNING TO PRAY

JOHN 5:19

*Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” —JOHN 5:19, NIV*

*Many of us struggle to pray—it seems like it should be simple, but it’s not. Yet we can learn from the example of the disciples.*

### INTRODUCTION

Do you find it easy or hard to pray? For me it is hard.

- Prayer is odd. Am I talking to air? We can’t see God. Am I talking to myself?
- Prayer can be boring. Have you been in some boring prayer meetings?
- Prayer is spiritual. Sometimes it feels like super spiritual people pray super spiritual prayers, using special language.
- One of the reasons prayer is hard for me is because I’ve fallen. Yes, I’ve been redeemed, but we are outside the Garden and I’ve got a badly damaged prayer antennae.

### WHY I STRUGGLE WITH PRAYER

- A. Too Independent
- B. Too Distracted
- C. Too Grown Up
  1. What’s the point of talking to God about what he already knows and is taking care of? Why should I bother God with details that aren’t probably that important?
  2. I’ve moved beyond simple faith; I’m grown up and become “sophisticated.”
- D. Too Cerebral
- E. Too Cynical
  1. Maybe our frustrations and disappointments build up scar tissue.
  2. Maybe we start to question God’s goodness and develop small doubts that grow to bigger doubts.
  3. We ask, “Does prayer really make a difference?”

### LEARNING TO PRAY EFFECTIVELY

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” —LUKE 11:1*

The disciples watched Jesus pray and listened to him pray, and they wanted to learn to pray. Let’s follow their example.

- A. I Will Realize That I Am Helpless
  1. John 5:19
  2. John 15:5
  3. If I’m not praying, it could mean that I am confident that time, money, and talent are all I need in life.



4. When I take time to pray, I give up being “productive,” which makes me more dependent on God.
5. If I’m confident that I can do life on my own, I will not pray.

B. I Will Make Time for Prayer

1. Mark 1:35
2. Prayer enables us to experience inner quiet in the midst of outer busyness.
3. The problem for many of us is not busyness but distraction.
  - VIDEO: [“The Distracted Mind”](#)

C. I Will Become Like a Child

1. Matthew 18:1-5
2. Luke 10:21
3. Traits of children: frank, bold, honest, trusting, abrupt, messy, expectant, playful

D. I Will Grow in My Love for Jesus

1. Revelation 2:4-5
2. Revelation 3:20
3. We need to focus less on prayer and more on God.
4. Ephesians 1:16-17

E. I Will Put My Full Trust in the Lord

1. Matthew 17:20-21
2. God is sovereign.
3. God is loving.
4. God is all-wise.
5. God is patient.
6. The difference in Scripture between the “upper story” (what God is doing) and the “lower story” (what we can see, the human condition).

**PASTOR:**

**CLAY PECK** is the founding/  
lead pastor of Grace Place in  
Berthoud, Colorado.

**FOR SMALL GROUP USE**

### *Study Questions*

1. Which of the five “struggles” with prayer do you relate to?
2. Is it hard to admit you are helpless? Why or why not?
3. What causes distraction in your life?
4. What does it mean to you to become childlike?
5. Do you struggle with believing that a sovereign God is interested in the details of your life?
6. In what tangible ways might you increase your love for Jesus?

### *Spiritual Practice*

Take a 10-minute walk and prayerfully ask God to show you tangible ways that you might increase your love for him. Afterward, write down what came to mind as you walked.



*This, then, is how you should pray:  
“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today  
our daily bread. Forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver  
us from the evil one.” For if you forgive  
other people when they sin against you,  
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

MATTHEW 6:9-14





## PRAYING FOR OUR NEEDS

MATTHEW 6:9-14

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*Jesus gives us a  
model of prayer.*

### INTRODUCTION

Back when Christian education took place on Sunday morning before the 11 o'clock service, I attended Sunday school where we learned the words of Jesus through Bible catechisms and committed to memory the Lord's Prayer. Every night before I went to bed, God's Spirit was invited into my bedroom through reciting this prayer. Throughout the night, heaven was on standby so that if I died before sunrise, I was committed to the Father of all creation.

How often, when words are few and troubles loom large, have adults reached back in their memory to this particular prayer and found comfort for the soul and rest from their weariness? In reflecting on these few verses, Jesus himself says, "When you pray, this is what your prayers should sound like."

### THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE INDIVIDUALS HAVE PRAYED UNDER A RANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

- A. Isaac prayed for his wife, Rebekah, to become pregnant (GENESIS 25:21).
- B. Moses prayed for God to take away the snakes (NUMBERS 21:7).
- C. Hezekiah prayed for direction (2 KINGS 20:2).
- D. Nehemiah prayed for architectural plans to rebuild a city (NEHEMIAH 2:4).
- E. Daniel prayed three times a day in thanksgiving to God's faithfulness (DANIEL 6:10).
- F. David prayed for the peace of Jerusalem (PSALM 122:6).
- G. At age 84 Anna prayed to behold the Messiah (LUKE 2:36-37).
- H. Two men went up to the temple to pray—one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector—and the second one was heard by God (LUKE 18:14).
- I. St. Paul the apostle prays for a successful evangelistic campaign (COLOSSIANS 4:3).
- J. John the beloved prayed for good health and wellbeing (3 JOHN 2).
- K. Jesus admonishes the church to pray for their enemies (MATTHEW 5:44).

*Throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, prayer is constantly in use.*

### WHY PRAY?

- A. Prayer is acknowledging that there is a God in the invisible, spiritual world who affects the physical and visible world.



- B. The soul longs to have conversation with its Creator.
- C. At a subconscious level too often we do not trust God to hold up his end of the bargain. When our eyes bear witness to the tragedies and atrocities that happen daily around us, we wonder, “What, if anything, is God doing?”

#### WHY DO WE PRAY FOR OUR NEEDS?

- A. It certainly isn't to inform God of something he does not know.
  - 1. In prayer we conform to God's perfect will about things that weigh heavy on our hearts and minds.
  - 2. We submit to God our concerns and wishes and seek his input before we press our way forward.
  - 3. Prayer in its simplest form is an exchange of confidence in the God of the universe. We bring our prayers to God because we believe he will fulfill his word, “Ask, and ye shall receive.”
- B. Does God really know and care about our needs? Yes.
  - 1. The dialogue between God and his people in this text is a personal conversation.
  - 2. God's knowledge of the needs of his people is taken as an encouragement to pray, not as a reason to refrain from praying.
- C. We ask, “Give us this day our daily bread.” This dynamic prayer reminds us of three movements of God happening in every prayer.
  - 1. God's provinces—reigns between heaven and earth borders
  - 2. God's provision—daily bread is unlimited
  - 3. God's protection—in a world of sin and evil

#### PASTOR:

**DAVID WILLIAMS JR.** (retired)  
is the founding Founding pastor  
of Abyssinian Christian Church,  
a Covenant congregation in  
Fort Collins, Colorado.

#### CONCLUSION

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. —EPHESIANS 6:18*

All kinds of prayers are directed to God for all kinds of needs from all kinds of people. God wants it that way. So let's keep on praying, and praying, and praying.

#### FOR SMALL GROUP USE

##### *Study Questions*

1. Is there a correct way to pray? If so, how?
2. How can finite human beings enter into dialogue with an infinite God?
3. How does prayer affect the material world?
4. Does prayer change God's heart about a matter?
5. How would you explain the Lord's Prayer as a model prayer?

##### *Spiritual Practice*

Take three minutes to make a list of the needs in your life and one other person in your life. Spend five minutes praying through those needs, asking God to fulfill them.



PRAYING FOR DELIVERANCE



*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

HEBREWS 4:15-16





## PRAYING FOR DELIVERANCE

HEBREWS 4:15-16

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*God helps those who  
want God’s help.*

### INTRODUCTION

Story about when I didn’t want to ask for help but needed to.

### TENSION

- A. It’s hard for most of us to ask for help.
- B. God helps those who help themselves.
- C. God’s invitation to us is the opposite!

### HEBREWS 4:15-16

- A. Explain context of Hebrews.
- B. Jesus is our high priest.
- C. Jesus has empathy for us.
- D. Jesus understands temptation.

### APPLICATION

- A. We have access to God through the high priest, curtain torn, Holy of Holies.
- B. We can approach God with confidence.
- C. We choose to receive grace as “help.”

### CONCLUSION

Surrender prayer. Invite people to practice this prayer, posturing ourselves as those who are in need of help from Jesus so we can be delivered from whatever holds us back.

#### PASTOR:

**STEPHANIE WILLIAMS O’BRIEN,**

*is the lead pastor of Mill City  
Church, Minneapolis.*

## FOR SMALL GROUP USE

### Study Questions

1. Do you find it challenging to ask for help? Share about a time when you asked for help—or should have!
2. The writer of Hebrews describes Jesus as our “high priest,” which means we have access to God through Jesus. In what seasons of life have you found it particularly meaningful that you have access to God who loves you and offers you grace and mercy?
3. What strongholds, or things that hold you back, have come up in your life that you have needed deliverance from? What strongholds might you struggle with today? Let us pray for deliverance for each other. When we walk in freedom, we can more fully join God’s kingdom work in the world.

### Spiritual Practice

Take 10-15 minutes to pray and answer these questions:

1. What areas in your life have you turned over to God?
2. Are there areas of your life that you still need to fully surrender to God? Read Hebrews 4:15-16. Close your time in prayer asking God to help you fully surrender your life to him.

PRAYING FOR PEOPLE



*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*

COLOSSIANS 4:2-4





## PRAYING FOR PEOPLE

COLOSSIANS 4:2-4

*“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone”*

—COLOSSIANS 4:2-6, NIV

*Let us devote ourselves  
to praying, seeking  
opportunities to  
proclaim God’s kingdom  
in action and speech  
and devoting ourselves  
to stand in the gap for  
our brothers and sisters  
who have lost hope.*

### INTRODUCTION

It seems as though everything is competing for our attention—endless to-do lists, we have the things that need to get done, and we have to protect our time. We are often too distracted to pray.

### DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO PRAYER

- A. Colossians 4:2
- B. “Devoted” means being committed. Staying devoted to prayer helps us align with God’s will in our life.
- C. We become watchful (alert/intentional) when we are devoted to prayer.

### BOLDLY PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

- A. Colossians 4:3-4
- B. Even though he was on house arrest, Paul proclaimed the gospel of Jesus with boldness.
- C. Barna report on Gen Z and the great opportunity we have to share the good news of the gospel and to walk alongside and disciple them.

### LIVE THE GOSPEL

- A. Colossians 4:5-6
- B. Be wise to how we act toward outsiders.
- C. Do we demonstrate love toward each other and those around us?
- D. Be full of grace, seasoned with salt.



### PRAY FOR THOSE AROUND US

- A. Are we quick to speak, or do we listen as those around us are looking for someone to share with?
- B. Can we be a people who are known by the way we love each other and those around us?

#### PASTOR:

**EVELYN PEREZ** is currently serving as coordinator of Latino ministries with the Pacific Southwest Conference.

### CONCLUSION

My brothers and sisters, I leave you with this verse as you are devoted in prayer with a heart of gratitude: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” —HEBREWS 4:16

## FOR SMALL GROUP USE

### *Study Questions*

1. What distractions are currently drawing you away from God?
2. Paul was thankful despite his difficult circumstances.  
What areas in your life are you thankful for, even on your hard days?
3. Verse 6 invites us to have conversations full of grace. How might that be reflected in your everyday encounters or conversations?
4. What opportunities might you have to demonstrate God’s love in action?
5. How can you pray, witness to, and love the people around you?

### *Spiritual Practice*

Spend 10 minutes praying and journaling, asking God to bring you names of people in your life whom you can share God’s love with. Send a message to one of those people, asking how they are doing during this season of life.

PRAYING TO HEAR



*When you pray, don't babble on and on  
as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers  
are answered merely by repeating their words  
again and again. Don't be like them, for your  
Father knows exactly what you need  
even before you ask him!*

MATTHEW 6:7-8





## PRAYING TO HEAR

MATTHEW 6:5-8; MARK 1:35

*When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! —MATTHEW 6:5-8*

*We cannot have deep, healthy relationship with God if we do not listen to God in prayer.*

### PASTOR:

**PETER AHN** is the founding/lead pastor of Metro Community Church in Englewood, New Jersey.

### HOW DO WE PRAY TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE?

- A. When We Make Prayer About God and Not Us
  - Matthew 6:5-6
  - Matthew 6:9-10
- B. When We Embrace Silence
  - Matthew 6:8
  - Mark 1:35

### WHY IS SILENCE SO IMPORTANT IN PRAYER?

- A. In silence we let go, surrendering our will to God's will.
- B. In silence we let go of our agendas, allowing communion with God to become the core of our lives.
- C. In silence we let go, opening ourselves to hear God speak.

## FOR SMALL GROUP USE

### Study Questions

1. Share a time when you heard God's voice while you were praying.
2. If God knows all of our needs even before we ask him, why do we make praying for our needs our main focus in prayer?
3. How do we make the shift to pray primarily to hear God's voice?
4. What is one thing we can pray for you about so that you can have a dynamic prayer life?

### Spiritual Practice

Read Mark 1:35 three times. Then write down your response to this question:  
How can we make the shift to pray primarily to hear God's voice?

PRAYING FOR YIELDED POSTURE



*You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

MATTHEW 5:14-16







## PRAYING FOR A YIELDED POSTURE

MATTHEW 5:1-2

*Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. —MATTHEW 5:1-2, NIV*

*In Christ, God is  
building a new  
community of disciples.  
The foundation of  
this community is  
the yielded posture of  
disciples in prayer.*

### BACKGROUND

- A. Matthew 5 is the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.
- B. Living in community, humility is the foundation.
- C. What life should look like in the kingdom of God. The disciples must live lives that demonstrate the values of the kingdom of heaven. They must be living witnesses that the kingdom way of life is counter-cultural, regardless of the culture from which they come.
- D. “Blessed” is a congratulatory exclamation. It is like saying “O, the blessedness.” Blessedness results from the cultivation of certain characteristics approved by God, and we must develop these attributes now.

### DEFINITION OF YIELD

To admit to be true, to concede; to submit and comply with; giving up a demand, right or claim.

### CHALLENGES TO YIELDING

- A. Societal teaching; cultural norms about yielding
- B. Vulnerability
- C. Sinfulness

### IMPORTANCE OF YIELDING

- A. No longer our power, but God’s
- B. Witness to the world → countercultural

### HOW DO WE CULTIVATE A YIELDED POSTURE IN PRAYER?

- A. Look up to Jesus (Matthew 5:1).
  - 1. Jesus positions himself on the mountainside so all can see him.
  - 2. Keep our eyes on Jesus.
- B. Recognize the authority of Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:1).
  - 1. Brian Blount: “Better righteousness begins from the inside. It is integrally linked to an inferior disposition wholly subservient to God’s will as this will is authoritatively presented in Jesus’s person and ministry”  
*(Then the Whisper Put on Flesh: New Testament Ethics in the African American Context [Nashville: Abingdon, 2001], 71).*



- C. Submit to teaching (Matthew 5:2)
1. The disciples come to Jesus to learn from him. Do we come with a posture of yielding and learning, to be transformed? To come to be taught implies that there is something more for us to gain.
  2. “You have heard that it was said... but I tell you...”

### CONCLUSION

- A. “Yield” can also mean to give in return for labor expended, to produce.
- B. Yielding in prayer produces the fruit of the Spirit.
- C. We do not yield alone. We are a part of a community of disciples yielding to the Lord and to one another. This builds a community that mirrors the kingdom of God.

#### PASTOR:

**SANETTA PONTON** is the associate pastor of justice, advocacy, and compassion at Metro Community Church in Englewood, New Jersey.

### FOR SMALL GROUP USE

#### *Study Questions*

1. In what areas of your life have you found it difficult to yield to God?
2. When you pray, are there areas of your life and heart that you keep from God? If so, what are they? Why?
3. In what ways is yielding counter-cultural?
4. Do you think yielding is necessary for our spiritual formation? Why or why not?
5. What physical posture do you take in prayer? How might this be a metaphor for your relationship with God or how you view God?
6. Have your views changed about a specific doctrine or belief about God or the church? What changed? Why and how?
7. Do you feel God calling you to embrace a new doctrine or belief about him or the church? If you are having a difficult time embracing it, describe why. What might help you to yield to God’s prompting?

#### *Spiritual Practice*

Read Matthew 5:13-16 two times. Write down 2-3 things that stand out to you in the passage. Take a few moments in prayer to ask God to show you where he wants you to use the grace he has given you.

