

Prayer

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 October 2015

Preacher: Chris Thornton

[0 : 00] Good morning. My name's Chris. For those of you who don't know me, I help oversee the community groups here in Watermark. And we're going through a series on what it looks like to be a healthy church.

And last week, Eric introduced really well what it means for us to be a community together, brought together by Jesus' death, which reconciles us, even though we're from so many different backgrounds, and brings us to be one family together, sitting here this morning at this time in October. I think it still is. And it's because Jesus has done that.

And today we're going to look at what does it mean to be a healthy church in praying together. And this is just kind of one of those topics where if I was going to ask you, how's your prayer life? Most people start shuffling rather nervously and then kind of change the topic of conversation. Because it's one of those things as Christians we know we should do, but we kind of seem to have problems doing.

And part of the problem is that we live in a society which tells us that only material things matter. You know, the grades you get, the food you eat, the achievements you get.

[1 : 19] Everything in society tells us, just get stuff. And you know, our whole lives are like this hamster wheel, you know, in Hong Kong, where we're just crazily busy, frenetically trying to produce, trying to be productive, trying to be efficient, trying to do all the things that we think will make a good, satisfying life.

And it may be getting your kids into the right school. It may be just getting to the place where you want into society. But we're so busy, we're like on this treadmill. And you know when you're on the treadmill and you're going along, but the problem is you look over next to you.

And even though you might want to think, I want to get off the treadmill, the person next to you is already going faster than you. And you've got to compete with them. So you've got to keep running faster and faster.

And then the problem is, even once you get to the point you're exhausted and you're just trying to slow down and you just press the slow down button, and then you look over at the other side and you see there's a three-year-old there who's already going far faster than you.

They're doing somersaults on the treadmill and you feel like, I can't slow down because there's so much more that I've got to do. And the problem is the whole of our life in Hong Kong is exhausting and sometimes it's lonely and sometimes it's empty because we think material things are what matters.

[2 : 41] And the problem is with this is that we try and then fill this kind of vacuum, this kind of void inside of us with yoga, with meditation, with charity work, with sex, with vacations, a million things that we think will fill this void which is inside of us.

And it's a void that was only meant to be fulfilled by prayer. Prayer, intimacy, belonging, approval. That's where we were meant to find all of those things. The book of Jeremiah in chapter 2 says this. It's an extraordinary picture. It says, My people have committed two evils.

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and they have dug out wells for themselves, broken wells that can't hold water. And what he's saying in this passage, he's saying we do two things.

One is when we turn away from God and we stop running to God in prayer, what happens is we're like this thirsty, dry people. We've left behind this beautiful well and we've turned to this dry, dusty ditch water.

[3 : 57] And there's heavenly periate on offer and we're just going to the ditch to drink. And if the church is to be the church in this society which is to be different, not on the treadmill, then we've got

to rediscover what it means to pray because otherwise we'll be as thirsty and as parched as everybody else.

So let's think about prayer because your prayer life, and here's a very powerful thing, your prayer life will tell you more about your spiritual health than anything else.

You can be full of so much activity, you could be serving in a million ways, but your prayer life, nobody will see that. It will tell you where your spiritual health is.

Someone once said, a man is what he is on his knees before God and nothing more. That's a painful thing to say.

So we're just going to scratch the surface on this topic today. There's so much we could say, but we're just going to look in three things. We're going to look at what is Christian prayer, why don't we pray, and how does prayer change us?

[5 : 10] Okay? What is Christian prayer, why don't we pray, and how does prayer change us?

Because the thing is, prayer is not uniquely Christian. Buddhists do it, Muslims do it, Hindus do it, in fact, even those who don't believe in God, atheists, at least 20% of them from studies say that at some time in their life, they pray.

But Jesus, in the passage we're looking at today, says there are right ways to pray and there are wrong ways to pray. He says this, verse 7, he says, when you pray, not if you pray, when you pray, do not heap up words like the Gentiles do, like the pagans do, that's the word, for they think they will be heard because of their many words, do not be like them.

Jesus is saying, there's two main ways you can pray. You can pray like a pagan, or you can pray like a Christian. And the difference between them is you pray based, is the basis on which you pray. Pagans pray on the basis of their performance. Christians pray on the basis of their status before God. Pagans pray on the basis of their performance.

They think they'll be heard because of their many words. Christians pray on the basis of their status. Now let's think about it. Probably most of you don't think you're pagan.

[6 : 37] But pagans are extremely religious people. Okay? They're not irreligious, they're religious. They talk religious talk, they serve, they go to community groups, they even pray regularly.

But they're still pagans. Because pagans are users. Okay? If you were a pagan in Jesus' day, you were always anxious because you didn't know if your God was in a good mood or not.

A bit like your boss. You know, is it a grumpy day? Is it a good day? You're never quite sure. And so the pagan, if they wanted to get something out of God, they would have to make sure they did everything right in their prayers.

And so they would list off all the names, the possible names that God might have, just in case they missed one and the pagan God would not be happy with them. And so they would heap up empty phrases by listing every name they could think of.

And here is a prayer slightly adapted from the first century. Okay? So say, Dear Apollos, son of wise and thundering Zeus, big guy in the sky, spirit up above, oh powerful and mighty God, whatever name you like to be called by, please, I've been a good boy, I've given you offerings these last few weeks, and you're an amazingly awesome, great, powerful, wonderful God.

[8 : 02] And if it doesn't trouble you, greatly, I ask humbly you to provide me with the names of all the horses that are going to win this Wednesday at Happy Valley. For your glory, amen.

That's how a pagan would pray. You check it out online, check it out on Google, you'll see. And you could substitute horses for kids' education, for health, for money, for career, any of those things, that's what a pagan would pray like.

And why did they do that? They did that because their relationship with God, they saw it a bit like, you know, a relationship manager at a bank. You know, one UK politician, he was arrested, actually, for fraud.

And he was a church-going guy, but when he got arrested, he became a Christian, and he realized, this is what he said about his relationship with God, he said, God for me was like my bank manager. I spoke to him politely, visited his premises intermittently, occasionally asked him for a small favor or overdraft, death to get myself out of difficulty, thanked him condescendingly for his assistance, kept up the appearance of being one of his reasonably reliable customers, and maintained superficial contact with him on the grounds that one of these days he might come in useful.

[9 : 21] You see, it's a user system. God is just your bank manager. Your relationship manager.

Your account manager. And the reason pagans do it like this is because most of our interactions in

society work like this.

You know, it's about trade and performance. You know, even as kids, you grow up thinking, okay, if I get good grades, my parents will be pleased with me and they will love me. If I fail, they will shout at me.

So I will work hard so they will love me. It's a trade, right? I do this, you do that. We do the same in relationships, in dating. You know, you assess somebody based on whether they're going to fill that social, emotional, spiritual kind of grand canyon that's in your soul.

And if you think they're going to fill that, they're going to satisfy, they're going to make you feel good, then you'll go into the relationship with them. Then you'll perform.

Then you'll love them. Then you'll serve them. As long as they're doing their part. But if your spiritual or social ATM machine, as these people become, malfunctions, if your spouse or your friend or your colleague, whoever you've come into this interaction with, is disrespectful, they're out of order, they don't give you what you want, then you get angry.

[10 : 41] Then you get bitter. Then you get critical. It's no more Mr. Nice Guy. Look at what you've done to me. Because you've performed your side of the deal, but they haven't done theirs.

Your bank has not been a very good bank. And it works the other way too. If you feel like your performance hasn't been very good, you haven't paid off all your debts to the other person, you failed in some way in your relationship, you don't perform up to the standard they're expecting. Then you feel guilty, you feel lacking in confidence, and maybe you blame yourself, you blame others, you justify yourself. And you know, as I go around Hong Kong and I listen to the conversations on the streets, I think pretty much most of our relationships are based on this trade. We're users, we're performers, and as long as we perform okay, then we feel good. If we don't, then we feel terrible. And it's a little wonder that, actually could I get a drink of water?

It's a little wonder that we actually feel, we kind of transfer this onto God because this is how all our other relationships work. Because we expect God to be that trader too.

[12 : 03] And so as long as we come into God and we fulfill our part of the bargain, you know, we're like an account holder in his bank. And we expect him to give us a good service because we've been loyal and we're trusting him as our bank provider.

But you know, if you suddenly realize your account is very low, you've got an exam, your kids are sick, something like that, you come to your manager then for the blessing, for the loan, the spiritual loan that you want from him.

And if you think you've been a good, loyal Christian and he doesn't answer your prayer, then you get angry. If you've asked him to help you with the exam but you fail your exam, then it's like, God, what were you doing?

I can't believe you let me down in this one and we're angry, critical, and we're bitter. Or if you realize you actually haven't been a very good customer of God's recently, then you think if he doesn't answer your prayer, then maybe it's because I wasn't good enough.

Maybe he's punishing me because I didn't kind of give enough to him. I haven't been loyal enough. Maybe he won't listen to me because of what I've done. And we're not confident in prayer.

[13 : 22] And Jesus says that's how pagans think. And he says, don't be like them. And the reason, it sounds nice, but you know, every single one of us in this room, I can guarantee at some point or other you're a pagan.

How do I know? Because I am one. Because I am one. Because we're hardwired and the whole of society is telling us like this. And Jesus is trying to come to us and say there's a different way you don't come to God based on your performance.

performance. Because think about it, frankly, your performance has been shocking. Your spiritual performance before God is so bad that no bank would ever have you.

Because mine is too. And if you were listed on the heavenly stock market, nobody would invest in you. Because it's a bad investment.

But the thing is, we are the ones who make up the church. And as a church, we don't come because of our great performance. Don't be like the pagans. He says this, don't you know your father knows what you need before you ask him?

[14 : 37] Pray then like this, our father in heaven. Christian prayer comes not on the basis of your performance, but it comes on the basis of your status as a child of a living God.

He is your father, not your bank manager, your account. You're not an account holder. And this is so radical because he could have said, our king, our creator, and he is.

And every other religion would be very happy with you doing that. But if he's your king, then he can punish you for your poor performance. He can throw you out of his kingdom. But a father, a good father, is not going to throw you out of his family.

And he says this. This is not, as Alfie was saying, this is not some distant father. It's a relationship with someone who knows you. He knows you. He knows, I don't know what's gone on with you this week.

He does. I don't know what your fears are. He does. I don't know what your darkest, deepest secrets are. He does. He knows what's happened, what your complaints are, what your hopes are, what your dreams are.

[15:48] He knows them. He knows them. He knows them. And many of us have grown up in families with fathers that we wanted to be, to have known us, but they were more like our relationship manager at the bank because all they would do, they would dispense cash to us.

They would give us gifts. They would give us the good education. And we wanted relationship. We wanted them to know us. And they never did. And this is aching in our heart to be known.

And those of you who have had good fathers will know what an amazing thing it is to have somebody who knows you, who knows what you need, and who cares for you.

Because we want relationship. God doesn't, when you come to God in prayer, God doesn't kind of go through his records and say, oh yes, I remember what your issues are. You can, if you're an account holder and you go to your finance manager or whatever and you say, listen, I've got some real issues with my sex life at the moment, they're going to freak out.

But, when you go to your father who knows everything that's going on with you, he's not going to freak out. It's amazing.

[17:10] So, we don't come to God as an ATM machine. We don't come to God as someone who is just there to distribute some blessings to make our life easier.

You come as a child who always has the ear of his father. Think about it. Who could go to the president of the United States at three o'clock in the morning and ask him to take you to the bathroom?

Can any of you do that? I suggest you might get arrested. But his child could. Only his child could. Because a child has an intimate relationship and the father knows them. In John chapter one, it says, those who received Jesus, he gave them the right to become children of God.

Gave them the right to become children of God. How do you become a child of God? You don't become a child based on your performance. You become a child based on Christ's performance. Christ died on the cross so that you might be adopted into his family and be, know that status that you don't have to perform anymore.

[18:28] You are his child. You are in the royal family. You are in his family. And you know with adopted children, have you noticed, some of you have got adopted children, but you know with adopted children, I don't see the parents treating adopted children and biological children differently.

I see them treating them with equal value, with listening to them with equal concern and love. Now think about this. Jesus is God's son, his true son.

We are adopted sons and daughters. So the way Jesus, God the Father looks at Jesus is the way that he looks at you and me.

And that means he's delighted. He's pleased. And so Matthew 7 says, if you who are evil know how to give good gifts, if you're a mother or father, don't you want to give your children the best?

If you're evil and you know how to do that, then how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? How much more will God, is he longing to give you good gifts?

[19:48] And the thing is this, if your Father doesn't give you what you want, if he doesn't give you what you want, if you're an account holder, you'll be angry.

But if you know that your Father is good, then you can trust him. You can trust him. And in the Bible, it says this. It says, in Romans chapter 8, it says, if God, who gave his only son for you, if he was willing to give his only son for you, he wouldn't spare him, he paid the ultimate cost for you, then how much more will he give you everything that you need?

Graciously pouring out all the things that you need. If he's already given everything, the most precious thing to him, he's not going to hand back. And you know, sometimes, I didn't get, when I was a kid, I wanted to watch TV in my room.

But my parents wouldn't allow me to have a TV in my room. I'm so glad, looking back, that they didn't allow me to have a TV in my room. Because I did so many other things, and I would have been probably seriously messed up.

Some of you may think I already am, but... But my father knew what I needed. Sometimes he knows more than I know what I need, because he can see the big picture.

[21 : 13] If you know he's your father, you can trust him when he doesn't answer as well. So that's Christian prayer. Christian prayer starts with knowing God as your father.

It starts with God. It doesn't... You see the Lord's Prayer. You see the first half of the Lord's Prayer. There's nothing to do with you. Did you notice that? Nothing to do with you. First half, you've got to go halfway through before you start asking for your daily bread.

Why? Because it's all about him as a father. So when you come in prayer, if you realize who he is, that changes everything about the way you pray. But if you're just based on your performance, you'll be like a manipulative teenager who's asking for money from their parents, and you know the ways to try and get them to do that.

So do you come to God on what basis? Are you a pagan? Are you an account holder? Or are you a child of a God who loves you? That's Christian prayer.

Now let's think about it. Sounds great. Why don't we pray then? Why don't we pray? I mean, if God's so good, why don't we pray? And you know, normally the first reason I give is because I'm too busy.

[22 : 24] But that's blatantly not true. We're busy. Hong Kong is busy. But you know, I find it extraordinary in Hong Kong that extremely busy people can find time to watch a rugby match at incredibly early hours in the morning.

It's extraordinary. They have time to go on Facebook. I don't know how they do it. They have time to go to the toilet. They have time to eat. Okay? Sometimes you might skip a meal. Sometimes you might hold your pee.

But you know, later on, you will find time. Why? Because you know you need to. And maybe because you want to. But prayer, when you say, our Father, that says, I'm a child.

But my problem is, I think I'm an adult. Okay? I can manage life by myself. I have a driving license. And prayer is for those moments in life when you're driving along.

You've taken your eye off the road. You're heading towards the granny who's just crossing the pedestrian crossing. And you're out of control. And you cry, Help! God puts his hand on the steering wheel. Swerves the wheel so you miss the granny.

[23 : 30] And then afterwards, you breathe a sigh of relief. And then you say, Thanks God. Now leave it to me. I can cope with the rest. That's the way we do prayer because we think we're adults. We're self-sufficient.

We can do it. And if you've ever driven in a car with a man who's got lost, you know he could be on his way to Honolulu but he won't admit that he's lost until he's stuck in some field somewhere.

And then maybe finally he'll say, Okay, I need help. Right? But that's what we're like in prayer. What stops me from asking? It's pride. It's self-sufficiency and it's actually childish.

Not childlike. It's childish. Because I'm so adult and grown up that I think I can sort out the world. And because you know when you become an adult you have responsibilities. You have got to take care of your kids.

You've got to take care of those deadlines, of those targets you've got to meet. You've got exams. You've got a whole host of pressures on you and you think, I'm doing well. I can cope with it. I can manage it.

[24 : 30] And so we're driving along. We're doing fine. But you know, sometimes I just feel like I mess up. I don't always cope with my responsibilities.

I let my family down sometimes. I say things. I do things. And I feel the pressure on my shoulders and the burden which is weighing me down. And then maybe I come to church and hope that God can just kind of swerve me back onto the path so that I can just get back on that treadmill again of life.

So I can get back and stay in the driving seat in life. And that's how I view prayer. You see, you know what I do? The way I do this kind of self-sufficiency, see, the other day I needed a book for an assignment I was doing.

I ordered it and then I discovered it's not going to arrive until after I need it. So what do I do? I stress. And then I plan. Okay? Then I research all the other options and ways I can get the book. And I found nothing. I couldn't get this book anywhere. So I talk to some other people about how I can get the book. And then still nothing. So I stress a little more. And then I take some time out just to de-stress a little bit before I go back to stressing again.

[25 : 42] Okay? And finally, when I'm getting absolutely nowhere, then I say, God, help me. And that's the way most of us do prayer. Right?

How much stress could I have avoided if right at the beginning of the process I knew that I was a child, I'd been less childish and I'd said, I'd taken it to my father in prayer, and I'd said, Father, you know my need.

Help! But I know that you are my father, you're my good father, you've got this one in your control, I can trust you, so I just lay this before you. Now I can go about all the rest of the things, ringing around, trying to find things, but with a totally different attitude because I know my father's in control.

But, I don't do that because I'm an adult. But I'm childish. not childlike. The hymn says, Oh, what peace we often forfeit.

Oh, what needless pain we bear. All because we will not carry everything to God in prayer. that is so true. as I look around your lives and my lives, I can tell you that is true.

[26 : 58] You can tell when I am prayerless because I am stressed. You can tell when I'm prayerless because I'm critical. You can tell when I'm prayerless because I'm complaining. The reason we don't pray is we're more childish than childlike.

You know, you don't see your three-year-old saying, I've checked off my grocery list and I've just been around five supermarkets and I couldn't find anything for lunch. And so, finally, after I got a bit stressed for a while, I thought, well, maybe mom's got something for lunch.

Does your three-year-old do that? Isn't that insane? But you think you're an adult. But that's an account holder. That's how an account holder, that's how a pagan prays, not a child.

Paul Miller, in an excellent book, I think there's a copy outside, he says this. He says, less mature Christians have little need to pray. When they look at their hearts, which they rarely do, they seldom see jealousy.

They are barely aware of their impatience. Instead, they're frustrated by all the slow people they keep running into. He's watching me going into Central, you know. Less mature Christians are quick to give advice.

[28 : 09] There's no complexity in their worlds because the answers are simple. Just do what I say and life will be easy. Surprisingly, mature Christians feel less mature on the inside.

When they hear Jesus say, apart from me, you can do nothing, they nod in agreement. Mature Christians are keenly aware they can't raise their kids. It's a no-brainer. Even if they're perfect parents, they still can't get inside their kids' hearts.

That's why strong Christians pray more. Husbands, wives, do you think you can really change your spouse?

Do you think you can really be the spouse you want to be without prayer? Students, do you think you can really honour God with your studies and yet not pray?

Church, do you think we can really be the church God wants us to do, to be and to just have a hive of activity but not pray?

[29 : 15] It's insane because it's like adults trying to control the world but actually the world is not in our control, it's in our Father's control. And if we're to be anything different than the rest of the world around us, if we're to not be on this treadmill and we can be on a Christian treadmill of doing a thousand activities but your activity is meaningless if you're not coming to God in prayer and saying, Father, we need you.

If you would spend ten unproductive minutes every day in prayer, you'd see the long-term effects produced far more than you could ever do in those ten minutes.

I guarantee it. That's why we don't pray. Because we're self-sufficient. We don't think we need to. Prayer is talking to our Father.

It's not our performance. It doesn't matter what you've done this week. You can come to Him.

Thirdly, prayer changes us. How does prayer change us?

At the heart of every spiritual revival that has ever taken place in the history of the world has been prayer. Just check it out in the history books. everyone.

[30 : 35] Because prayer changes your perspective on life. You see, what I tend to do is I shrink my world down to my needs, my desires, my wants.

And the world becomes this very narrow focus. But did you see in that prayer, it says, Jesus says, our Father. Did you see that? He didn't say, my Father.

He said, our Father. Our, that is plural. That means the world, the God who you are speaking to is a God who has brought us together in a family.

We are part of His family together. That means the world is not revolving just around you. It's not you, just you and God. It's us together with our Father.

But what we do is we think actually the whole of church is centered down around me. My relationship with God is just centered down around me.

[31 : 34] Did you ever see that movie, Honey, I Shrunk the Kids? Anybody see that movie? Okay, if you didn't see it, it's basically a movie about this kind of inventor father that invents a shrink ray and it kind of accidentally goes off and his kids and his neighbor's kids get shrunk down to a quarter of an inch.

And what happens is suddenly they're now a quarter of an inch and the ants are now like elephants and the bees are now like airplanes and the grass is now like a rainforest.

And suddenly all these things have become huge in their eyes. That's what we do with our worlds because when you shrink it down to just you, your world has just narrowed down to this tiny little thing and everything seems massive.

But what prayer does, prayer opens you up to see our father in heaven. He's got this bigger perspective, this heavenly perspective and it's one which is not just about you but it's about all of us here.

And prayer helps you to see people when you would only ever see your issues before. I was walking to work last week and in front of me there was a woman sweeping the stairs at the top and just kind of coming up to her there was another woman kind of dragging her kid behind her and as she saw the woman sweeping in front of her she started shouting at her to get out of the way and she just abused her and demeaned her completely and then just dragged her child on, ran past and walked on.

[33 : 11] And I walked up the stairs afterwards, I looked at this cleaner lady and she was just crushed. You could just see it written over her face. Devastated. And I said something comforting to her and I walked on but I was furious at that other woman and for ten minutes my mind was thinking what a, well I won't say what I was thinking.

This is being recorded. You can pray but pray for me afterwards. But as I walked along then suddenly I remembered I'm supposed to be speaking on prayer and this little voice came into my mind which said have you prayed for her?

And my instant reaction was for her? And then I thought well because I'm preaching I guess I better try and practice what I'm preaching. So, so I prayed for her and suddenly and I prayed our father, father just and then suddenly I realized that woman doesn't know her heavenly father.

Her whole life is based on performance. Her performance and other people's performance. if she knew her father just how much would that transform that angry critical bitter person.

And I stood and I changed from seeing just with anger to seeing her with compassion. She needs to know our father. And just think how many of the things would you change if suddenly you began to start praying for this church?

[34 : 55] You began to start praying for the people in your community group? You began to start praying for the people around you? Our father, would they know you as father? And the people who just irritate you, the things which have just driven you mad, suddenly you go from being a quarter of an inch to suddenly seeing above the, the, the, the, the, just the normal stuff of life.

You begin to get perspective and it changes you. And you begin to change with having more compassion. You begin to see people as you never saw them before.

But you see, prayerless people complain all the time. How do I know because I do it? Prayerless people are critical all the time. How do I know because I am?

Prayerless people only see the problems. And when they pray, they only ever pray for their issues. But the thing is, let's imagine you go into your community group and you have a problem and you say, or somebody has a problem and they say, oh, my little Johnny, he's been struggling at school, I need you to pray for him.

What do we normally do? We say, okay, Lord, please make his problems better, amen. But what if you began to pray our father so you began to see they need to know God as father in this.

[36 : 15] So Lord, you know their problems, you know their needs, you know their fears, you know their struggles, you're a good father and I pray for that situation, I pray that they would know you in that, but even more than that, with their stress, would they know that you are their father who cares for them because that's what they need in this situation.

We pray that you would answer, we pray that you would give them that situation, but even if you don't, would they know that you are good in this situation? Because when you pray like that, do you see, the world is not just about your problems, it's about knowing him, it's about knowing the God who loves you.

What this church needs more than anything else is not more programs. What this church needs is not greater leaders, greater sermons, it's not greater kids program, it's not all those other things, great though those are.

The thing which this church needs more than anything else is that we would know God as our father. And the only way that we will know God as our father is if we come to him in prayer.

And if you see that we need each other to come to God for each other in prayer. So let me ask you, this week, what have you complained about?

[37 : 54] What have you been critical of? What have you been stressed about? Have you narrowed your world down?

And have you prayed? Have you prayed? Have you not just prayed for a solution, but have you prayed that you would know and that other people would know your father?

The only way that you can stop being a pagan is to know the father. The only way that we can know our father is to pray. We keep forgetting that.

We keep needing other people to remind us. So how are you going to change? I want you to think for a minute because it's nice to talk about prayer, but you know, in the practical things of life, all the best intentions to pray come to nothing.

You've got a plan to pray. You've got to put it in your calendar. You've got to put it in your diary.

You've got to make time like you do with your family. We have spaces before the service.

[39 : 08] We have people who come to pray. Do you see how much this church needs us to pray?

Your community group. Do you just go to your community group and just turn up, or have you actually been praying for the people there?

Will you set aside time to pray? For the leadership. For all the things which are going to happen in our lives, and happen in our life as a church, will you pray?

Will you put it in your diary? Will you make time? Or are you too productive? Are you too adult? Are you too self-sufficient to do that? We have a couple of great books outside.

There's some great books on prayer. There's one here by Tim Keller. Really thorough, just understanding what prayer is. There's another one here outside.

You can go outside on the bookstore. The problem with recommending books to pray, about learning to pray, is that you read the book and then you don't pray.

[40 : 18] Done that? The problem is when we start coming to community group and say, let's have a time of prayer, is we spend 35 minutes talking about what we're going to pray about and then 3 minutes praying.

You done that? Why? Because we're self-sufficient. Because we don't really think we need it. But our Father is longing to hear us and He wants you and us and as a church to say, our Father.

And that's a spiritually healthy church. not a church which has great activities, great sermons, all those other things. It's a church which can say, we need you.

We need you. And God will place us in positions where we have to cry like a child, Father, we need you.

Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[41 : 26] Maybe you just want to stop for a minute. And I want you to think, do I treat God, am I just an account holder with Him? Am I just an account holder with Him?

Do I treat Him as like some spiritual ATM that I can just cash in on occasionally? I want you to be real. And if you think, oh, my prayer life sucks, I've been terrible, just know the amazing thing is we don't come to our Father on the basis of our performance.

We come to Him on the basis of His goodness. That's why we start with Him in prayer, not start with ourselves. So stop for a moment.

What are you going to do? What's your next step this week? How are you going to be too busy to pray? How are you going to change?

Do you want to change? Father, this spiritual vacuum inside of us that we fill with so many other things is meant to be filled by you.

[42 : 57] It's meant to be filled by you. I pray that we would constantly remember, remind each other, remind ourselves that in the midst of life when we forget who you are, we try and be self-sufficient.

We remember that we need you. And that we turn to you, not just when we have to, but we turn to you because we want to have that relationship with you.

Change us, Lord. Change us, Lord, as a church. Help us not be pagans, but to become people who live as children of yours.

In your name. Amen.