

Practicing the Presence of God

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Date: 29 May 2022

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- [0 : 00] Glad you're here. Never know who's going to come on a holiday weekend, so we're grateful for those that are here. We know others are traveling with family and such and celebrating this good weekend when we remember our folks who have laid their lives down.
- There are folks who have given their lives for us, and so we're grateful for that. So turn with me to Ecclesiastes chapter 5. Ecclesiastes you'll find pretty easily.
- It is after the Psalms and after the Proverbs. It's right there. It's a little book, but you can find the Psalms. Just go over a couple of books. Ecclesiastes chapter 5.
- Very unique text this morning. He is actually focusing on God, and instead of talking about wisdom versus foolishness, which he still does, instead here he is giving us instruction, which he doesn't tend to do.
- Here he's saying guard your steps. Come to the house. Listen to him. Don't speak too much, et cetera, et cetera. So he has a lot of instruction in this one.
- [1 : 11] So it's quite unique for Ecclesiastes. So I think we'll enjoy that. So let me read, and then we'll pray, and then we'll dig in.
- If you would like, and if you can, stand in honor of the reading of God's word. Ecclesiastes 5. Guard your steps whenever you go to the house of God.
- To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.
- Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God.
- For God is in heaven, and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.
- [2 : 19] When or whenever you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it. For he has no pleasure in fools.
- Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake.
- Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands? For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity.
- But God is the one you must fear. Father, so, reads his word.
- Let's pray. Father, we pray, oh Father, that you would show us your word.
- [3 : 32] Help us to see your words. Make us, Father, walk in the path of your commandments, for we delight in the path.
- Incline our heart to your testimonies and not to selfish gain. Turn away our eyes from looking at vanity and revive us in your ways.
- Establish our hearts that we might fear you. Turn away our reproach which we dread, for your ordinances are good.

Behold, we long for your precepts. Revive us through your righteousness. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. So, this study this week, let me get my drink of water first.

The study this week reminded me, as I'm looking at this, reminded me of a book I read a long, long time ago. It's called The Practice of the Presence of God.

[4 : 44] It's not a very big book. Very small book. It wasn't even written by Brother Lawrence. It is written based on the gathering of his letters and his conversations with another Christian friend, a vicar, a pastor, who recorded all of this.

Brother Lawrence was not famous. He was a barefooted dishwasher in a monastery in Paris.

He learned to practice the presence of God amidst the clatter and clutter of the kitchen. He's known for simplicity and humility.

And yet, his influence was quite profound with everyone he met. Because of the way he walked with God, you could tell.

People could tell something different about this guy. And they wanted to know more. So, thus came this little booklet. I read way back.

[5 : 59] It rang with my heart. Clicked. Resonated. Yeah. It's like, yeah, that's what I want. I want to walk with God.

I want to know God. I want to have a relationship with God. And that's what this is all about. Let me just read a couple of excerpts. In order to form a habit of conversing with God continually and referring all we do to him, we must first apply to him some diligence.

But that after a little care, we should find his love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty. So, it's like getting a train going, right? Get the train.

Once the train's gone. It takes a little diligence to get it going. That we ought to act with God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to him frankly and plainly and imploring his assistance in our affairs just as they happen.

That there needed neither art nor science for going to God, but only a heart resolutely determined to apply itself to nothing but him or for his sake and to love him only.

[7 : 25] The most excellent method he had found of going to God was that of doing our common business. So, he would talk about washing dishes.

And of course, it was a kind of job that was routine and he didn't have to apply a lot of mind strength to. He could commune with God as he did that.

As there's clatter and stuff going on behind him. Worth a read. But that's what reminded me of our text today.

His one desire was a relationship with God. To be constantly aware of God's presence. To walk in his presence. To practice the presence of God.

All of life is a walk with Christ. And all of life is worship. All that we do. All of our thoughts.

[8 : 37] All of our words. All of our work. Now, it doesn't mean we're 100% focused on God as we have work to do. As we can, right?

We have to do our work. And that has to take some attention. But there's a spirit of walking with God through the whole thing. Jesus talked about worship.

He met a woman in Samaria. Remember? This Samaritan woman. And turned the conversation to worship. Very interesting.

And Jesus said to her about worship. Because she was wanting to debate. He started to get a little personal with her. So she wanted to change the subject to something that wasn't spotlight on her.

Right? So she wanted to talk about worship. And where do you worship? The Jews say in Jerusalem. And we worship here in Samaria. Right? Where's the right place to worship? And Jesus said, the hour is coming and already is.

[9 : 39] Right? When true worship is not about a place. Not on this mountain. Not on that mountain. True worshipers will worship in spirit and in truth.

That's what God is seeking. Not a geographical worship. But a worship of integrity. And so here we come in Ecclesiastes 5.

That's going to talk about worship. Coming to God and making promises to God. Talking to God. Coming to God. Listening to God. Worship. And he's going to describe wise and foolish.

So I thought it would be helpful if we started with just thinking about what is false worship. What is worship that is not in spirit and in truth?

What is worship that's rather in folly and futility? So Jesus said in Matthew 15, he talked about what vain worship was.

[10 : 38] Empty worship. They worship me in vain. They worship me in emptiness. Why? He says, men, and he quotes Isaiah. He's saying, men honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

That's empty worship. It's external. It's a performance. It's just saying the words, but the heart's not there. It's not meaningful. It's not sincere. It's just ritual.

It's external. It's without thought. Paul calls this a form of godliness. They have an external form of godliness. Like Jesus said, they're like these tombs that are all decorated on the outside, but it's dead inside.

They have a form. They go through the right motions. They have a form of godliness. Looks like godliness, but they deny its power. They don't employ its power.

It's just outward. And actually, it's about themselves. Much worship that is empty, much worship that is false and in folly is worship that's about my experience.

[11 : 47] That's not worship. That's about me. That's about what I want, what I experience. That's not worship. Worship is about God. It's always about God.

So here in Ecclesiastes 5, he mentions the fool three times in relation to coming to God, talking to God. He mentions the fool in verse 1.

He talks about a sacrifice of fools. Verse 3, he talks about the fool who has many words versus few words. And in verse 4, he talks about a fool who makes a vow to God but delays in fulfilling it, puts it off.

That's a fool. So he's revealing foolish worship and at the same time instructing us what is right to do, what is true worship, what is wise.

But as you read this text, it is encouraging in all of the texts of Ecclesiastes. This one seems a bit more hopeful, doesn't it? He seems a little bit more God-focused instead of just, you know, oh, this is vain and this is vain.

[12 : 51] Why bother? You know, the whole thing. This one is more like, okay, no, do these things. A little more instructive. Yet as you read it, is it not a bit restrictive? Is that all there is to worship?

You know, that's... So I think, as always with Ecclesiastes, we must read him with thoughtfulness. We have to read him with a broader scripture in mind.

Has he said it all? And we have found he hasn't said it all. He seems to be incomplete in his wisdom. So we're going to look at it that way. So what's a true worshiper?

Jesus says a true worshiper is one who comes to God in spirit and in truth. How do we practice the presence of God?

What is worship in spirit and in truth? And how can we safeguard our own worship or relationship with God that it might be genuine and meaningful and not fall into this tendency of going through motions and doing externals, which we can easily do.

[14 : 04] That's just natural if we're not thinking, if we're just going through things, right? And we don't want that. So how do we safeguard that? Well, he talks about two wins. Verse one, when you go to the house of God.

Verse four, when you vow a vow to God. Okay? Two different situations. So how do we do it? Two ways.

One, when you are going to God's house, go to listen, not talk. Go to get from him, not tell him something.

Okay? And then secondly, in verse four to seven, when you make a vow, when you make a promise to God. Yeah?

He has some different things to say about vows. He actually says, better not to vow than to vow and not keep it. Vows are very serious things.

[15 : 02] What he ends up saying is fear God. Bottom line, verse seven, fear God. Whatever you do, fear God. That's really the point of this whole text.

Whether you're going to his house, whether you're speaking to him, whether you're talking about him, whatever you do, practice the presence of God. Be aware of who he is.

A conscious, intentional walk that considers and treats him as who he is. So when you come into his house, whose house is it?

Oh, it's our church. We call it a house. We don't call it a church. Little log church is the people that make up. Right?

In this community. This is a chapel. Or a house. So. So let's look at those two things.

[16 : 01] So first of all, first application, verses one to three. Whenever you come to the house of God. The application, I would put it this way. Walk with the Father with conscious intention to hear first.

So practice the presence, right? So walk with the Father with a conscious intention to listen first. Quick to hear, slow to speak.

Yeah? It's a good principle for all of us, right? But not to talk to him first, but to listen to him first. We're not comfortable with that. We talk about silence.

We don't like silence because it, you know. It's like, then you start thinking. And thinking leads to anxieties and, you know, we don't know how to handle silence.

We don't know. I remember on my sabbatical, my first sabbatical back way back, 2012. That was one of my goals was to go and try to be still and know he's God, right?

[17 : 07] To try to listen. And as I'm doing that, someone kept talking the whole time. I mean, this voice would just be like interrupting. I'm like, shut up. I'm trying to listen.

I didn't know how to do it. Because we're always, you know, getting the car turned radio or turned the thing on. Or we come home and turn something on.

Or we got to look at our phone. Or, you know, we don't know how to do it. It's always busy and noisy. Besides, when it's real quiet, it's kind of like, we're going to have a time of silence at the end of the service.

Okay? So get nervous now. And I'll tell you, our natural response will be, okay, how long is this going to go on? Because we just don't know how to do it.

It's not, I'm not being critical. I'm just saying, we're not good at this. So, walk with the Father with conscious intention to listen first.

[18 : 09] So he says, when you go, verse 1, our steps. Guard your steps. Protect your steps. Watch your steps. Take care as you go to God's house.

So he's talking about coming to public worship. When you go to God's house, when you go to worship God at his house, at a designated place that God has set apart. Right?

You're going to his house. Remember, it's his house. Tread carefully. Remember whose house it is. As you approach the house of God.

Jesus had a zeal for the house of God. Remember? When in the outer court of the temple, they were selling stuff.

Right? It just made it convenient for people to, you know, get their lamb and their dove and whatever, you know. Little interest price going up on that. But, you know, because you didn't have the diligence to get your own lamb or whatever.

[19 : 09] You could just get it there. Pay a little interest. I remember Jesus took out the whip and turned over the tables and drove everybody out. How dare you treat the Father's house, which is a house of prayer, like a robber's den.

Because he knew they're just doing it to make money. Convey it. No, it's for money. It's not about worship at that point.

It's about convenience. So Jesus had a zeal. That house is separate. That house is not a common house. That is a holy place. It has one use.

The worship and fellowship of God. Now, ours has more uses than that. But our chapel is dedicated to God.

We will not let certain events go on here that are in conflict with that. We're not a community house. We will bring in certain people as long as they're, you know, they don't have to be agreeing with all our statement of faith.

[20 : 26] But they should not be in conflict. Remember, we worked through the bylaws with that kind of weird talking about that stuff. It's like, how do we do that? How do we think about that? This is, we're intentional.

Right? So, so it's a holy place. So how do you do that? How do you prepare? How do you guard your steps on the way to the house?

How do you do that? Well, you prepare. You prepare yourself. You, you, you, instead of just being careless and thoughtless and just showing up, you know, I give it some thought beforehand.

You know, we, we try to help with that by, we send out a prep to worship, you know, email earlier in the week so that if you want, especially if you have kids, you're preparing the kids for their experience in worship.

And you're showing them what, oh, this is what we're going to be doing. This is what we're going to, and if I don't know the song, we can learn the song, right? And that kind of thing. But we're thinking ahead. But it's not so much as what, what's on the bulletin is as I'm preparing my heart and my mind for that day.

[21 : 38] I'm not just showing up. Granted, there are weeks and times where, you know, it's hectic and crazy and we show up and, gosh, I haven't even prepared for this.

There's weeks when I forget to bring the offering, right? Dan's standing there holding the plate and I'm going, I forgot. Sorry, I forgot. But it's not intentional.

It's just like, oh, man, I got so busy, I forgot to write the check. So it's thinking ahead for those things, not just showing up and doing it. Intentional.

So why do we go to God's house? He says in verse, the end of verse one, so guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To do what? Why? Why do we guard? So that we can listen. Draw near to listen rather than offer the sacrifice of fools.

So we draw near to listen, to hear from God. Not just to get all our stuff out, but to hear from him first. Because it's not about me. It's about him.

[22 : 42] We say that little thing, little, what do we call it? A motto? I don't know. A little saying we say. It's good to be in the Lord's house. On the Lord's day.

With the Lord's people. I knew there was a third one. Because it's all about the Lord. It's about the Lord, not about me. That's just a quick little reminder. Because we're aware that no matter how much you might prepare for the week, you can still have a Sunday morning that's just...

And I forget when I get here. I know I got to get here. Just a quick reminder. Just a real focus. This is what it's about. I need to intentionally think about what we're doing.

Instead of picking up the hymnal and going, oh, we're doing that song. Oh, man. I don't know about that song. It is well. That's kind of depressing. Why don't we sing something lively? Instead of doing that, we're looking at, well, wait a minute.

Why did we pick it as well? Oh, because we're talking about Christ's power in our sufferings. Okay. Yeah, that worked. Yeah, sometimes I need to sing that kind of song. And sometimes that song is extremely applicable to me and moving to me and going, yeah, I'm so glad we sang that song.

[23 : 58] I don't sing it every week. Unless I have 12 years of depression, then I might want to sing it every week. But that's one thing you notice when you're depressed is not a lot of churches want to sing about being depressed.

Yet the psalms are full of songs of depression. I remember being told once, you know, when I was picking some songs and the worship leader said, you pick dark stuff.

Like, what are you talking about dark stuff? Well, they're kind of sad and they're not lively. Like, well, are you always lively your whole life? Does God always make you feel lively?

No, but we shouldn't. Why? How about real life? How about what psalms does? So your motive is to glisten in contrast to the sacrifice of fools.

So in other words, a fool is somebody who's not listening. We've heard the reference to a fool three times already in Ecclesiastes. Chapter 2 talked about the fool is the one who walks in darkness.

[25 : 07] He doesn't know what's going on. In chapter 4, he's the one that folds his hands instead of work, right? He's lazy. In chapter 4, 13, he's the one, he's that wise king that no longer listens to advice.

No, he's not, excuse me, not the wise king. He's the old foolish king who no longer listens to advice. So he doesn't listen. He's not teachable. He's a solo, lone wolf kind of guy.

So it's thoughtless. So your motive is to come to listen. It's about him not come carelessly and thoughtlessly. So then he gets to your words, verse 2.

So we're coming to the house. What about our words? Do we speak at all? We come to listen. That's the big thing. But do we speak? Well, yeah, you do speak. We do pray. We do worship.

We do express things to God. Of course we do. So how, verse 2, be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God.

[26 : 09] For God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few. For the dream comes with much business and a fool's voice with many words. Notice how many times he talks about words and mouth and voice.

It's all through here. Do not be rash with your mouth. Let your words be few. So when you first read verse 2, you know, don't be rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, because God's in heaven and you're way down here.

It almost sounds like, so don't bug him. You know, he's kind of busy. So keep your words few. When you get your opportunity before the sovereign God, just keep it to a point and then get out of there.

That's how I read it the first time. I'm sorry. And it might be part of his view of God, this Solomon-like or fallen Solomon-like person. It almost sounds like that.

But I think with a bigger view, your God is in heaven. I think it's more, not how many words you say, and it's certainly not about you're not welcome in his presence.

[27 : 26] And it's certainly not he's too busy as if, you know, he's got limited capacity. He's just God, right? As if he's one of us. But rather, who are you talking to?

Who are you talking to? Right? So come intentionally. Have your words be deliberate. Now, we're not talking about crisis, psalm-like prayers.

Okay? Where I'm in a crisis, I just got to cry out to Jesus. I got to cry out to Jesus. I don't think we're talking about it. We're talking about regular times of prayer, regular times of worship.

Let those be deliberate. Let those be planned. Let those be, not that they can't be spontaneous, but overall, be deliberate.

Don't be casual. I think of, and James brought it up this morning in class, Isaiah 6. Anybody know what happens in Isaiah 6?

[28 : 28] Isaiah has a vision of God. Remember, he sees God on his throne, and he sees all these magnificent things. He sees the seraphim and all this. And what does Isaiah do?

What does he do? He falls on his face. They're like, oh, not casual anymore. And all of a sudden, he's very, very aware of who he is.

Because when we see who God is accurately, we are very clear on who we are. See, we get our definition of ourselves in relation to him, not the other way around. He defines us.

And when we see who he is, we're very aware of who he is. Okay, Isaiah, the prophet, says, my lips are unclean. I, so God being the merciful God takes, you know, one of the seraphim flows over and touches his lip with a burning coal.

That had to, you know, be a nice experience. I cleaned your lips. Now you can speak for me. Now you can speak for me. So, yeah, you don't deserve to be here, but I'm going to use you.

[29 : 35] Because I purify you and I make you. And I, anyway. What's it like? I just bring that up because thinking about practicing the presence of God. So what kind of God are we talking to when we talk to him?

Is he my friend? Yes. Is Jesus ever scary? Yes. Is Jesus kind?

Almost always kind and gracious. But he's also very scary sometimes. Now, not in a, more like a, you know, all of a sudden he calms the sea and we're realizing, who is this?

This is God. When John talks about his vision in Revelation chapter 1, remember he hears the voice and he turns around to see the voice that was speaking to me.

And he turns around and what? His first words were, dead man I am. I just saw God. I'm dead. Falls on his face, right?

[30 : 43] And it's Jesus who comes over and, hey, hey, hey, John, remember me? Yeah, you don't look the same. Okay, yeah. Remember me? We're okay. You're okay. Remember the song, what will we do when we, I can only imagine, right?

Am I going to, am I going to dance for you, Jesus? Am I going to fall on my knees? I'm thinking knees first, then dancing. That's just, to me, that's, that's what I'm going to do anyway, as far as I know.

I can only imagine, of course, but. Oh, got it. Oh, yeah. Oh, see what you did there, wordsmith. I want to see the dancing.

No, you don't. No, you don't. Yeah. Yeah, no, no, I do that for, only for private parties. Yeah. Pulling on ladders. Oh.

Wow. All right. So let your words be few, he says at the end of verse two. Not hasty, right?

[31 : 47] Not rushed, not rash. Let your words be few, deliberate. And then he gives this parable, verse three. For a dream comes with much business and a fool's voice with many words.

Got it? I mean, that's clear, right? Everybody's going, huh? What in the world is he talking about? What's a dream? So we have a long discussion in class about the dream because we Americans think about the American dream and we think about dream as being, you know, this, this great future thing.

And probably all he means is literal dream. You know, when you sleep. You know, when you sleep. So think about a dream that you, when you dream in your sleep, do you control that dream?

Nope. Do you plan it? Can you manipulate it? So what's the use? It's kind of pointless. Unless it's a dream given you by God.

So in scripture, you have some who do have dreams from God, right? They're called prophets. And they're not very often. They're quite rare.

[32 : 59] So we're not talking about that kind of dream. We're just talking about common dream. When you have a dream, you kind of wake up and you go, I had a really weird dream last night. I haven't got a clue what it means.

Well, ask Freud. He knows. No, he doesn't. He doesn't know a thing. When the king has a dream, when Pharaoh has a dream, who does he call? He calls, who do you call? Joseph. That's who you call. He calls Joseph and he interprets the dream because he has a gift from God.

When Nebuchadnezzar has a dream, who does he call? He calls all his magi and they haven't got a clue what it means. And so here up comes Daniel, the interpreter of dreams, right?

Because he has sovereign God telling him what the dream is. He says, so what's a dream? All that to say, yeah, I read all these scholars and they're all like, we haven't got a clue what he means with a dream.

But I think it means, because this is Hebrew poetry, right? So you have, for a dream comes with much business and a fool's voice with many words. So you have a dream in comparison with a fool's voice.

[34 : 06] A dream with much business, a fool's voice with many words. So the fool's voice, so the second line in Hebrew poetry explains the first line.

First line is about dreams. So whatever that means, it's explained by the second line. A fool's voice with many words. Okay, that's a little easier. A fool does a lot of talking.

What's his point? Doesn't have a point. He just wants to talk. What is the old thing? Better to be thoughtful than to open your mouth and remove all doubt, right?

A fool just talks, talks, talks. Why? Because he's not thinking. He doesn't know. He's just talking. Just filling the void. Don't be silent. Got to fill the void. Just talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. So whatever the dream thing is, it's the same thing.

It's pointless. It's useless. Therefore, draw near to listen and let your words be few.

[35 : 13] That's his point. Walk with the Father with a conscious intent to listen. That's not our first go-to. So it has to be deliberate, right?

Our first go-to. I'm going to go pray. What do I do? I got a lot on my, right? I got a lot. And Psalm says, go for it, right?

Pour out your soul. There are times that that's all I got. I just got to do that. Times Jesus did that. Let this cup pass.

But. So he's in the moment. We're talking about regular times. Times I set aside to come to God.

Whether it's public or private. So how does all this relate to the Christian? Well, let's see what Jesus says about this whole thing. How does Jesus talk about coming to God?

[36 : 16] How does he talk about coming to the Father? And where does he tell us to do that? So the psalmist, the prophet, ecclesiastiker, the preacher, says, you know, God's house, this is go reverently, et cetera.

So what does Jesus say about coming to the Father? Matthew 6, Jesus said, when you pray, and he's going to say, when you pray, don't do this, but do this.

When you pray, don't do this. Don't be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners. Why? That they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they've received their reward.

That's what they got. They got what they wanted. But you, when you pray, go where? God's house. What did Jesus say to go when you pray?

You, when you pray, where do you go? Go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.

[37 : 22] Just you and him. It's just intimate. Just you and him. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Why do you go? What's your motive?

You know, the hypocrite's motive is to be seen and be noticed, right? To get a pat on the back. Your motive is just to be alone with the Father. Just you and him.

Your motive is relationship. Relationship. Go on. What else? When you pray, do not. And now he's sounding like Ecclesiastes 5.

When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Don't be like them. Why?

Why? Let your words be few, in other words. Why? Why? What does Jesus say? For your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Okay, so hang on a second. He already knows what I need.

[38 : 17] Why do I go? If he already knows what I need, what I don't need to do is tell him, give him information. So, Lord, this happened. And, you know, so I got this bill and I didn't pay it.

And, you know, I don't know. You don't have to explain. It's not about information. It's about relationship. Why does he want you to come when he already knows? Because he wants you to come. He wants you to be with him.

He wants you to talk to him. Right? So, the manner is very simple. And it also implies, if you're not heaping up empty phrases and many words, it implies that maybe when you're praying, you're also quiet.

You're also listening. Being still. How many of us do that when we pray? You know, I got to confess.

I look at prayers, man. I get through that list. In the middle, I'm going, wait a minute. What am I doing?

[39 : 20] Or the Lord might be. Hello? Hey, hey. Hey, you talker down there. Hey, hey. Check.

Did you get it all checked off there, Billy boy? Hey. Hey. Good job. Yeah, I didn't know about that one. Yeah. Yeah, how do we see prayer?

I have to confess, sometimes it's like, I got to do it because I got to do it. Because I need to do it because I need to bring these things before the Lord. Sometimes they're you people.

So it's like, you know, I got to do that. But my motive can be all kind of in a hurry. I don't know about you. So he goes on.

Jesus says, so here's how you pray. So when you pray, not about getting attention. It's just about being alone. When you pray, it's not about a lot of words. It's just, you know, talking to the Father, being simple.

[40 : 19] And then he tells us how to pray. Pray then like this. Pray then in this way. He's giving us a way to pray.

A deliberate process. This is not a prayer. The Lord's Prayer. It's called the Lord's Prayer. It should be called the Disciples Prayer. Because he's giving it to his disciples.

He's giving us a way to pray that has a pattern and a deliberate intention to it. Watch. He's going to give us a method. It's not a prayer just to kind of repeat.

Right? Our Father who art in heaven. It's the way. Not the word so much as the way. He gives us six things to pray about.

The first three are about God. And the third, the next three are about us. You ever notice that in the Lord's Prayer? So he says, we address who? Who does Jesus tell us to pray to?

[41 : 22] Our Father. We pray to the Father in the name of the Son with the power of the Holy Spirit. That's how the Trinity is involved in that. I pray to the Father in the name of the Son with the help of the Holy Spirit.

So what do I pray? Our Father who art in heaven. So I'm addressing, I'm recognizing who I'm talking to. First thing, hallowed be your name. That's not a statement. That's a prayer. We're not saying, oh, your name's holy.

We're saying, cause your name to be hallowed. Cause your name to be set apart. And I thought, as I'm doing this, I'm reading that and going, that's practicing the presence of God.

Our Father, cause your name, cause who you are to be set apart right now to me. And I pray as, cause your name to be set apart in my heart, in my mind, and please, in my soul.

Soul, soul's down here. Then second, your kingdom come. Cause your kingdom to come. Your will be done.

[42 : 32] Cause your will to be done. So first three things about God's name, his kingdom, his will. And then it's about us. Then give us our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. So the first three, your name, your kingdom, your will. Now it's our bread, our daily needs.

Just today's bread, by the way, not tomorrow's. Cause it's a walk of faith. Just like the man in the wilderness. So in other words, Jesus meant this prayer to be our daily prayer.

You pray like this daily? Now, if you use this every day, it's pretty tough not to be just a ritual. That's what I'm saying. That's where I get into that. Cause I put, cause there's six categories.

And then I put stuff, cause I'm, you know, whatever. Weird. I got to put stuff into each one of those categories, you know? Cause, cause when we finally get to us, by the way, you're praying for his name and his kingdom and his will.

[43 : 40] It's kind of like real purifying. Cause it's like I made it about him first. Then by the time I get to me, it seems like that's not that big a deal. Cause that's, yeah, it's interesting.

Then, then my bread, that becomes about all the physical things. People who need prayer for, for healing people who need a job, people, you know, whatever. And then our debts, that's about relationship. Forgive us our debts as we also forgive others.

So that's about interpersonal relationships. So then we're praying about things, not just forgive us, but we're talking about people who have tensions between each other. And we're talking about people that I've got a grudge with and past hurts and all that kind of stuff.

Yeah, you get that out. That's AA, isn't it? Isn't that one of the steps in AA? That's where you got to deal with the, okay, sorry. Um, we all need that.

That's what I'm saying. And then about our temptations, our battle, our spiritual battle. I mean, that covers everything. The point is, when you pray, you're practicing his presence.

[44 : 42] Cause even coming to him, it's just about me and him. It's not about performance. When I'm talking to him, it's, it's not that he needs all the information. He already knows what I need. But I get it out in a way that I need to get it out.

It's not about information. Maybe it's more about, Lord, this is how I feel. Look at the Psalms, how the Psalms talks about that. And then it's deliberate. Is your prayer deliberate? Okay.

Now I'm talking about the regular kind of prayers. Times when we come to him. I'm not talking about in the middle of day or middle of a crisis where you just gotta, all you can do is, okay, I can't take time, bro.

Okay, I gotta pray through, you know, his name. No. All I can do is say, Jesus, help. Let this cup pass.

Okay. There are, I'm not talking about those kind of moments. I'm talking about our regular, okay, so that's one. Are we done? This was gonna go really fast.

[45 : 43] I told somebody in Sunday school, it's only seven verses. We'll be done in about seven minutes. Should never say that. Second application, verse two, when he talks about vows, let me go through this a little quicker.

In sum, I would say the application is this. Serve God with deliberateness to treat him as holy. It's still an aspect of practicing his presence, but serve him, you know, whether you're doing something or saying something.

So, I'm trying to relate vow issue to what's applicable to us. Serve God with deliberateness. So, it's the same thing, that intentionality, that deliberateness to treat him as holy in whatever you do.

So, he talks about when you vow, verse four. What's a vow? A vow is a promise. It's a conditional promise. It's a commitment to do something for God in order to receive something from God.

So, Jacob, remember when he left the land, he made Esau mad. He stole the birthright and the birth blessing, and then he's heading out of the land. He meets God, and he says to God, if you will be with me as I leave this land, and if you will protect me, then I, you will be my God, and I will give a tenth of everything to you.

[47 : 08] So, he made a vow. And 20 years later, he kept the vow. Hannah, 1 Samuel 1, Hannah was childless. She wanted a child desperately.

She went to the temple to pray, and she prayed to God and said, if you give me a child, if you give me, I will what? Remember what Hannah did?

I'll give him back. I'll give him back. I just want a child for a couple of years. Right? There were other vows in Scripture that weren't so well done.

But that's what a vow is. Rather, we see at the end of verse 4 here, there's the foolish kind of vow. Right? When you vow a vow to God, do not delay in paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools.

Fools are the ones that make a vow, but then don't keep it. They don't intend. They don't think about it. Pay what you vow. It's better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Why? Because vows are serious.

[48 : 11] You're making a promise to God. You're making a promise to God. That's as serious as it gets.

According to Deuteronomy 23, it says, when you make a vow to God, and if you delay, he will seek you out. Excuse me.

You said something to me. And I took it. Vows are serious things. So he recommends, better not to vow.

You don't have to vow. There's nothing in Scripture that says you need to make a vow, with the exception of the Old Testament covenant, which was God's vow to the people and their return vow to him.

If you obey, I will bless you. If you disobey, I will curse you. We promise we will obey. How'd that go? Right? So, so, so how does it happen?

[49 : 16] Verse six. How does, how does this, this vow and delay happen? Verse six. He says, let not your mouth lead you into sin and do not say before the message that it was a mistake. Don't let your mouth, don't let what you say.

I vow, I promise. Don't say that so quickly and thoughtlessly that then later you regret it because you didn't think about it. There's a story in Judges where the man says, I will, I will give the first thing that comes out of my house, right, if God does this.

And first thing that came out of his house was his only daughter. And he had to kill her. I mean, I talk about a stupid vow. Talk about thoughtless, in the moment saying something.

That's what he's talking about. Be careful. Your words mean something. Why make God angry with your foolish words? So then he gives another, another proverb in verse, beginning of verse seven.

He says, when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity. There we have that dream thing again. When there's a lot of dreams, in many dreams and in many words, there's vanity.

[50 : 27] In many words, the words are too many. The words are not few. The words are just hasty. The words are thoughtless. The words are, in effect, useless. If there's a lot of dreams, lots and lots of dreams, what's the point of the dreams?

They're useless. If God gives a prophet one dream, that's useful. But just the dreams that we have, and we're like, what?

What was the point of that? Right? So that's the point. The dreams are useless. The many words are useless.

The point is, vow to God is serious. So now our application question is, what about Christians?

Do we vow? Do we make vows? What about wedding vows? What about those? Take a wedding vow, right? Does Scripture tell us to do that?

[51 : 28] But Scripture does talk about the great commitment between a man and wife. So we make an application in our ceremonies to call a vow.

That's okay. Because you do intend, you have thought about it, right? But remember, that's a serious vow. That's before God. So what does Jesus say?

Jesus said, you've heard that it was said, make a vow. Make a vow by this, by that, by the temple, by whatever, whatever. You know, it's kind of like saying, I promise I'll do it.

And if I don't, stick a needle in my eye and, right, pull out my, I don't know, how's that go? Cross my hard hope to die. Cross my hard hope to die, stick a needle in my eye. Right, yeah.

As if, you know. I remember the first time I did that, I'm like, is somebody really going to stick a needle in my eye? I don't think I want to say that. It's kind of like that. It's like it didn't really mean anything.

[52 : 28] Jesus said, you've heard that it was said, make a vow. I say to you, make no vow. Don't make a vow. Why are you making a vow? Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Just be honest. There's no purpose for a vow. I swear what I tell you is true. So when we go into court and we put our hand in the Bible, we're making a vow, right?

Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth? I can't wait for the day I get to do that. And then a lawyer tries to cut me off and I'm saying, no, I promised to say the whole truth. Just want you to say yes or no, sir.

Nope. Sorry. I vowed to say the whole truth. Sorry. So what's the point? By the way, making promises.

So some time ago, I was part of this movement called Promise Keepers. Did you guys hear about that? Great organization. Great people. Great intentions. Where'd it go?

[53 : 30] What happened? What happened to all the Promise Keepers? This is not a criticism. It was very well intended.

Because look at how many thousands of men wanted to do that. Because their heart's saying, yeah, I want to do that. What happened? We didn't keep our promise, did we?

And then when we didn't keep our promise, that was worse than making the promise. We wanted to because our hearts were changed.

We wanted to. But was it wise? It was not wise. You know, looking back, it's like not. It's an evaluation, kind of learning from that.

There's only one Promise Keeper. Why do we make a vow? The whole purpose of the law was to teach those people that vowed to keep it. They couldn't do it.

[54 : 36] So why make God angry by foolish words? So what's the point? Verse 7. Here's the end. This is it. Here's the point of the whole thing. Whether you're going to the house of God or whether you're making a vow, you're promising to God.

Here's the point. This is how you live. God is the one you must fear. Fear God. That's the point. Fear God. What's that mean? That means a whole lot of things.

It means standing in awe of Him. It means taking Him very seriously because the words that I promised to Him mean something. It means treating Him always as holy.

Treating Him always as holy. In other words, practice His presence. So how do we apply that? Are we still in the New Testament called to fear God? Yes. Yes.

But we want to tone it down. We want to make it mean treating Him with reverence. Well, that's part of it. Yeah, absolutely. But there's a little bit more than that.

[55 : 37] The Greek word means phobia. Okay? So there's some terror in that word. But we shouldn't be terrified of God. Why not? Because He's my friend. Yes, He is my friend.

He's also sovereign maker and He can take you out right now. Talks about communion, right? Come to the table in a worthy manner. If you don't come in a worthy manner, what might happen to you?

Well, for this reason, some are sick and some are gone. Gone. So God takes it serious. It's not a terror like, oh, He's going to kill me.

It's more of, do I recognize who He is? And do I treat Him that way? That's what I'm talking about. Intentionality. So here, we have a story in the New Testament about a vow. It wasn't called a vow, but they made a promise and a commitment.

It's the story at the end of Acts 4 and in the beginning of chapter 5 of Acts. Remember in the early church, it's a brand new church, very early church. It's growing, thriving.

[56 : 41] People are loving one another, right? They're giving their possessions to each other. They're helping each other. Just a wonderful, wonderful environment. Why can't we all be like that, right? And they weren't.

They were for a little while. So here's the story. Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas, which means son of encouragement, a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property too. And with his wife's full knowledge, he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

In other words, I'm bringing the wholesale, but not telling you that I'm holding back some of it for myself. In other words, it's pretense of self-glory. But Peter said, Peter being a prophet, Peter said to him, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

Why'd you do that? Why'd you do that? You didn't have to do that. Why'd you do that? Nobody asked you to do that. Well, it remained unsold. Did it not remain your own?

[57 : 58] You could do whatever you want with that property. It's your property. And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Do whatever you want. Give it to the Lord.

Give it to the people. Or give part of it to the Lord and say, this is part of it. Instead of saying, this is all of it. So why?

Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? In other words, it was intentional. You have not lied to men, but to God.

See what you did? You did this for the church. You did this for the church. Now you didn't do it for the church. You did it for you. You wanted to be in the next Barnabas. I want to be a Barnabas. Barnabas gets all this credit. Cool. He got a new name.

Joe became Barney. I want to become something like that. Oh, what did he do? Okay, let's do that. But we don't have to do that. When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last.

[59 : 02] What happened? A great fear came upon all who heard it. Heard it. Heard it. The young man rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.

After an interval of about three hours, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, tell me whether you sold the land for such and such. And she said, yes, for so much.

Yep, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's the story. That's the ticket. That's the story we're going with. But Peter said to her, how is it that you have agreed together to test the spirit of the Lord? So you're not even lying to the Holy Spirit.

Now you're testing the spirit. Hey, you think you'll really do anything? You think God will do anything if we lie? Behold, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door.

These guys, they're the burial men. They will carry you out. Immediately she fell down on his feet and breathed their last. And when the young men came in, they found her dead and they carried her out and buried her.

[60 : 00] That's what they're doing all day long. They're just burying liars. And once again, it says, and a great fear, not just fear, a great, a tremendous phobia, a tremendous fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard these things.

What does that mean? What is that fear? What is that? Well, think about it.

How did Ananias and Sapphira treat God? Peter said they lied to God and they tested him. Tested him in what way? I'll see if he does anything.

They didn't believe he would do anything. They acted as if God did not know or would react. That's testing God. I can lie.

God won't do anything. Or the Christian, you know, I can sin because God will forgive me. Yes, yes, yes, yes, he will. Yes. But, yeah.

[61 : 08] So what's great fear? I think by that example, the fear is taking God very seriously. Treating him as holy. Practicing that he's actually present with us.

Practicing his presence. Do we believe God is with us? Or is God in heaven? Yeah? Is God really walking with us?

Do we think that way? Do we really think? And if he's with me, well, he's just with me to help me and be good, right? Not to terrify me or anything.

Well, what are you going on? It's causing us to think. This isn't about a fear message. This is really about who is it that we are walking with?

Who is it that Paul says, I give up everything for the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. Just to know him. To walk with him.

[62 : 10] To talk with him. To depend on him. And that means knowing the power of his resurrection as well as the fellowship of his sufferings. I take it. It's all part of the game. All part of it. And to me, that's worth more than anything I've ever had.

Is that how you feel? So, what it means is walk with God with deliberate intent to listen.

When I come to listen. And secondly, to treat him as holy. To worship him in spirit and truth. Okay. Let's pray.

Father, we pray. Our Father who art in heaven, we pray that you would cause your name to be hallowed. To be set apart in all of our hearts and minds. We pray that you would cause your kingdom to come.

That there would be, Father, the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit. We pray that you would cause your will to be done. Not ours, but yours.

[63 : 14] Lord, show us your will. Not our will, but yours be done. We pray that you would give us this day the daily provision that we need today.

Forgive us, oh God, our debts. Our debt to you is immeasurable. And you have forgiven it before. We pray that you would forgive it again.

Because we, like you, want to forgive others too. So, help us to forgive. And finally, Lord, lead us not into the temptation. The one that so often we fail at.

Lead us not there, but deliver us from the evil. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.