



Matthew 6:5-13

"How to Pray - Part 2"

By Mike Clark

Matthew 6:5-13

⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

⁷ "And 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. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. ⁹ Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

INTRODUCTION –

This morning we are continuing our two-part message on prayer. Last week we looked at some of the practical ways we can improve our prayer life – why we pray, hinderances to prayer, motivations, the place, timing, duration, and posture of prayer.

And this morning, I want to go through this wonderful passage of Scripture, known as the Lord's prayer and just unpack the riches that Jesus has given to us when he taught the disciples.

The Psalmist said it is good to draw near to the Lord. Prayer is not an easy spiritual discipline. As I mentioned last week, there are a lot of reasons why people don't pray.

And think about this – prayer is talking to someone you can't even see and who doesn't respond audibly. It can be difficult to keep that conversation going.

It's easy to get distracted, bored, or not know what to say. Many people try to pray, but many often give up.

And like so many other things, prayer is a skill that has to be practiced in order to get better and better at.



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Sometimes what happens is that we hear other people pray and we feel that their prayers are so much better than ours that we're then tempted to give up because we feel like we'll never be able to pray like that.

We sometimes struggle just to pray, let alone to pray well.

Maybe you've never had prayer modeled to you by someone and maybe you're not sure how to even get started.

What do I say, how do I keep talking to the Lord? What is proper? What isn't proper? And so, you may have all these kinds of questions.

And sometimes the only time we go to the Lord in prayer is when something bad has happened or we need something and then what happens? -

We may feel guilty that the only time we go to the Lord in prayer is when we need something.

But I want you to know that even the disciples struggled with how to pray. It wasn't easy even for them.

In Luke 11, the disciples heard Jesus praying and then asked him to teach them how to pray. Can you imagine hearing the Son of God praying?

This is the perfect, sinless, Savior praying prayers that would make us marvel. After hearing that, would that not make you feel a little bit inadequate?

Well, the disciples felt that and so they asked Jesus to help them pray as he did. And Jesus taught them the Lord's prayer. But before he taught them the Lord's prayer, he first taught them how NOT to pray.

So that's where I want to start – how not to pray. Jesus begins by telling the disciples two ways they are not to pray.

The first thing Jesus said is not to pray to get attention from other people or to try to impress them.

Matthew 6:5-6 - ⁵ "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.



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6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Notice Jesus says, "And when you pray." He didn't say if you pray then don't pray like this. No, he says when you pray, meaning it is assumed that you should be praying.

As Christians, this is one of the things we do. It should be natural, just like children asking their parents for things.

So, when you pray, assuming you're praying, do not be like the hypocrites.

The term hypocrite originally referred to Greek actors who wore masks that portrayed in an exaggerated way the roles they were dramatizing.

The hypocrites are pretenders—persons who are playing a role. The only thing you truly know about them is the false image that disguises their real beliefs and feelings.

So how do the hypocrites pray? – Jesus said "they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly I say to you they have received their reward."

Jesus is teaching us not to pray to impress other people. That should relieve any pressure you may have or any feelings of guilt because you feel like you don't pray good enough.

We're not to pray like the pharisee in Luke 18. If you pray to impress other people, the only reward you'll receive is that you may get the praise from other people.

But you won't get praise from God and your prayers probably won't get answered.

James 4 says that you ask but don't receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

So, when you pray, you are to talk to God and not to others, even when you pray in front of other people.

Instead of the pharisee in Luke 18, we should be like the tax collector who beat his breast and said God be merciful to me a sinner.



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The tax collector wasn't praying to be seen by others, but it was a genuine heart cry to the Lord. He approached the Lord with a humble and penitent attitude.

So instead of being hypocritical in our prayers, we should find a secluded, private place to remove distractions so we can focus on God and not on others.

When you're talking to God from a pure heart and your prayers are genuine expressions of worship, God will hear your prayers and the people near you will be blessed by your prayers.

Now, the second thing Jesus said is not to pray using empty phrases and many words.

Matthew 6:7-8 - ⁷ "And 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. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Jesus is telling the disciples and he's telling us not to pray like the Gentiles pray, the pagans.

Don't heap up countless words over and over again like a mantra. The Greek word for empty phrases has the idea of idle, thoughtless chatter.

Jesus says "don't just keep repeating words and don't think that the more you say the more God is going to hear you. That's not the way it works with the Lord."

So don't pray to sound spiritual. Beware of saying the same prayer over and over again.

Even if you're praying Scripture or one of the prayers in the bible word for word, which is a wonderful thing to do, just beware of your prayers sounding like an unchanging voice mail recording.

There is enough of God's Word to make our prayers with variety, Amen?

And listen, we've all been guilty of repeating the same prayers. Like saying the same prayers before meals for example.

If you're truly focused on the Lord and being genuine, that's ok to do, but don't be afraid to change it up a bit sometimes.



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And the same thing goes for the repetition of genuine requests. For example, if you have been praying the same prayer for someone's salvation, keep praying that prayer. There is nothing wrong with that.

Jesus is saying to keep it simple and straightforward. Be reverent to God when you talk to him. And be honest and natural.

Pray with a devout heart—with a pure motive seeking only the glory of God. Pray with a humble heart seeking only the attention of God, not men. And pray with a confident heart knowing that God already knows what you need.

If you go to God in prayer on those terms, He will reward you in ways you could never imagine, and you'll learn the value of being alone with God.

So that is how not to pray. Now let's talk about how we should pray.

What you have in the Lord's Prayer is really an outline. It's an outline of the kinds of things that you are to say when you pray.

Now I have to mention that Jesus never meant for us to just recite these words verbatim as our only prayer. There is nothing wrong with doing that, but it's meant to be more than just reciting it.

The Lord's prayer is meant to be an outline that you can follow and expand upon. Jesus is giving us categories of which to pray for.

You can break the Lord's prayer into two main sections. The first section is how we worship God and exalt Him, and the second section is our petitions to God.

So, this is meant to be a guideline for us. But listen – there is nothing wrong with praying simple, quick prayers that don't go according to this outline especially when you are in a crisis.

You can say Lord forgive me for this sin or Lord help me in my pain. That is ok to do.

But generally speaking, it's a good habit to start with exalting the Lord and then bring your requests. God comes first and then your requests come second.

And you see that prayer pattern in many of the recorded prayers in the Bible. You see this especially in the book of Psalms. I want to show you this from Psalm 9.



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Psalm 9 –

- I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;
 I will recount all of your wonderful deeds.*
- ² I will be glad and exult in you;
 I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.*
- ³ When my enemies turn back,
 they stumble and perish before your presence.*
- ⁴ For you have maintained my just cause;
 you have sat on the throne, giving righteous judgment.*
- ⁵ You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish;
 you have blotted out their name forever and ever.*
- ⁶ The enemy came to an end in everlasting ruins;
 their cities you rooted out;
 the very memory of them has perished.*
- ⁷ But the LORD sits enthroned forever;
 he has established his throne for justice,*
- ⁸ and he judges the world with righteousness;
 he judges the peoples with uprightness.*
- ⁹ The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed,
 a stronghold in times of trouble.*
- ¹⁰ And those who know your name put their trust in you,
 for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.*
- ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD, who sits enthroned in Zion!
 Tell among the peoples his deeds!*
- ¹² For he who avenges blood is mindful of them;
 he does not forget the cry of the afflicted.*
- ¹³ Be gracious to me, O LORD!
 See my affliction from those who hate me,
 O you who lift me up from the gates of death,*
- ¹⁴ that I may recount all your praises,
 that in the gates of the daughter of Zion
 I may rejoice in your salvation.*
- ¹⁵ The nations have sunk in the pit that they made;
 in the net that they hid, their own foot has been caught.*
- ¹⁶ The LORD has made himself known; he has executed judgment;
 the wicked are snared in the work of their own hands.*
- ¹⁷ The wicked shall return to Sheol,
 all the nations that forget God.*
- ¹⁸ For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
 and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.*



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*19 Arise, O LORD! Let not man prevail;
 let the nations be judged before you!*
*20 Put them in fear, O LORD!
 Let the nations know that they are but men!*

So, this Psalm is a great example of what Jesus was teaching his disciples. And the Psalms are wonderful to just pray through.

And so, what you're doing in this first part of the Lord's prayer is turning your heart upward, toward the Lord in worship and adoration and exaltation.

And sometimes it's a great idea to pause before you start praying. Think and meditate on the Lord. Center your thoughts on the Lord and think on him.

What this does is it gives our hearts a chance to get reverent if they aren't already.

As you're pausing, think about the qualities of God, the attributes of God, his character and think about His mighty works. He has done great things! This is recorded all over the Scriptures.

And not just in the Scriptures but you can think on the mighty works that he has done in your life or the lives of your family or the lives of those you know.

And as you think about these things, you then begin to praise Him. Praise him for his attributes, his character.

"God you are holy, there is none like you, thank you that you are so good, thank you that you are so loving...."

.....Thank you that you are so merciful even though we are not worthy to receive the least of your mercies. Thank you for how loving you have been towards me."

Think about his creation of the world. You can do that for a while if you get really detailed. The stars in the heavens, the vast ocean, the mountains, the sunrises and sunsets.

He parted the red sea, he sent Jesus, he raised him from the dead. Ponder that as you pray. That is a mighty work of God where he triumphed in power. He has triumphed over death itself.



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That's the very reason we can call him Father. Jesus died to take away our sins and to make us sons and daughters of God and to make God to be our Father by the new birth.

**And through simple faith in his death and resurrection makes us right with God!
What mercy! What power! What grace!**

Proclaim the mighty works of God and proclaim them to God. That's how you exalt Him, when you thank him for those things and thank him for being the way he is and for doing the things he's done.

Be moved in your heart by the greatness of God and humble yourself before him, being grateful to Him. Pray that your own heart will be submitted to his will.

Pray that you would obey the Lord quickly, without hesitation.

Now if you want to pray longer prayers, this is where you can linger for quite a while.

**We can't ever reach the limits of the descriptions of his greatness and his glory
amen?**

We can't ever exhaust the telling of the riches of his grace.

Doing this will deepen your prayers like nothing else. Because you know what this will do? – It will keep your prayers from being shallow or superficial.

**Praying this way will saturate your heart with reverence and adoration.
And when that starts happening, that's when you start maturing and growing in the Lord.**

Worshipping the Lord in private prayer will do several things for you. It will deepen and enliven your public worship like nothing else.

Don't rush past this too quickly just to get to your requests. Soak in God for a while.

It will deepen your relationship with the Lord Jesus, and it will deepen your walk with the Lord.

Remember Jesus told the parable of the seeds. We don't want to be like the seed that fell among rocky places where there wasn't much soil. They sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow.



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It spent all its energy going up and getting green on top but nothing going down deep. And after a while when the sun comes up it's scorched because there's no depth of root.

We want our prayers to go deep, not shallow. And when you go deep, you'll get lost in wonder, love, and praise.

And you know what, even if you don't get much time left for your own requests, don't worry about it, because the Lord knows what you need before you ask him.

So, it's ok to have a big part of your prayers be focused on the Lord and who he is. And you know what else this will do? It will purge worldliness from you. Because the unholy cannot cling to the holy.

So, the first thing we do in our prayers is to worship God and we see that in the first part of the Lord's prayer. Look at verses 9 and 10 again.

Matthew 6:9-10 - ⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Now, you basically have 3 requests in this first section. Did you notice that? – "Hallowed by your name, your kingdom come, and your will be done."

But before those requests, Jesus says to start by calling on God as Father.

Prayer should always begin with the recognition that God is our Father, the One who gave us life and who loves, cares for, provides for, and protects us.

The fact that God is *our* Father means that only believers in Christ are children in His family.

Scripture makes it clear that God is the father of unbelievers only in creation. Spiritually, unbelievers have another father. 1 John 3 clearly characterizes two families: the children of God and the children of the devil.

So when you begin your prayers by calling on "Our Father, who art in heaven," you indicate your eagerness to go to Him as a child, knowing He loves you.

And you'll find that He is eager to lend His ear, His power, and His eternal blessing to the requests of His children if it serves them best and further reveals His purpose and glory.



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After acknowledging God as our Father, we are to pray that God's name would be hallowed.

We see the world do the exact opposite, do we not? Throughout history, the name of God has been abused, used as a curse word, and blasphemed.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said this:

"What unworthy ideas and notions this world has of God! If you test your ideas of God by the teaching of the Scriptures, you will see at a glance what I mean. We lack even a due sense of the greatness and the might and the majesty of God. Listen to men arguing about God, and notice how glibly they use the term. We obviously do not realize that we are talking about the ever blessed, eternal, and absolute, almighty God. There is a sense in which we should take our shoes off our feet whenever we use the name."

While we may cringe and express displeasure when we hear someone taking God's name in vain, we would do well to examine our own heart attitude. Indifference and lack of respect due His name from those who love Him may be just as heinous a sin.

So, we are to hallow God's name in our prayers, and you could pray something like this –

"Lord, may your name be revered as holy because you are holy, holy, holy. May your name be revered first of all by me and my heart and by those in my family and those in my church and among the nations.

Father, you who love us and care for us, and who has in heaven supplies to meet our every need; may Your person, Your identity, Your character, Your nature, Your attributes, Your reputation, Your very being itself be hallowed."

To hallow God's name is to revere, honor, glorify, and obey Him as the one and only completely perfect God. When we do, we remind ourselves of the important difference between us and Him.

God lives in a different sphere than we do. He is holy and undefiled, but we are sinners. Only through His gracious provision of Jesus Christ and His payment for the penalty of our sin are we even able to approach Him.

John Calvin said this: **"God should have His own honor, of which He is so worthy, and we should never think or speak of Him without the greatest veneration."**



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So, when you pray, picture yourself entering the very throne room of God, a holy place, where He is to be honored and approach with the respect due His most holy name.

And so, as you're exalting the name of God, you start praying the priorities of God. You pray for the priorities of God to come to pass.

You can ask the Lord to make His priorities become your priorities. And so, you pray for God's kingdom to come.

"Lord may your sovereign plan be accomplished in the earth and in the universe.

Help me to long for and yearn for the return of Christ. Help me to long for that day because I long to be with you Lord. May your kingdom be consummated where Christ reigns."

We are to pray to be used by the Lord, that we would lead people headed for an eternity in hell to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and an eternity in heaven.

Matthew 6:33 - But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

The Lord will take care of all our needs—clothing, shelter, and food—when we seek His kingdom. So, we should pray, "Lord, do whatever advances Your kingdom and brings about Your reign."

And then we are to pray "May your will be done." "Begin with me Lord. Help me to do your will like it is done in heaven."

We are to pray in accord with God's will. His will is to become our will. We're also praying for His will to prevail all over the earth, just as it does in heaven.

It's to cry with David, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; and let those who hate Him flee before Him" (Ps. 68:1).

If you want to have that passion in your prayers, you need to realize that the real benefit of prayer is not the changes God may make in your circumstances but the changes He will make in you and in your perception of them.

When He draws you into conformity to His person and will, your circumstances, no matter how insurmountable they may look, will no longer be your priority.



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So how do we pray in accord with God's comprehensive will? By joyously joining in affirming and awaiting the accomplishment of His divine plans.

Although we know that someday Christ will return and setup his eternal kingdom, we are to pray in anticipation of that great hour and for God to hasten the coming of it.

When you pray, "Thy will be done," you are praying for three things:

The consummation of the world and the use of sin's consequences for God's eternal plan, the salvation of people who don't know God, and the obedience of every believer to God's commands.

Now after we have exalted the Lord, we can come to our needs. Step 2 is to ask God for the things you need. Look at verses 11-13.

Matthew 6:11-13 - ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

So just like we have 3 things that focus on God, so we have 3 prayer requests. They are also 3 categories of requests that really encompass anything that we would ever ask from the Lord.

And you could name these categories as follows - ask for things you need, confess your sins, and pray for guidance and protection.

Let's look at the first part of this section. We are to ask God for our daily bread.

We are ultimately dependent on God for food, clothing, and shelter, the needs of our physical frame. The request here has to do with physical necessities.

This petition is more than just a request for physical needs, however. Above all it's a recognition of and an affirmation that every good thing we have comes graciously from the hand of God (James 1:17).

Although we may not always be on the edge of hunger, we can always be thankful for everything God provides, and avoid being presumptuous.

When all our needs are met and all is well in our lives, we tend to take the credit for what we have and feel that we carry our own load do we not?



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Yes, we work hard to earn the money we need to buy food and clothes, pay our rent or mortgage. But even the hardest-working individual owes all he earns to God's provision.

Moses reminded Israel that God "is giving you power to make wealth" (Deut. 8:18).

Our life, breath, health, possessions, talents, and opportunities all come from resources God has created and made available to man.

Everything we have is from God: He brings the rain to make things grow, He causes the seasons to change, He produces the minerals that make the soil fertile.

He provides the natural resources we use to propel ourselves around, and He provides the animals and plants from which we make our clothing and food.

Our daily bread—the necessities of physical life—are all from God and for that we should be thankful.

And we are to rely on the Lord one day at a time. To accept the Lord's provision for the present day, without concern for our needs or welfare tomorrow, is a testimony of our contentment in His goodness and faithfulness.

This kind of prayer focuses on God as the One who supplies. It acknowledges that He is the Source of all our physical needs, and it teaches us to live one day at a time in the confidence that He will meet those needs.

Next, we are to confess our sins and forgive others.

Forgiveness of sin is the greatest need of the human heart because sin has a twofold effect:

-----it promises to damn men forever while at the same time robbing them of the fullness of life by burdening the conscience with unrelenting guilt.

Ultimately sin separates man from God and is the primary enemy and greatest problem of man.

Since this prayer is a model for believers to use, the debts referred to here are those incurred by Christians when they sin. More important than our need for daily bread is our need for continual forgiveness of sin.



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A.W. Pink writes:

"As it is contrary to the holiness of God, sin is a defilement, a dishonor, and a reproach to us as it is a violation of His law. It is a crime, and as to the guilt which we contract thereby, it is a debt. As creatures we owe a debt of obedience unto our maker and governor, and through failure to render the same on account of our rank disobedience, we have incurred a debt of punishment; and it is for this that we implore a divine pardon."

And so, as a result of our sin, we owe a massive debt to God that we could not even begin to pay, much like the debt owed by the unfaithful servant in Matthew 18.

Anyone who desires to come to God must do so recognizing the severity of his sin and the magnitude of his debt.

Since man's severest problem is sin, his greatest need is forgiveness—and that is exactly what God provides.

Asking forgiveness implies confession of sin. To confess means basically to agree with, and when we confess our sins, we agree with God that they are wicked, evil, defiling, and have no part in those who belong to Him.

Proverbs 28:13 - "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

And as we confess our sins and ask for the Lord's forgiveness, we are to forgive others that have sinned against us.

We should forgive one another for several reasons.

First it is a characteristic of a true child of God. Secondly, we are to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us. It is also one of the highest virtues of man and it frees the conscience of guilt.

Finally, we are to ask the Lord for guidance and protection.

We live in a fallen world that continually bombards us with the reality of sin and its consequences.

Now at first glance that might seem strange that we are asking the Lord not to lead us into temptation, as if God is doing wrong.



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But listen - God's holiness and goodness will not allow His leading anyone, certainly not one of His children, into a place or experience in which they would purposely be tempted to commit sin.

James addresses this:

James 1:13,17 – ¹³"Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one." ¹⁷ "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

This petition is another request for God to provide what we in ourselves don't have.

It's an appeal to God to place a watch over our eyes, our ears, our mouths, our feet, and our hands—that in whatever we see, hear, or say, and in any place we go and in anything we do, He will protect us from sin.

And when we are tempted, we need to remember –

1 Corinthians 10:13 - ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

The implication of this part of the prayer seems to be something like this –

"Lord, don't ever lead me into a trial that will present such a temptation that I will not be able to resist it. Rather, deliver me from any trial that would bring evil on me as a natural consequence. Don't put me into something I can't handle."

While God won't tempt us to sin, He will bring things into our lives that become tests for us, and it will reveal your spiritual strength.

The Lord orders our life so that we will never be tempted without the strength to resist.

He uses our trials to help us trust Him more and strengthen others who go through the same trial later. He also uses them to drive us to His Word and to prayer.

Finally, let me say something that may at first seem strange, but I highly encourage you – after you have exalted the Lord, to pray for your needs first before others.

What I mean by that is to pray for your spiritual growth, your spiritual health.



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Confess your sins thoroughly and ask God to change you to be the opposite of those sins. Ask God to change you in specific ways. You can linger here for a while as well. Pray for God to change you.

Maybe it's a certain temptation that you have been struggling with. Ask God to help you with that specific temptation in this way and that way and ask him to make you more like Christ.

And then pray for others. And this is where you may want to keep a prayer list for other people's needs.

Pray for your family, pray for your church family and your friends. And pray for specific unbelievers you know by name that they would be drawn to Christ.

Pray for those in the mission field. Pray for those in authority over you, both in the government and the church.

Now to wrap things up, Pastor Jody has prepared a short video that I want to draw your attention to as he discusses some of the things we at Highlands Community Church can be praying for in 2021.

Pastor Jody video -

And so, with those things in mind that Jody has just talked about, may the Lord make us a praying people in 2021 who long to approach the throne of grace with boldness, Amen? Let's pray.