

**Living Life Upside Down**  
**“Upside Down Praying”**  
(Part 3)

**Intro:** Story of being in Stockton California singing at my friend’s wedding and praying at the dinner at the Hilton. Everyone clapping – conversation at the table...”Did you just make that up? That was amazing?”

- Somehow, the way I prayed was something very different from their experience with prayer. 2000 years ago, what Jesus taught about prayer was even more shocking to His listeners. Jesus revolutionized people’s understanding of prayer. Jesus’ teaching on prayer was considered upside down. That’s what today is all about. Explain
- I want to give you 3 ways to understand and embrace upside down praying!

**I. Upside Down Praying Is Relational Not Repetitious**

*Matt 6:7-8 “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!” (NLT)*

**A. Repetitive prayers remove the relational dynamic of praying**

1. How many relational dynamics are taking place in what I call, Robotic praying?  
Same prayer / same phrases / same tone / exact words / after awhile, the mind simply disengages when we do things over and over again.
  2. Can you imagine talking to your spouse like this? C’mon! If all your communication consisted of scripted statements you said over and over every day, how relational is this? (The mind disengages with over familiarity)
- Just think about your commute to work every day. How often do you mentally disengage? You don’t notice scenery / landmarks / road signs / Now, apply that to prayer. No wonder people get so bored with prayer. It’s like spiritual commuting!
  - Saying that repetitive praying helps you connect with God is like saying your repetitive commute everyday helps you connect with the beauty of the landscape you drive through.
    3. God is not listening to us because we’re earning the right to be heard by repetitious praying / or spending a certain amount of time repeating words over and over again.
    4. There is teaching out there today that tells people to do this. Just take a phrase: “Jesus I love you.” Now that’s a great phrase! There are those who teach that you should say this over and over again for 30 minutes straight to help you connect.
      - Men...go home and try this with your wives and see how well this works connecting with them. She might like it for the first 30 seconds. After that, it loses its meaning. In fact, my wife would hit me after the first minute!
    5. Let’s understand what this does not mean: This is not referring to Praising God over and over again / or praying for loved ones continually / being consistent in prayer (we’ll talk about this in a few minutes).

6. Your prayer life might really feel boring because you're more repetitious than relational in your praying!

B. Relational prayers motivates me to pray

1. We need to embrace the upside down principal that prayer is primarily relational. It is not religious / robotic / ritualistic / It is talking relationally with our Creator who loves us. We don't talk to people like robots. Why talk to God this way!
2. When we pray, we are not informing God of our needs. That's why Matt 6 Jesus said; "*your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!*" Now your asking yourself...why pray then? We tell God about our needs for our sake not His.
3. This dynamic plays out in parenting all the time. There are times when I can see very clearly what my children need, but I wait until they ask me. WHY? It's all about the relationship. When they come to me with their needs, it helps us connect.
4. It works this way with God has well. He already knows all our needs and has already decided to help us...BUT He waits until we come to Him. WHY? Because the greatest thing God wants is NOT to answer our prayers. It is to experience intimacy with the ones He created! He's a relational God!
5. As a parent, I enjoy helping my daughters, but what I want more from them is relationship. I don't mind them asking me for things. But what I love the most is when they just want me...when they just want to spend time with me.
6. Just think how much easier it is for my kids to talk to their dad when we are connected relationally? How much easier it is to ask for things? How much more motivated I am to grant the requests?
7. This is how it works in our relationship with God. If you want to excite the heart of God in your praying, make it relational not repetitious. How do I make prayer relational? Two words! BE REAL! What does that look like?
  - R: Revealing – Reveal what's really going on in your life when you pray. God can handle it. Your needs / fears / pain / anger / disappointment / joy – Stop trying to sound spiritual...be revealing!
  - E: Expecting – What's the point of praying if you don't expect God to answer? This is about praying in faith. Choose to believe He hears and sees! Faith is a choice not an emotion!
  - A: Affirming – I just love it when my kids affirm their love for their dad. God loves it too. Do we tell God we love Him / committed to Him and His way / that we need Him /
  - L: Looking & Listening – After we pray, are we looking and listening for the answers or do we forget what we even asked for? How many prayers has God answered and we didn't even notice?

As you can see, upside down praying is relational, not repetitious. How's your praying?

## II. Upside Down Praying Is Practical Not Pointless

- In Matt 6, Jesus gives us one of the most well known / most quoted prayers in Christianity...It's called the Lord's prayer. (explain)

*Matt. 6:9-13 "Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one." (NLT)*

- This is not a prayer to be memorized and simply repeat over and over again by rote memory. This isn't what Jesus meant by giving us this sample prayer. That would eventually make this prayer pointless. In this prayer, Jesus gives us practical ways to pray.
- Many people feel prayer is pointless. Let's understand a few reasons why.

### A. What makes praying feel pointless

1. Not knowing what to pray for: Some people think there must be appropriate topics and inappropriate topics to pray about. Since they don't know what they are...they don't pray.
  2. Not knowing how to pray: Many people think they have to sound religious / use big words / talk in King James English / use repetitive language / they think they don't know the formula
  3. Believing God doesn't see your needs or care about them: There are plenty of people who are convinced God doesn't care about them. Because if He did, why did He allow certain things to happen. Sometimes pain can cause us to give up on praying.
  4. Never seeing answers to your prayers: If you believe you don't see answers to your praying that is going to be pretty demotivating. If you don't see tangible evidence that prayer matters in real life it's going to feel pretty pointless.
  5. Not dealing with sin in your life: If we are choosing to hang on to rebellious attitudes and behaviors this kills our prayer life. It creates a relational barrier between us and God and will cause prayer to feel pointless. (Parent / Child relationship – Explain – Relationship precedes requests! )
- If some of these factors are true in your life, then I imagine you're struggling being that motivated to pray. BUT, Jesus teaches us to pray in such a practical manner that it removes these barriers.

### B. What practical praying looks like from Jesus

- Please understand this is NOT a formula. This is one passage that talks about prayer. It was not Jesus' intent to limit our understanding of prayer to this one passage. BUT, it is a great place to start. Also, not all of these elements need to be practiced every time we pray. Sometimes it's only one.

  1. Praise: *Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy*

- Practical praying praises God. Telling God how much you love Him. Acknowledging His greatness / power / holiness / sovereignty / Thanking Him for who He is. (Many of our worship songs focus on this!)
2. Preference: *May **your** Kingdom come soon. May **your** will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*
    - Practical praying gives preference to God's Kingdom and God's will not our kingdom and our will. Practical praying surrenders! Practical praying doesn't want God to bless our thing, but asks for the reality of God's thing in real life.
    - Giving preference is asking for God's will in your life / relationships / job / in our community / it is asking for the reality of His Kingdom
  3. Provision: *Give us today the food we need*
    - Practical praying asks God to be our provider. This is where we ask God for all the things we need in this life. This is the request part...it's the most familiar part. This is what people think about when we talk about prayer.
    - What should we ask for? Everything! The bible tells us to pray about everything! (physical needs / emotional / relational / financial / ) The more specific we become the easier it is to see the answers.
  4. Pardon: *and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.*
    - Practical praying recognizes that we're in constant need of forgiveness from God and there is the constant need of granting forgiveness to others
    - This protects our hearts from getting hardened towards God and hardened towards others. It should be a daily heart examination. Who doesn't need to embrace God's forgiveness every day? When was the last sinless day you had?
  5. Protection: *And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.*
    - Practical praying acknowledges the need for God's help to live in this fallen world. We recognize there is a spiritual dynamic playing out around us. There is a spiritual enemy who is real, and outside of God, we can't defeat Him
    - There are two kingdoms that are clashing and we are caught right in the middle of it. Temptation is a reality of this life. Temptation takes on so many different forms, we need God's protection to see it and avoid it.
    - Personally, I spend a lot of time on this one (explain)

Upside down praying is highly practical, not pointless. How practical is your praying?

### III. Upside Down Praying Is Consistent Not Casual

*Matt. 7:7-8 "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."*  
(NLT)

- Notice 3Xs Jesus tells us to “keep on”. This is certainly not a casual approach to prayer. Jesus is saying that consistency matters! Let’s first understand what casual praying looks like.
  - A. What does casual praying look like
    1. Casual praying quits when it doesn’t see an immediate answer. It views praying more as a form of instant gratification. Many people treat God like a cosmic vending machine. Explain
    2. Casual praying prays only when they remember / have time / fit it into their busy schedule. Views praying as more optional than essential for life. Prayer is limited to meal times / bed times / in a crisis.
    3. Casual praying sees no need to pray with others. In fact, it views it as threatening and as something to be avoided.
    4. Casual praying is myopic in its approach. It only prays for a very limited amount of issues / people and usually only ones that personally effect them. (No desire to pray for their church / specific ministries / their community / etc...
    5. Casual praying has no real power. It’s simply too infrequent to make much of an impact in real life. There’s no real transformation.
  - The prayer life of many followers in Christ represents casual praying. But, Jesus calls us to more...He calls us to “keep on”.
    - B. What does consistent upside down praying look like?
      1. Consistent prayer keeps on asking God until the answer comes.
        - People just quit praying too soon! Jesus said that if we keep on asking we will receive. Don’t quit! I love the acronym PUSH - Explain
      2. Consistent prayer keeps seeking God’s direction until the direction is clear
        - Jesus said that if we keep on seeking we will find. How many of you need to know what God’s will is in a specific area of your life? Keep seeking...keep praying...keep listening.
        - One of the keys to successfully seeking God’s will through prayer is telling God YES in advance. Explain
      3. Consistent prayer keeps on knocking on doors of opportunity until they open.
        - There are some doors of opportunity we know God wants to open to us. He’s just waiting until we pray. Does God want to open up more doors of opportunity for us as a church to bless Molalla? Feed hungry people? Help with addictions? Help people find Christ?
        - There are doors that we should be banging on until they fly open!
      4. Consistent prayer is motivated by the promise of God’s intervention.
        - WHY do we pray with such an upside down commitment? Because of what Jesus promised! If we keep asking we receive / if we keep seeking we will find / if we

keep knocking the doors will open. If we will pray with this type of an upside down commitment, transformation happens!

5. Consistent prayer with others multiplies God's power

- Matt. 7:7-8 works for individuals, but when churches embrace this, and we keep asking together / keep seeking together / keep knocking together / something more takes place in the spiritual realm. There is something very powerful about prayer and unity together. The enemy has no answer or defense for.
- Post Easter attendance – result of prayer
- Worship and prayer event May 4<sup>th</sup>. (talk about)

Jesus is calling us to live life upside down and part of this means we embrace an upside down commitment to pray.

Where Prayer is Relational not repetitious

Practical not pointless

Consistent not casual

Are you willing to let God make you into a person who embraces upside down praying?