

Ways to Pray

Series: *Mountain Moving Prayer*

Paul Bradford, *Covenant*

Text: *Romans 8:26–27; Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 3:12*

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Scripture Reading

Romans 8:26–27 – ²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Ephesians 3:12 – ¹² In Christ & through faith in him we may approach God with freedom & confidence.

Galatians 5:1 – ¹ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, & do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Introduction

Today is the final sermon in our series **Mountain Moving Prayer**. As we wrap up our series on prayer I want to share several different approaches to prayer. One or more of these may be very helpful to you, others may not be, but all are good to be aware of, & all have been taught & used by Christians for centuries. Our topic is **Ways to Pray**.

◆ Over the years I've heard speakers or read books that emphasize a certain approach to prayer, sometimes to the exclusion of all others. At times the writer gave the impression that his or her way was the only right way. I've tried various approaches. Some were of great value, some like wearing Saul's armor. It was a fit for someone else, but it didn't fit me. Sometimes a prayer style has been right & beneficial for certain seasons.

◆ I've come to realize that how we have fellowship with God is very personal. Each person needs to find their own style, their own rhythm. What works for one person might not work for another. Sometimes what worked in the past, isn't working right now, though it might work again in a year or two. Be free. Today I'll share several ways to pray that have been meaningful for believers over the years. Each can be deeply nourishing to a person's soul. Some may work for you, some not. See what nourishes you. Sometimes a combination of approaches works best. Be flexible. This is a relationship; you can't put a relationship into a box. Let's begin today with a fundamental principle that applies to all styles of prayer. Let's turn to God's Word, & discuss...

God's Word

◆ Praying with freedom & confidence.

◆ In Ephesians, Paul shares how, though we were once dead in our sins, because of his great love for us God sent his Son to die that we might be forgiven, & then raised him to life that, in him, we might be made alive with Christ. At one time we were estranged from God because of our sin. Paul writes that we were ^{2:12} **without hope & without God in the world.** ¹³ **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

◆ We been reconciled to God & brought near to him, we have been joined with Christ & have received his resurrection life. ^{2:6} **God raised us up with Christ & seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.** You are part of God's family, seated next to him in Christ in his throne room. He's your roommate. You're with him continually. So Paul writes in, **Ephesians 3:12** **In him** (that is, in Christ) **& through faith in him we may approach God with freedom & confidence.** At one time you were far away. To approach the holy God was terror. You were in rebellion against him, his enemy, & under his righteous judgement.

◆ We can approach him with **freedom**. The word means **boldness, outspokenness, frankness**. Freedom in expressing ourselves. We can come & bring our needs openly without fear. He's our Father.

◆ And we can approach him with **confidence**. That word doesn't refer to self-confidence, but **being certain about something because it is trustworthy**. We come with confidence that as we freely express our hearts, he is faithful, he will hear, he will be there for us. All prayer should be like this. Not religious, not legalistic, but joyfully coming with boldness & certainty.

◆ One more thing. Paul says in **Galatians 5:1** *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, & do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.* This is a different word for freedom. In **Ephesians 3:12** the word means **freedom of expression**. Here it means **freedom from bondage**. Before Paul became a Christian, he was burdened down with legalisms, regulations, rules upon rules trying to earn God's favor. Paul says, you've been freed from all of that so that you can be free. Don't let that yoke of legalism be again put on your shoulders. Few things will kill joy in prayer more than legalism. You are free. When approaching God, be flexible in how you pray.

◆ With that in mind, let's look at some ways to pray that are to be used in freedom. Ways to approach God boldly, with confidence that he will hear. First let's review...

① Praying the **FACETS** of prayer.

◆ I want to mention the 6 facets we discussed last week, because this is one helpful approach to prayer that encompasses the key dimensions of prayer. We discussed that prayer is like a beautiful gem with many sides or facets.

Focus – spend a few minutes becoming still before God.

Adoration – begin to praise God for who he is.

Confession – confess your sins, receive his cleansing, let him remove all barriers.

Enjoyment – enjoy the Lord, his presence, his cleansing, his love.

Thanksgiving – thank the Lord for what he has done.

Supplication – bring your needs, & the needs of others, before him. **The Lord's Prayer** can be used at this time.

◆ As you come in Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, & Supplication, one wonderful way to pray is by...

② Praying the **Scriptures**.

◆ By Praying the Scriptures, I simply mean turning a passage in the Bible into prayer or personal prayer. I often do this when I'm doing my daily reading from the Bible. This is one way to know we are praying according to God's will! For example, **Ephesians 4:1** *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.* ² *Be completely humble & gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* ³ *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

◆ The Psalms is the biblical prayer book. Almost any Psalm can be turned into a praise or prayer.

◆ **Psalm 1:1** *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,* ² *but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, & who meditates on his law day & night.* ³ *That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season & whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.*

◆ **Psalm 96:9** *Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.* ¹⁰ *Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."* ¹¹ *Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, & all that is in it.* ¹² *Let the fields be jubilant, & everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.* ¹³ *Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness & the peoples in his faithfulness.*

◆ Another powerful way to use the scriptures in prayer is to meditate on Scripture. **Psalm 1**, which we just read, speaks of meditating on God's Word. This can be done by slowly reading a short passage that stands out to you, then repeat it several times, pondering each word or phrase.

◆ One thing I've found to be impactful is picking out a story in the gospels from Jesus' life, reading it slowly, then imagining myself in the story, experiencing it as if I was there. Reflecting on the words and each thing that happens.

◆ For instance, once I was meditation on the story of the rich young ruler in **Mark 10:17–22**. A man comes to Jesus & ask what he must do to be saved. Jesus first shares what he would expect, obey God's commandments. But the man relies, ²⁰ *"all these I have kept since I was a boy."* Then the bible says, ²¹ *Jesus looked at him & loved him.* In my imagination I looked into Jesus' face, I saw the love in his eyes. *"One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have & give to the poor, & you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."* ²² *At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.* As I watched & heard Jesus speak those words, I suddenly realized, Jesus loved this man so much he was inviting him to be

with him every day. Jesus loved him so much he wanted everything that blocked him from being in daily friendship with this young man to be removed. And I heard Jesus speaking to me, *let go of everything, then come follow me*. I felt his love & his call.

◆ A wonderful way to pray is by praying the scriptures, turning a passage into a prayer or praise, or meditating deeply on a passage, pondering it, sometimes imagining yourself entering into the story. Powerful. Another way to pray is by...

③ Praying written prayers.

◆ This wasn't something I was familiar with most of my life, though it's a big part of both the Lutheran, Anglican, & Catholic traditions. Praying a written prayer, if done just by rote, has no value, but if prayed from the heart is of great value. There are many impactful, classic prayers that can be a great aid in prayer. I've found value in praying written prayers, they can broaden my prayers, they can focus my prayers, they can help me pray for important things I might otherwise have missed.

◆ One rich source of prayers is the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer (2019)* which can be found & downloaded online. Easier to use is the phone app put out by the Anglican Church of North America called the *Daily Office*. Also online at dailyoffice2019.com. ◆ *The Daily Office* has been around for 1,000 years. The Daily Offices are 4x of prayer each day – morning, midday, evening, & compline (just before you go to bed). The main offices are the morning & evening. They include Psalms, prayers, the Lord's Prayer, scripture readings to take you through the entire bible in 1 year or in 2 years, & more.

Collects. They *Daily Offices* include short prayers called *Collects*. They're called Collects because the prayers are often prayed when God's people are gathered together, & the prayers are raised together, collectively, to God. They usually follow a simple pattern...

Address to God

Acknowledgement of one of God's qualities.

Petition based on that quality.

Aspiration which is an expression of our longing.

Declaration in Jesus' name.

Here's an example of a Collect that has two petitions & two aspirations

Address: Almighty God,

Acknowledgement: you alone gave us the breath of life, & you alone can keep alive in us the holy desires you impart.

Petition: We beseech you, for your compassion's sake, to sanctify all our thoughts & endeavors,

Aspiration: that we may neither begin an action without a pure intention nor continue it without your blessing.

Petition: And grant, having the eyes of our mind enlightened to behold things invisible & unseen,

Aspiration: that we may in heart be inspired by your wisdom, in work be upheld by your strength, & in the end be accepted as your faithful servants;

Declaration: through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

I also find great value in using **Hymns & Songs** that are prayers to God; I read them as my own. Many are powerful. For instance, the classic song *Just as I am* has been so relevant many times in my life. I come & pray, ◆ *Just as I am, without one plea, • But that Thy blood was shed for me, • And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee, • O Lamb of God, I come!* ◆ *Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind; • Sight, riches, healing of the mind; • Yes, all I need, in Thee to find, • O Lamb of God, I come!*

Prayer Book for the Covenant Church Cheboygan: Several years ago I put together a Prayer Book that includes shortened versions of the Daily Office that repeats every 2 weeks, many classic prayers, all the Collects from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, a couple dozen prayers in hymns & songs, & the prayers of Jesus & the Apostles. I've updated this book for CCC & am making it available to all of you. We'll post it on our website by midweek & also send out an email with a link. I've prepared a printable copy if you need one.

④ Praying in the Spirit

◆ Romans 8:²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ◆ Ephesians 6:¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers & requests. With this in mind, be alert & always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

◆ What does it mean to pray in the Spirit?

◆ Praying with the guidance & the inspiration of the Spirit.

◆ Christians are born of Spirit, we are immersed in God's Spirit, and as we yield to God we can be saturated, guided, & empowered by the Spirit – Spirit-filled. ◆ Our prayers are to be guided & inspired by the Spirit. Paul tells us in Romans 8:²⁶⁻²⁷ that the indwelling Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express, & enables us to pray in accordance with God's will.

◆ Our prayer life will become exciting as we come expecting the Spirit to inspire & empower our prayers. When praying for others, sometimes I know how to pray, but often I simply ask the Spirit to guide, then I just pray for what comes to mind. I might pray a portion of a biblical prayer or ask for other things from God's Word that I know he wants for all of us. I trust that God is guiding, listening & moving as I pray.

◆ Praying without words.

◆ Romans 8:²⁶ ...the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. We can pray without words. ◆ Just being before God. Sometimes in an intimate relationship you need to talk things through. Sometimes you just need to be together, perhaps with no words at all. Our relationship with the Lord is indeed a relationship. ◆ Sometimes praying for ourselves or others without words. We think we have to pray with word. I found great freedom when I learned I could bring a person or situation before God without words, rather just longing & loving in my heart.

◆ Praying in an unknown language.

◆ 1 Corinthians 14:¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. ¹⁵ So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. Someday I will speak in depth about praying in tongues. For now I will say that its primary purpose is in private for intercession & worship. It doesn't make you holy, you're not a better Christian if you have this gift, but God does give it to help us pray when we don't know how to pray.

⑤ Praying through journals & lists

◆ Tammy writes her prayers. Many find this valuable. ◆ Some have made prayer notebooks in which they record the requests they make to God. When the prayer is answered, they record the answer. This can be very encouraging. ◆ Some create prayer lists, a list for family, one for friends, another for public officials, & so on. They sometimes rotate through these lists. ◆ One of my friends uses prayer beads. He doesn't pray the rosary, rather he uses each set of beads to pray into a different area – family, church leaders, ministries, & so forth. You can actually buy Protestant Prayer beads online. ◆ Each of these approaches have been valuable to people.

⑥ Prayer place, time, & posture.

◆ Having a rhythm of time & place is important. Like exercise, if you have a set time, it becomes a health-giving habit. ◆ Place: I have a rocking chair in my room I sit in. When at church I have a little kneeling bench. Tammy drives to a specific parking lot & sits in our van. She's done this for decades. ◆ Time: Everyone needs to start the day with prayer. Based on whether you're a morning or evening person, this may or may not be your main time of prayer. ◆ Posture of prayer speaks of our seriousness & reverence before God. For some sitting, but with focus. For others kneeling. Some go for a walk, but a meditative, thoughtful walk. Posture will vary. I sometimes sit, kneel, or at times lie face down on the ground. So, to sum things up...

Our Response

◆ Pray with freedom in the Spirit, discovering & practicing the styles of prayer that best enable you to connect with God in an authentic, consistent way.