



**A Primer on Prayer**  
 Devotional Thoughts for the Week of  
 October 25, 2020  
 by Toni Wright

*This is week 8 of our series on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount called "Living Right-side Up in and Upside-down World." Our focus this week is his teaching on prayer in Matthew 6:5-15; 7:7-12. Our devotional author this week is Toni Wright, who serves as the leader of our prayer ministry here at BCC.*

**Week 8 Day 1: Matthew 6:5-8**

Psalm 91 unfolds the secret place or shelter and shadow of the Almighty: our intimate time with God.

We don't need to tell God all the problems going on, He knows them. Our prayers should be dwelling on Who God says He is and thanking and praising Him for Who He is. For instance, *Jehovah Rophe* is our Healer and *Jehovah Jireh* is our Provider. Our prayers should also be declaring what God's Word says about whatever the situation is. For example: right now, with COVID-19, Psalm 91 says it, so we declare it:

*"God, You are my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. You will deliver me from every deadly pestilence, I will not fear the pestilence of COVID-19 or any other pestilence or plague that destroys. A thousand may fall at my side, ten thousand at my right hand but it will not destroy me or my family."*

Declaring Who God is and declaring His Word in our secret place with God is much more effective than droning on (or babbling) about how bad



the circumstances are. Give it a try this week. (Here is one helpful survey of various names of God used in Scripture: <https://www.gotquestions.org/names-of-God.html>)

**Week 8 Day 2: Matthew 6:9-11**

*"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name."*

Hallowing God's name literally means to reverence His name as holy or sacred. One way we do this is by worship. John quotes Jesus as saying (4:23, 24), "...true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The Life Application Bible study notes say that it is how we worship that counts, whether our worship is genuine and true. But also, whether the Holy Spirit is helping us. It is Holy Spirit Who teaches us and empowers us to know Who God is and enables us to really worship Him in spirit and in truth.

*"Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

Jesus continually spoke of the Kingdom of God (or "heaven" in the Gospel of Matthew). The good news or gospel is receiving or being "translated" from the natural world as our home to God's Kingdom as our home. That is why Jesus said (speaking of His disciples),



"...for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world." (John 17:14b). So, when we pray about His Kingdom coming, we are first of all praying that people are being saved and thereby being translated into the Kingdom of God. The apostle Paul in Romans 14:17 says that the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are also to pray righteousness, peace, and joy into the circumstances we see that are contrary to those things.

When we pray His will be done, we are praying His Word into the circumstances for which we are praying. God's Word is His will. And "on earth as it is in heaven" means we are praying and believing for miracles, for God to take action. There is no sickness or depression or lack, etc., in heaven.

*"Give us today our daily bread."*

Declare God's provision for your life. He is *Jehovah Jireh*, the God Who is our Provider—the One Who meets "all our needs according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Have you been trusting your job (or the government, or...) for your provision or have you put your trust in God? Ask God to reveal your heart in this and if adjustments are necessary, ask Him to help you make them.

### Week 8 Day 3: Matthew 6:12-15

*"And forgive us our...as we also have forgiven..."*



Forgiveness. Only eleven little letters, but it can feel as though the weight of it is unbearable. We desperately desire God's forgiveness, but when someone has really—really—hurt us, we somehow feel justified in not forgiving them. Don't we? But

Jesus says Father God won't forgive us if we don't forgive others. The thing is, unforgiveness hurts us, not the other person. The unbearable weight we feel is holding on to the unforgiveness. Truthfully, in our own strength we can't forgive when it's really bad. And, we don't have to! That is one of Holy Spirit's jobs. He will help us. He will give us the power to forgive. Just ask Him.

Forgiveness does not mean you are telling that person what they did is okay. It just means you are releasing them to God. If you are struggling, pray for them. (Remember, Jesus said to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us...Matthew 5:44.) In addition, forgiveness does not mean you must let that person be close again. If

that person is not safe for you, God doesn't want you to set yourself up to be hurt again. Forgive, release, and move on.

*"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."*

Concerning temptation... The Life Application Bible study notes say:

"God sometimes allows us to be tested by temptation. As disciples, we should pray to be delivered from these trying times and for deliverance from Satan and his deceit. All Christians struggle with temptation. Sometimes it is so subtle that we don't even realize what is happening to us. God has promised that He won't allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:3). Ask God to help you recognize temptation and to give you strength to overcome it and choose God's way instead."

Just as Stew encouraged us a few weeks ago to pray for our enemies, I would encourage you to pray for those you are struggling to forgive (including yourself). And ask for Holy Spirit's help!

### Week 8 Day 4: Matthew 7:7-11

*Ask, seek, and knock.* The literal translation of ask, seek and knock is: keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking.

The Bible doesn't tell us that Jacob's beloved son, Joseph, prayed to be delivered from slavery or from prison, but I tend to think he did. However, it was thirteen years before he left prison and was put in charge of the food in Egypt (and second in command to Pharaoh!) and he didn't even live to leave Egypt (but his bones later did). God *did* hear Joseph's prayers. He just answered them differently than Joseph would have ever imagined, but His answer was perfect.

We need to pray expectantly and never give up. Our God is a good Father. He will answer in His perfect timing, the way that is best for us. He will do "immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine,



according to His power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20). James tells us: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights...” (1:17).

Trust in God's goodness and love for you. Expect. Believe. Keep asking...keep seeking...keep knocking, and don't give up!

## Week 8 Day 5: Matthew 7:12

Jesus said that “doing to others as you would have them do to you” sums up the Law and the Prophets.” When asked about the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus said that all the Law and Prophets are hung on these two commandments: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:37-39).

If we really love God with all our heart, soul and mind, it will be easier to love our neighbor as our self. Then, it won't be as difficult to treat others like we want to be treated, will it? So, today, ask God to search your heart and reveal where you stand in your love for Him. Then, be quiet and wait for His response. If you hear Him say that some adjustments need to be made, ask His help in making these adjustments. When your love for Him is where it needs to be, the rest will follow. What I have learned over the many years of following hard after God, is that I need to regularly search my heart and pray for God to reveal where I am in my love for Him. It isn't difficult to fall out of that place of having Him as your first love. It takes purposeful time in His Word, in worship, and in prayer daily to keep Him in His rightful place as your first love. But, oh, how wonderful it is to bask in the presence of your First Love! And when He is in that place, and you begin to treat others as you want to be treated (even when their behavior doesn't warrant it), others will take notice and be drawn to Him through you.



If you realize that God is not currently in first place in your heart and you are having difficulty treating others as you wanted to be treated, don't despair! God's mercies are new every morning! Pray and ask Father's forgiveness and for His help to reposition Him back into first place. As long as you're still here, it's not too late!

Toni is married to her high school sweetheart for 45 years. They have three married children, each of them with two children, so that makes six of the most wonderful grandchildren God ever created! In addition to serving as Prayer ministry leader here at BCC, she is a small group Bible study leader at the Vineyard Church. (She is a member of both churches.) She has been making greeting cards of all kinds to get her through the boredom of COVID lockdown!