

STARTING POINT OF PRAYER - ENCOUNTER SERIES

Good morning Life Fellowship. I hope everyone is doing well today. Please turn in your Bibles to Exodus Chapter 30, as we will be journeying through the tabernacle again. This morning we will be studying the Altar of Incense, and I am excited about the Altar of Incense because I enjoy good smells.

Remember we have been going through the tabernacle in this Encounter Series, and we started with the outer courtyard. Then we moved inside the tent. There were three sections of the tabernacle. There was the outer courtyard where there was the Altar of Sacrifice and the Bronze Laver. Then inside the tent you have the Holy Place and then the Holy of Holies. In the Holy Place there was the Golden Lampstand, the Table of Shewbread and today we learn about the Altar of Incense. Then inside the Holy of Holies there was the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. So as we are journeying through this series today we are at the final piece of furniture that is in the Holy Place which is the Altar of Incense.

And I don't know if over the last four weeks you have recognized this as yet but every single one of these articles of furniture were engaging one of the senses that we have as human beings. Thinking about the Bronze Laver you realize that we have the touch of the water. With the Golden Lampstand we have the sight sense, how our eyes see the light. The Table of Shewbread is about the taste of the bread. And now today we have the smell of the Altar of Incense.

That should tell us something, it should really pique our curiosity as to why God did that. And I think one of the things we have to understand is that God is interested in engaging all of us, all of our senses, the fullness of who we are. See, God is not just a God of intellect; He is also a God of emotion. God is not just a God of truth; He is a God of beauty. And there might be some things that really resonate with us. And we think, *'This is the way that I worship God.'* God is interested in engaging every single one of us in the fullness of who we are.

And I think that is really important as we walk into the tabernacle and learn about the next piece of furniture, the Altar of Incense. Now you may have realized from the title of this sermon that we are going to be talking about prayer today. Is that okay that we talk about prayer? Listen, I have heard a lot of sermons where they talked about prayer, and I don't know how you feel, but usually every single time a pastor wants to preach on prayer I feel guilty afterwards. Am I right? Do you feel guilty sometimes too? And it is because we all know that we don't pray like we should. None of us do.

I have never heard a sermon on prayer and felt like I was just doing awesome in my prayer life. I have never felt that way. If you have felt that way, please talk to me afterwards because I want to be your friend. But for most of us whenever it comes to

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prayer we just feel inadequate. We feel like there is this bar that we should be hitting and we are not hitting it.

And so I want to confront this upfront and say that today is not about making you feel guilty. This is not about making you feel inadequate, or make you think that you are not doing a good job praying. Because the reality is none of us are really doing what we should in prayer. But that is okay, because I think when it comes to prayer our starting point is usually wrong. And the reason why I call this the starting point of prayer is because I think for most of us the starting point of prayer is us. It is our experiences and our desires. It is what we think. It is our style. So when we pray we pray what is normal and natural for us.

And I believe that God wants us to start with Him. That really the starting point of prayer should be God. And that is what the Altar of Incense is all about. It is helping us to understand that the starting point of prayer is knowing who He is, because if God is the starting point of prayer we will pray differently. Again, this is not so much about making sure you are praying enough; this is really about taking a step back from our prayer life and asking ourselves why do we pray the way we do, and what should we really be praying about.

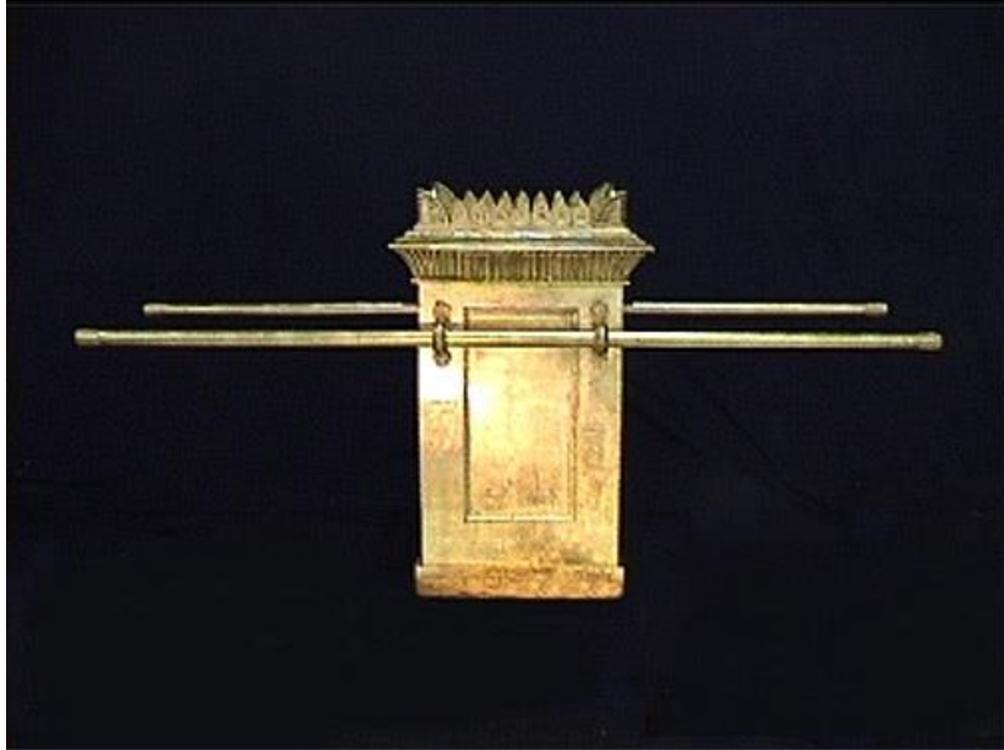
So let's look at this passage in Exodus Chapter 30 as we think about the starting point of prayer. We are going to look at the first ten verses about the Altar of Incense. ***“You shall make an altar on which to burn incense; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth. It shall be square, and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top and around its sides and its horns. And you shall make a molding of gold around it. And you shall make two golden rings for it. Under its molding on two opposite sides of it you shall make them, and they shall be holders for poles with which to carry it.”***

“You shall make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it in front of the veil that is above the ark of the testimony, in front of the mercy seat that is above the testimony, where I will meet with you. And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it. Every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the Lord throughout your generations.”

“You shall not offer unauthorized incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering, and you shall not pour a drink offering on it. Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the Lord.”

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So that describes the Altar of Incense. And as this passage of Scripture tells us the Altar of Incense was used twice a day. The priest would go in and he would put his own little mixture of resin and incense on the altar and they would burn it. This was done twice a day, once in the morning and again in the evening. That is why sometimes you might have grown up in the tradition of having morning prayers and evening prayers. Different Psalms that we read talk about going before the Lord in the morning and going to the Lord at the end of the day. Those were the times of prayer that were in the tabernacle and later in the temple.



Maybe you have noticed that frankincense is being pumped in this room this morning, and you wonder why is that? It is because what we definitely know about the recipe for this incense is that frankincense was definitely in there. So if you smell something this morning it is frankincense and that would have been the smell that would have permeated the Holy Place.

Another interesting thing about the Altar of Incense was where they got the fire to burn the incense. They would get this little pocket of coals from the Altar of Sacrifice out in the outer courtyard. Why is that important? It is important because it is teaching us that our access to God is one through the blood of sacrifice and forgiveness. God hears our prayers because of the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We don't have access to God any other way. So we have to understand that it is not about being able to say enough holy sounding words to make God like our prayers.

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Have you ever been around someone who loves to pray in King James English? (*Laughter.*) You know what I'm talking about, right? '*Thy Lord, thine will be done.*' And you are just like, '*Man, that person is really holy.*' But is God really impressed by King James English? No, He is not. And sometimes we think it is our opulence that impresses God, and it is not. What God is saying with the Altar of Incense is we need to understand where the coals of fire were used first before burning the incense, that there is only one way of access to Him and that is through Jesus Christ by repentance and forgiveness.

Another picture in this is that every year on the Day of Atonement the high priest would take blood of the sacrifice and he would go into the Holy of Holies to the Mercy Seat and sprinkle it with the blood. The one place where they put blood in the Holy Place was on the Altar of Incense, which again signifies what Christ does for us because He is our advocate. There was a veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies and the Altar of Incense was right before the veil. Inside the Holy of Holies were the Mercy Seat and the Ark of the Covenant.

And we need to understand that the prayers of God are before His throne. That is a picture that the tabernacle gives to us. And it is a picture we see over and over and over again that when we pray our prayers are entering into the throne room of God. There is no barrier, you don't need to go to another human being and pray to them so they can then pray to God for you. That altar is a symbol and representation of Jesus Christ and our access to the Father is through Him.

We are going to look at three starting points of prayer that will help us this morning and what they look like. We are going to look at God's pleasure in prayer, God's participation in prayer and then we are going to look at God's plan in prayer. So first let's look at God's pleasure in prayer. I want you to see this because all throughout Scripture incense was used as a symbol for prayer. There are a lot of passages that we could turn to, but I just want to show you two of them this morning.

The first one is found in Psalm 141 and verses 1 and 2. "***O Lord, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you!*** So David is praying here and what does he say about his prayer? Listen to verse 2: "***Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!***" So right there you see that David knew that incense was viewed as prayer before the Lord.

Another passage I think is so powerful is in Revelations Chapter 8 and verses 3 and 4. And again this is the throne room of God, people, and I want you to see this, because what we see in the tabernacle is a shadow of what is present in the actual Heavenly throne room of the God of the universe. Listen to what it says: "***And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer.***" There is an actual altar of

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incense in Heaven, okay? *“And he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.”*

This is what that means, when you pray your prayers are offered as incense, and they actually make it to the throne room of God. If you prayed this morning, that prayer was heard by God the Father. So we see how God loves prayer. He loves prayer. How do we know God loves prayer? It is because He calls it incense. And the reason why I think that is so important is because all of us love good smells, do we not?

I mean how many of you bought a pumpkin spice candle for your house this fall? You know what I am talking about? A couple of years ago my wife got this thing called a diffuser where you put the essential oils in the water. She has her own little bag of essential oils I guess you call them. And she put it by her side of the bed, and I was like, *‘Man, that really smells good. I really like that.’* And I started messing with that thing and then I moved the diffuser to my side of the bed because I enjoyed it so much.

And I am like a mad scientist, *‘Let’s see there’s cinnamon, orange, lavender and peppermint.’* My wife is like, *‘What is that smell?’* But I think it is awesome. I love this thing so much my wife has given it a new nickname. It is called *‘My mist tress.’* That is how much I love the smells in my room. I just love it. I look for reasons to go to my bedroom and just turn that thing on.

So as much as we love those smells - and there are certain smells that just put you in a good mood, like the smell of cookies baking in the oven. I mean how can you be grumpy if you are smelling cookies baking? That is what smells can do. And if that is what it does to us, that is exactly what happens to our Heavenly Father, because when we pray it is like this fragrant beautiful, good, aroma fills His presence. And He goes, *‘Oh, that is good stuff.’* That is what our Heavenly Father does when we pray.

Last week we talked about how much we need to be enjoying God when we go into His presence. But many times we forget that God wants to enjoy us at all times as well. And God enjoys us the most when we pray to Him. God enjoys His time with us the most when we are in prayer to Him. To God this is a fragrant aroma.

I want to give us a definition of prayer and I think the definition is very important because our definition of prayer determines our destination of prayer. How we define what prayer is will determine how we actually use it. And if I were to ask you to give me a definition of prayer probably ninety-five percent of you would answer the same way. *‘It is talking to God.’* That would be our definition that prayer is talking to God.

But if that is our definition of prayer, even though it is not bad, it is just not complete. And if talking to God is our definition of prayer, it just makes God one giant

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ear, and it makes us one giant mouth. And how is that relationship going to turn out? It would be very one sided, and that is not how God designed prayer to look.

So here is the definition, and this is not original to me, I wish I knew who to attribute this to, but I wrote this down in my notes from a while back and what I want to share with you is this: 'Prayer is intimacy with God that leads to the fulfilment of His purposes.' Notice that the starting point of prayer is not *'God, I have all of these needs.'* That is not the starting point. Does God want us to share our needs? Absolutely. But God's starting point of prayers always is intimacy. It is always communion. It is always relationship.

So what we have to do is understand that God's primary reason for creating prayer, for instituting prayer, is not so that He would need to find out what is going on in our lives. He doesn't feel like if you don't post it on Facebook that He won't have any idea what we are doing. Is that God? No! He is not up there wondering what is going on in our lives. His primary reason is not for us to share with Him what is going on and what our needs are. No, God's primary reason for prayer is so that we would know Him. He wants us to know Him.

So prayer is a shaping thing. It shapes us, it drives us to Him. What happens in prayer is it changes our perspective on who God is. The more we pray, the more we go before Him we become different because we see Him differently. For example, for most of my Christian life I have viewed God as a cosmic slot machine. Have you ever done that? I was told that prayer changes things, that it really gets God's hand to move, and so I just used Him like a slot machine. I would just put my coins in through my prayers. Just put in my coin and pull a lever until I get what I want.

And if prayer is simply so that God can answer our requests and get our things done, our will done, what happens when God stops answering our prayers? We stop praying. Most of us stop praying because we have brought something before the Lord and He is not answering it in our timing, or in our way, so we start having this crisis of faith. *'Man, God is not hearing me. Why isn't He answering my prayers?'* And we go down that rabbit hole.

But let me just stop and say this. If your primary reason for why you pray is so that things will get done in your life, your prayer life will be a roller coaster. This is very important so don't miss this - the primary reason why we pray, why we go before the Lord is because He is worthy. That's it, because He is worthy. God is worthy of our time. God is worthy of our affection. He is worthy of our praise. He is worthy of every moment that we can give Him. And that is why we pray. God is a God who is worthy.

So we have to make sure that the reason why we are praying is because He is worthy. And if our starting point is the worthiness and the worship of God it changes the

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destination of where we get to. It changes our relationship with the Lord by how we approach Him with a sense of intimacy.

We need to remember then that the starting point of prayer is realizing that God's pleasure in our prayers is important. The second starting point of prayer is God's participation in prayer. I want you to turn in your Bibles to Romans Chapter 8. This is probably one of the most powerful and important chapters of Scripture in the entire Bible. Most of us believe that prayer is all about us, right? We have been taught that salvation is a work of God from beginning to end and that God is a God of grace. We hear so much in church about how God works for us and towards us and in us, but when it comes to prayer for most of us when we think about prayer we believe it is all up to us. And God's word teaches something differently.

The starting point of prayer for why we pray and how we pray is not us. It is not all up to us. Here is what you have to understand, and that is even if you don't pray, God is. If you don't believe me, listen to Romans Chapter 8 and verse 26: "***Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought.***" Whoa! Underline that little phrase right there. That is one of the most amazing phrases in the Bible because it teaches us that none of us know how to pray. None of us. We all need help.

And that's okay. God recognizes by nature we don't know how to relate to Him. In fact this is an area of weakness in all of our lives. He doesn't just say the Spirit helps some of you in your weakness. He says the Spirit helps all of us in our weakness. We are all weak in this area of prayer. That's why we know we need Him so much.

Listen to how the Spirit works. "***But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.***" We need to underline this verse, because even when we don't pray, or even when we are praying for the wrong things, God has given us the Holy Spirit. If we are a child of God, if we have accepted Christ as our Savior and Lord, we have a prayer helper. It is not all up to us. We don't have to lift the heavy weights. Even when we are praying for things that maybe we shouldn't be praying for, the Spirit is interceding for us and telling the Father what we really need. The Spirit helps us.

I know this is going to shock you, but I do not work out. I have just never been good at working out. I have had the same body type my entire life. I have the same waist size as I had in high school. I don't know why, but I have never changed. I was really trying to gain weight one time so I decided to go to the gym and work out. I went for about two weeks, but when I went there I had no idea what to do. I was just walking

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around wondering what I should be doing. I know I looked dorky and awkward, but I am just not good at that kind of stuff.

I remember another time when my friend Bruce invited me to work out with him. Now Bruce works out and he looks like it. He is the kind of guy that I want to go hang out with at the gym. And Bruce just told me when to show up, what exercises to do, how many times I had to lift something, so it was just wonderful. I just walked into the gym and followed him around. It was a wonderful relationship and I actually enjoyed working out, because I didn't feel all the pressure of what to do now. I had someone to help me.

And that is exactly what the Spirit is doing with us in our prayers. We are not alone. Even when we are not praying the way we should be God acknowledges that and He has given us a helper. This word helper really means to come alongside. God is not in Heaven looking down at us and thinking we are such a disappointment. *'Five minutes of prayer - seriously?'* *'That's all you are going to give me today?'* No, this verse tells us that the Holy Spirit comes down to us and He puts His arm around us and He helps us to pray.

And not only does the Spirit help us, but look further down still in Romans Chapter 8 and verses 33 and 34: ***"Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died - more than that, who was raised - who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."***

Listen, the reason why some of don't pray is because our life may be in a mess. *'I did this this week. I have struggled with this sin this week. And I just don't feel like praying because I feel like I am a mess. I just feel guilty and ashamed.'* But do you realize what these verses said? It said that Jesus prays for us. He is always interceding for us. Maybe you hear the voice of condemnation, when the voice of the enemy goes before God the Father and says, *'Look at that person; you call him your child?'* But understand this - when that happens Jesus Christ is right there and He says, *'He is yours, Father, because He is under my blood and my authority.'*

We don't have to prove ourselves before God in prayer. We don't have to work ourselves up to make sure we are doing all the right things. Jesus is there continually before the Father interceding for us. That is what He does. He is carrying the heavy load for us so that we can come to the Father as a child.

We are going to look at this passage later, but I love how the Lord's Prayer starts. Jesus said, ***"Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name."*** We approach God as Father. No other religion on the face of this earth calls out to God as 'Father.' And that is amazing to me. Tim Keller is a preacher up in New York and I love what he said one time. He said, *"No one wakes the king up in the morning at 2:00 a.m. for a glass*

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of water - but his child.' And that's the access you and I have with God. That is the relationship you and I have, that He gives to us through Jesus. Jesus has won for us this access.

We have to understand that it is grace that saves us. It is grace that carries us. It is grace poured out on us in our prayers. There is a third way we are to approach prayer and that is with God's plan in prayer. Most of us when it comes to prayer we learn how to pray through osmosis. Do you know what I mean by osmosis? I mean we just kind of pick it up here and there. We are around this group and they pray a certain way so we learn how to pray that way. Then we are around another group and we learn how to pray like they do. So to many of us it is a hodge podge of how we learned to pray.

And I have to be honest with you. A lot of what I am sharing with you this morning is things that I have learned from other men, that they have poured into me, that they have taught me. This is important for us to understand, none of us are brought into the kingdom of God as an expert in prayer. And we will never learn how to pray until we approach God as a child. We need to ask God for His help because we don't know how to pray the way we should. Ask Him to help you to know how to pray to Him, help you to learn how to commune with Him, help you to know how to be intimate with Him.

The reason why I think this is so important is because Jesus when He was on earth was very intentional about teaching His disciples how to pray, which is something that most of us are not really intentional about in our discipleship. We don't really take the time to intentionally think through how we should talk to God. But it was incredibly important to Jesus.

I want you to turn to Matthew Chapter 6 and we are going to read the Lord's prayer in a moment. And we have to understand that God's plan in prayer is important and it can't be our own plan. Our way of prayer always begins with us and that is not the way Jesus prayed. I will never forget one time when Donald Whitney shared something with a room full of Christians by saying this: "*The number one reason why Christians do not pray today is because they get bored with prayer.*" And I remember thinking, '*Did he just say that? Can you say something like that in church - that you get bored with prayer?*'

I will be honest with you and tell you that I have fallen asleep during prayer time. Has that ever happened to any of you? You tell the Lord that you are going to pray a lot in the morning, next thing you know the alarm goes off at 6:00 a.m., you decide to just lay there a few more minutes and think God hears me if I am vertical or horizontal. You pray for a few minutes and then you fall back asleep. And God is like, '*Again?*'

So many times the reason why Donald Whitney said we get bored with prayer is because many times we say the same thing over and over and over again. We pray for

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the same five things over and over again to God. That is why we need a starting point of prayer. And one of the things that Jesus was very clear about is that the starting point of prayer is God's word. In fact prayer should be Scripture fed and Spirit led. The prayer that God wants us to pray is Scripture fed and Spirit led. We can pray with Scripture. Many times our prayer life gets boring and stale because we end up saying the same things, when we need to start with God's word by praying a passage of Scripture.

So we start with God's word. Donald Whitney taught this. He told us to pick out five different Psalms and then pick out one for the day. It could be like Psalm 1, Psalm 31, Psalm 61, Psalm 91 and Psalm 121. And then whatever day of the month you can just pick out Psalms for that date. If it is the 13th of the month you could pick out Psalm 13, Psalm 43, Psalm 73, Psalm 103 and Psalm 133. Why does he suggest that? It is because out of one of those Psalms that you will read you can probably decide on one and just pray through it. I did that a few years ago and it really helped my prayer life.

Now let's look at how Jesus taught His disciples how to pray in Matthew Chapter 6 and starting in verse 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.”*** What was Jesus saying? Was it to think that our words are to come from our own minds believing God will be impressed with them? No! He told His disciples not to be like them.

“For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’ This is the way that Jesus taught His disciples how to pray.

And I want to lead you through it by teaching you four words that should help guide your prayer life. This is God's plan for prayer. Here are the four words - up, down, in, out. It is that simple. This prayer that Jesus taught His disciples was up, down, in and out. Let's say that together. Up - down - in - out. So we see first of all that our prayers should be upward. ***“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”*** We start with reverence because He is God. As we begin prayer we should always start by looking upward. *‘God, this is how great you are.’*

Our next response is downward, ***“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*** How should we respond to the greatness of who God is? What should I ask now for God to do in light of who He is? I can begin with God's character and what God wants.

The next thing I move to is inward which can be requests. What should I ask God for? Notice the two things that should happen before we ask God for requests. Many times we don't know what to ask God for until we know what He wants. And so our

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requests could be like, *“Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.* What does God want us to pray for? He wants us to pray for relationships and resources. *‘God, this is what I need. Please help me with this person.’* That is our inward request.

Next is the outward which is our readiness. Where are we going? *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”* Or deliver us from the evil one. There is evil, there is wickedness, there are the forces of darkness in this world which can creep into our families, into our church, and into our own hearts. So we need to ask God to do a great work out there.

So if we understand that this is how Jesus taught His disciples to pray, don't you think it should also be how we pray? It is that simple. We just need to remember to pray up, down, in and out. That is how God wants us to pray. So we should just practice that and then also take it to Scripture. You can open up a passage of Scripture such as Titus Chapter 1, Ephesians Chapter 1 or one of the Psalms and then just think about this up, down, in and out. Let that guide your prayers and it can radically change the way you pray.

We are going to practice that right now. Jesus said that His house would be called a house of prayer, so what I want to do is lead us in some moments of prayer using the up, down, in and out template that Jesus gave to us. And we are going to have some moments of silence and that's okay. We are not used to silence, but we need to learn how to be silent for the Lord.

So what I am going to do is lead us in some time of prayer and I will pray through a transition. So please bow your heads and close your eyes. And let's begin our time in prayer this morning with upward reverence. Would you spend the next few moments praising and worshipping God for who He is? (Period of silence.)

‘Father, there is no one like you. I pray that our prayers right now would rise up to your throne room and this would be a sweet aroma of time for you. You love us unconditionally. You love us beyond what we can imagine. You are our provider. You are our healer. Everything good in this world comes from your hand and you have blessed us richly with that. You are a God who is present. You are a God who is powerful. And you are a God who has given to us your own Son. So God we worship you and we praise you this morning. We don't have enough time and enough words to declare to you all that you are.’

I want us now to respond to the holiness and the goodness and the love of Christ. What is your response now to *“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* What are the kingdom prayers that God wants you to pray right now? (Period of silence.)

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'Oh God we believe that when you see this world you see what is possible. We believe that when you look at Cornelius and Huntersville and Davidson and Denver and you look at our cities, God, that you desire to see your glory fill this earth. So God I pray that your love would be manifested in our homes and in our work places. God I pray that your will would be done. Help us to love what you love and desire what you desire. We just pray, Father, that you would help us to see the harvest that is before us and to love our neighbor as ourself.'

Now let's spend some time praying our inward requests. Maybe there is someone that is far from God that is close to you. Maybe you have some issues with one of your children, or maybe it is an issue with your marriage, or maybe it is just a daily need that you have. You don't know how God is going to provide, but He can and He does. Lay those requests before the Lord's throne right now. (Period of silence.)

'Oh Father you know what we need. Jesus told us that you know what we need before we even ask it. God, whatever broken hearts that are here this morning, please mend them. Whatever broken relationships are here in this room, please heal them. God, for the people that don't know where the answer will come from may they find their answer in you. God, we are a people who walk into sin all the time, whether it is sin in our hearts or sin being done to us, so I just pray God that we would see you bring reconciliation and redemption to our lives.'

Finally let's pray against the strongholds of sin, the temptation that seeks to destroy us, the power of the evil one that seeks to destroy the work of God. How will we pray against these forces of darkness with a force and a power of our Savior? Let's spend some time in prayer right now for that. (Period of silence.)

'Oh Father there are things in this world that seem bigger than you. Father, I pray that we would not let those things rob us of our joy in you, our hope in you. God, I pray if anyone is struggling with temptation, please help them understand the power of the resurrection is working inside of them this morning. Knowing that Satan seeks to steal, kill and destroy your children we ask you, Father, to fight for us. God, we know that prayer is one of our only offensive weapons in this world, and may we use it. I pray, Father, that we would leave here with an understanding of your power and your will and your goodness. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.'