


TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- Read Luke 5:16. Jesus "**often**" would slip away and pray. In **your** opinion—irrespective of the activity (it could be sleeping, it could be shopping)—**how often** qualifies as "often" **to you**?

List the activities in which, according to your own standard (above), you "often" are engaged.

List the "Christian activities" in which, according to your own standard, you "often" are engaged.

How satisfied are you with your responses to the last two questions?

- What should you do differently? Concretely, what will it take for that to happen?
- Jesus taught us to pray, "*Give us each day the food we need.*" Bart Simpson, no doubt speaking for many Americans, prayed: "*Dear God, we paid for all this stuff ourselves—so thanks for nothing.*" What evidence of that attitude—*probably in a less crass form*—do you see in your own life?

In what situations do you **typically** pray? **Why those** situations?

In what situations do you **almost never** pray? **Why those** situations?

What do your answers to the above questions say about your **view** of God? of yourself?
Are those views accurate? Where are they inaccurate?

- In your sphere of influence, where does God's name need to be more revered ("hallowed")?
- In your sphere of influence, in what situations does the actual reign and rule of God (his "kingdom") need fuller expression?
- Pastor Doug said that when Jesus taught us to pray, "lead us not into temptation", he meant, "Lord, lead us into righteousness". Explain the connection between us **praying** for God to lead us into righteousness and us **disciplining ourselves** for righteousness (1 Timothy 4:7b).

Sermon Summary

In prayer, the Creator of the universe invites you to commune with him (1 John 1:3). Jesus had a close relationship with his Father and prayed throughout his life: at his baptism (Luke 3:21), when the crowds began to increase (Luke 5:16), before he chose his twelve disciples (Luke 6:12), before asking his disciples for their confession of faith (Luke 9:18), at his Transfiguration (Luke 9:29), that his disciples' faith would be strengthened as they faced mounting temptation (Luke 22:32), in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed for personal strength as he anticipated the agony of the cross (Luke 22:41-42) and while on the cross he prayed for his enemies (Luke 23:34). Jesus prayed a lot (Luke 5:16). Prayer is one of the greatest privileges God gives to his children, but many of us struggle to make prayer an integral part of our lives. The same intimate fellowship that Jesus enjoys with God the Father is available to you and me today, and it can be cultivated and deepened through a life of prayer.

Jesus' disciples had the opportunity to observe him up close and personal. Nowhere in the Scriptures do the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to preach, to perform miracles, or to cast out demons. They ask for instruction in prayer (Luke 11:1). We twenty-first century disciples also need to be taught how to pray. Jesus' disciples recognized the disparity between their prayer life and that of their master's and they wanted to do something about it. Oftentimes when we see the gap between Jesus' practice of prayer and our own, we dismiss it. Jesus' disciples didn't allow their struggle in prayer to become an excuse not to pray.

Many of you have memorized the Lord's Prayer (I prefer to call it the "disciple's prayer")—but is your life guided by its principles? There are five petitions in Luke's version of this prayer (Luke 11:2-4). The first two concern God's reputation and will (that His name would be hallowed and that his kingdom would come), and the final three requests concern our needs (for our daily bread, for forgiveness of sin, and to not be led into temptation).

First, notice how Jesus encourages us to address God in prayer. The word translated as "father" is a term of endearment which we might even translate, "Daddy". Jews of Jesus' day never addressed God so personally. They preferred titles like, "Sovereign Lord," or "King of the Universe." But Jesus referred to God as "Father." Jesus taught his disciples to address God in the same way. Although my dad was a successful owner and CEO of several companies, I didn't heap all of those titles on him when I called his office. I'd just say, "Hi, this is Doug. Is Dad there?" And they'd patch me right through. Someone else calling might get the runaround, but not me. Why? Because I am his son and he is my father. He wants to talk with me as much as I want to talk with him.

God is the Sovereign King of the Universe and deserves more respect and reverence than what is due our earthly fathers, but even so he invites us to address him as "Father." Knowing how great God is makes it all the more incredible, that he invites us to address him in such intimate and personal terms. Jesus balances intimacy with God with the proper reverence due him. He tells us that we are to pray, "Father, hallowed be Your name." To "hallow" something means to treat it as being holy and sacred. No matter how close God invites us to come, there is still an infinite gulf between our sinfulness and his majesty. By praying, "hallowed by your name," we are asking our heavenly Father to act in such a way that mankind, in increasing numbers, will come to revere him, to glorify him, to worship him and to consider him holy. Sometimes even Christians use God's name as a curse word! To pray, "Hallowed be your name" is to pray, "Father, work in me so that I will acknowledge your unsurpassed and glorious holiness."

Then Jesus told us to pray, "Your kingdom come." This is a prayer rather that God's sovereign rule on earth would be universally acknowledged and submitted to. Make no mistake about it, Jesus is the sovereign king of the universe. In heaven there is no question about it. We pray that the kingdom of God will become visible on earth, that the invisible will be made visible. It anticipates a time in the future when evil will be stamped out, God's enemies vanquished, and God's promises to his people fully realized. Do you hunger for God's kingdom to come in all its surpassing righteousness, or are you content with how things are now? If we only knew what awaits us, we would pray with fervency, "Thy kingdom come."

Regarding those petitions directly related to man, first we are to pray for our daily bread. Is such a prayer appropriate for twenty-first century American Christians? Yes. We are no less dependent upon God's good gifts than were our first century counterparts. God has blessed us, but he could withdraw that blessing at any time (1 Corinthians 4:7). Don't ever forget that God is the ultimate source of all that you enjoy (James 1:17). Our ingratitude is an insult to his great generosity. We are, by and large, a thankless generation. We have taken God's gifts for granted. This prayer reminds us of our dependence upon God.

Next Jesus instructs us to pray, "And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us." (It is this part of the prayer that compels me to suggest that we call this the "disciples prayer" rather than the "Lord's Prayer", for Jesus could never pray this, since he never sinned. He had nothing to be forgiven of!) Sin is a debt owed which must be discharged; what strikes me is not that we should ask God to forgive us our sins, but that Jesus assumes that we will freely forgive those who hurt us! In Jesus' mind, this should be the first mark of a Christian. Having been forgiven such a great debt by God, we should be quick to forgive others. The readiness to forgive others is a manifestation of the self-denial which should characterize disciples of Christ (Luke 9:23).

The final petition of the disciples' prayer is "lead us not into temptation." Why should we even have to pray such a prayer? Can't we just take it for granted that God would never lead us into temptation? (James 1:13). So then, why this prayer? I think Jesus is using a figure of speech called *tapeinosis*, where you declare a truth by negating the contrary. We have all used it, without knowing what it was called (to say, "It was no small gathering," literally means that there was a large crowd in attendance). Jesus used this figure of speech on a number of occasions (John 6:37; 14:18; etc.). Essentially we are praying, "Lord lead us into righteousness, into situations where far from being tempted, we will be protected and therefore kept righteous. We need to look to God not only for physical provision ("daily bread"), but also for moral triumph and spiritual protection. The more I grow as a Christian, the more aware I am of my moral weaknesses, and my capacity to seek to justify the unjustifiable. The prophet Jeremiah said, "The heart is desperately wicked, who can understand it?" (17:9)

When was the last time you asked God to strengthen you in the face of temptation? For some of you it has been a while. And you wonder why you struggle the way that you do. Much of it goes back to our prayerlessness. Church, we stand in great need of the grace of God, and that grace is available to us. In fact, Jesus invites us to attach our weakness to his great strength. We can do that through prayer.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Pastor Doug challenged us all this week to read Luke 11:1-4, and then to: Converse with your heavenly Father using this prayer as a model.

- Pray that God's name would be hallowed (revered) and that his kingdom would come.
- Thank him for his physical and spiritual provision in your life.
- Ask him for protection in those areas where you most struggle.
- Ask him to help you forgive others as he graciously forgives you.

Make prayer an ongoing centerpiece in your home.

As time permits, meditate on these "Great Prayers of the New Testament":

Monday—Ephesians 1:15-23

- List all of the **things** Paul prayed for.
- List the **result** in our lives when these things come to pass.

Tuesday—Ephesians 3:14-21

- List the ways God (Father, Son, or Spirit) are **described** in this passage.
- Map out the **progression** found in verses 16-19.

Wednesday—Colossians 1:9-12

- **For what** did Paul pray in v. 9?
- What **impact** do v. 10-12 say it would have in your life if you were "filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding"?

Thursday—Philippians 1:3-11

- **Why** was Paul thankful for the Philippian believers? Specifically, what does that **mean**?
- **Pray** v. 9-11 for yourself.

Friday—Acts 4:23-31

- In v. 24-28, **contrast** God and his opponents.
- Can you **honestly** pray what the disciples did in v. 29? Why or why not?

Saturday—Jude 1:24-25

- How is God **described** in these two verses?
- What is the **outcome** for those who have such a God as their own?