

*Come, Holy Spirit, and make these words Your word, that our hearts may become your heart. Amen.*

Do we really need to learn how to pray? Doesn't it come naturally?  
Some of us have been doing it our whole lives. As had Jesus' disciples.  
But they saw something in the way he prayed that was different. They wanted  
to learn to pray the way he prayed. When he prayed, things happened!  
Palsied limbs became strong; water became like pavement; fish swam into nets;  
the blind could see, the lame could walk – and forgiveness was possible.  
All the power that they saw in Jesus' ministry was connected to his prayer.  
Don't we want that kind of power?

That power doesn't come from prayer so much as from our relationship with God  
– which is built through prayer.

No relationship can grow without communication.

So let's think of different kinds of prayer as different forms of communication.

We have our "text" prayers – short, quick, sometimes a shopping list.

"Please?" "Thanks!" "Help!"

There are "email" prayers – longer, more like letters, more detailed –  
but still one-way communication.

And then there are "meeting for lunch" prayers – where you sit down to stay  
awhile, and not only speak but listen for what the other person has to say.

That can be harder for us non-quiet types – yet it's how we build the relationship.

Many of us were taught that prayer is something we do when we need something.

And then we ask politely, like submitting a request to corporate headquarters.

And when our prayer is not answered the way we wanted, we go away –

sometimes we say, "Oh well, it wasn't God's will."

sometimes we say, "Oh well, who said God answered prayer anyway?"

sometimes we say, "Oh well, who said God exists?"

After all, what's the point of believing in God if it doesn't get us anything?

But what kind of relation does well when it's only based on what we can get?

Jesus came to invite people into a relationship with His Father in heaven.

Prayer is the way we most closely live that relationship.

So when his disciples said, "Teach us to pray," he started with the basics.

Start by reminding yourself who you're talking to – your abba in heaven,  
your creator who loves you, who exists in a realm where all things are possible.  
your father who loves you, but isn't like you – who is holy beyond measure.

If "father" is painful for you, use "mother." God has no gender.

And ask this loving father/mother to give you what you need for today.

Not for this year. Just your bread, what you need to sustain you, today.

And in the embrace of this loving relationship with One who knows you,  
be honest about your sins and receive God's forgiveness,  
which is always waiting for us.

And out of gratitude and humility that comes with accepting forgiveness,

ask for grace to forgive those who have hurt or wounded or offended you.

And ask God to be your defender in the trials that come our way in this broken  
world, be they misfortunes or spiritual attack.

That's it. So simple and right, that we're still saying that prayer weekly, even daily.

In that prayer, my friends, is the road map for navigating your future.

And it starts with that word, Daily.

We only land in our preferred future as we are willing to live in today.

Ask for your daily bread, not October's.

Forgive today, so it doesn't build up and fester.

Put it in God's hands today – invite God's kingdom into your reality now.

We can never control the outcome of the things we pray about.

The things we can control, we rarely bother to pray about.

And yet here Jesus issues a promise: when you ask you will receive;

when you seek, you will find, when you knock, the door will be opened.

And everyone goes home with a gift – the gift that encompasses all other gifts.

The whole package: the Holy Spirit.

Jesus doesn't promise that when we pray we will always get exactly what we want.

Jesus invites us to go beyond what we want, into trusting in God's presence.

When we ask, seek, knock it's not like a wish list, a wedding registry –

it's more like a wedding night, a mutual giving and receiving.

Jesus promises that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask.

The Holy Spirit is all this community needs to move into its next phase of life.

The Holy Spirit is the way we experience the presence and the power of God.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, remaining with us always.

The Holy Spirit guides our decision-making, our movements, our relationships.

The Holy Spirit activates our gifts, so that we move into the fullness of God's intentions for us. We're going to learn more about our gifts this fall. As we're aware of God's Spirit alive in us, we begin to be transformed; other people see in us things like *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*. And the Holy Spirit gives us the power of God, the power that made the universe, so that we can become agents of transformation for others. So if we feel helpless in the face of all that is wrong in our world, our country, Remember we've received the power that made the universe. In some ways our life of faith is about learning to wield that power. The one undeniable promise of God, after eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, is God's presence with us here and now through the gift of the Holy Spirit. And that gifts makes possible everything. Everything we want to be.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't bring our worries and wants to God in prayer – A loving parent wants to hear what their children are worried about, Whether or not they intend to give them the pony or the new toy, Whether or not they can make the other kids be nice to their beloved. God wants to hear what's going on with us, and then to leave those needs and wants and anxieties with him, because God wants to bless our socks off with the one gift we cannot give ourselves, the power and love and peace of the Holy Spirit flowing through our lives.

How will thrive in the next phase of our life as a church?  
By living in the Spirit, inviting the Spirit to be present at every meeting.  
The Holy Spirit likes to be invited – so start every meeting with  
“Come, Holy Spirit.” Every time you worry, say, “Come, Holy Spirit.”  
Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all the other things we want and worry about will come to you too.  
How much more does God want to bless us, and the world through us?  
More than we can ever ask or imagine.  
God will bless our socks off.

*Amen.*

**Luke 11:1-13**

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation." Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs. "So I say to you: **Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.** For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"**