

# FIVE FORKS BRETHERN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *The (-ions) of Prayer: Part 2*

**SERIES:** *The Wonder and Mystery of Prayer*

**SCRIPTURES:** *Luke 11:3, Luke 1:38*

**SPEAKER:** *Brady Smith*

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*\*Credit to the Tyler Staton, author of "Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools\*"*

Good morning Five Forks Church, it is great to have you with us this morning. Similar to what we've been doing in prior weeks, I'm going to ask that you bow your heads once more as we pray to our great God to begin our message.

*Pray \*Slight pause after prayer concludes\**

Prayer is awesome. Because the fact that we can call out to our Creator and He will listen... it's simply incredible. It's something that should blow your mind every time you try to wrap your head around it! It's **The Wonder and Mystery of Prayer**.

If you were with us last week, we began discussing **The (-ions) of Prayer**

Because as I have delved into this wonderful and mysterious world of prayer, I have found that there are 4 words ending with "-ion" that are absolutely essential to grow and connect deeper with God through prayer. Those four words are...

**Adoration**

**Confession**

**Petition**

**Participation**

Last week we talked about Adoration and Confession, which you can always go back and listen to that message on our website if you missed it.

However, for today, our goal is to break down those final two words of Petition and Participation.

Also, I do want to give credit to Tyler Staton and his book, *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools*, for the inspiration behind this sermon series. It's a great read that I'd highly recommend!

Alright, let's get started by talking about...

## I. Petition (Daily Bread)

My wife Lexie absolutely loves The Cheesecake Factory, and I'm thankful for that because it's delicious! The only sad part about this is that the closest Cheesecake Factory restaurant is roughly an hour and a half drive to Colombia, Maryland. We don't go very often, but typically, around her birthday, we'll make the trip down.

It's a relatively easy drive down, but the absolute worst part of it all is parking. **(picture of Cheesecake Factory parking lot)** If you can see in this picture, the restaurant is right next to a massive mall. We've gone maybe 4 times to this restaurant and EVERY time the parking lot is packed. Even when it was pouring down rain around 2:30 PM on a random weekday... It's always packed.

Now, I like to think of myself as fairly patient guy... but I can distinctly remember our first time going down we had driven up and down these lanes trying to find a spot for nearly 15 minutes. I saw people snagging open spots right in front of me time and time again I was starting to lose my mind!

I finally started praying to myself, "God, please just let there be an open parking spot!!" I was praying as hard as I could for this too! Soon after, it did end up happening... "Thank you God!! Now we can enjoy our meal." I found myself praying afterwards.

Now, the reason I tell you that story is because looking back at that moment I found myself thinking... **"Why should God care about this?"** Why should God bend the arc of the universe just so I can find a parking spot? I mean, He has FAR more important things that I should be praying for Him to address, so why should He care about this?

I wrestled with that for a while and I think many of us do. We'll sometimes feel guilty when asking God to help with little things, or we may view it as "selfish".

But you know, as I have delved into the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer, I have discovered that Jesus INSISTS that we pray like this. Jesus insists that we pray about the big "world peace and no wars" types of prayers, as well as the small "parking spot" prayers. He wouldn't have it any other way.

Here's why I say that... Right in the middle of what we call "The Lord's Prayer". Between the powerful words of "hallowed be your name", "your kingdom come", "forgive us", and "deliver us from the evil one"... Do you know what's right in the middle of all of that?

"Give us this day our daily bread." (Luke 11:3)

This verse right here is what Petition in prayer is all about... but why is this so important? Why does Jesus insist we have a "Daily Bread" type of mindset when we pray? I think it can be summarized into 3 clear points. First, it helps us...

### A. Focus on the Little Things

It's pretty fascinating... right after Jesus shares the Lord's Prayer in Luke 11:2-4, he shares a parable in verses 5-8. In the parable he explains that there is a neighbor requesting... and you're never going to guess... bread!

"Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup> a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him."

When you read this verse I want you to catch this... This right here is real, genuine language. This is "Daily bread" type of language. It's something you'd hear in day to day conversation, and I think that's incredibly important to recognize, and here's why...

Throughout the American church there's been this unwritten rule that we have to fill our prayers with these grand phrases or euphemisms that we'd never use in our typical day-to-day conversation...

For example, I remember using the phrase, “I pray You fill me with Your Spirit until I am overflowing with Your goodness” often in my prayers. It’s good to pray like that, but I’d would not use that kind of phraseology in my typical, day to day conversation.

What I believe Jesus is teaching us here with “Daily Bread” prayers is that it’s okay, even good, to use the same common, everyday language when we pray. Common, everyday language we’d use when telling a family member about our day, or when we call a friend on the phone to just chat and catch up.

When you pray using “daily bread” type of language, it allows you to remain grounded in your prayer life. I feel like when you only focus on the “big and lofty prayers” it can cause you to push God and prayer into this far-off, and almost imaginative place.

However, you get in the habit of praying for the little things such as...

God, provide for my meals today.

God, allow me to be a good representative of you if I meet someone new.

God, help me pass the test.

Or maybe... God, let me find a parking spot.

When you get in the habit of Daily Bread prayer it means you are constantly inviting God into the here and now. Yes, God of course cares about the big prayers and requests, but he also cares about the little things.

In the words of Tyler Staton,

**If we pray for only big things, exclusively limiting our conversations with God to the objective noble requests, we live a cramped spiritual life, with little room for the actual God we meet in Jesus.**

So let me encourage you, invite God in and focus on the little things, this is part of what daily bread prayer is all about. But daily bread prayer also helps us...

## **B. Fight Against the Temptation of Control**

Regardless of who is it is, I think every person on this Earth would agree that they like feeling in control. Personally, when I think back to what have been some of the scariest moments in my life, it was when I didn't feel in control. For example...

When I was driving in the Winter in some poor weather the car started to slide on some black ice... Regardless of what pedal I hit or how I turned the wheel, it felt like I had no control. It was terrifying.

Or when I recently had to get surgery done and was put under anesthesia. No control whatsoever, I had to put full faith in the Lord and those doctors... and it was terrifying.

And why? Because I like control. Now I will say, having a desire to be in control is not necessarily a bad thing, but I do think it can be turned it into a major problem when we our obsess over it.

And you know, as I reflect on this, I realized something kind of ironic. As followers of Jesus we will subconsciously think something like this,

**“I trust God to fulfill my big theological questions (such as why we were created, where I'll go when I die, that He saved me from sin)...but I'm not sure I can trust him with my dreams, hopes, and plans.”**

We'll say we trust him ultimately...but not immediately. As a result, we will try and white-knuckle and micromanage our way through life. When this happens we fall victim to the temptation of control, and do you know what that leads too?

It causes our lives to be filled with unimaginable amounts of stress and leads us to feeling so exhausted as we try to constantly control everything.

That's why I believe directly in the middle of the Lord's Prayer Jesus tells us to pray the simple words of,

**“Give us this day our daily bread.” (Luke 11:3)**

It is those first two words, “Give us,” that really stand out to me here because it seems that Jesus is encouraging us to command that God takes control. It's like a young child asking their parent for something,

“Mom, give me my toy.”

“Dad, fill up my water bottle.”

“Read me a story.”

“Give me a snack.”

It is Jesus challenging us to fight our addiction to control and instead humble ourselves, and why? Because daily bread prayers are a reminder that ultimately we are not the ones in charge...we are not the ones in control.

I love the way Staton explains it,

**“Prayer replaces control with trust. A God-given desire (in wanting control) is only fulfilled by God-given means.”**

This is why we need to have these daily bread prayers in our prayer lives, but there’s also one final reason and that is...

### **C. It Builds Relationship**

In John 5 there’s a popular story of Jesus visiting Jerusalem during one of the Jewish festivals and it’s while he is there that he comes across a place where many disable people would sit and lay to beg for money, food, or water.

Picking up in verse 5 it says,

5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

When I read this story I almost laugh because of how ridiculous the question that Jesus asks this man seems to be. It’d be like calling 911 for an ambulance and when the EMT arrives to help you out they first ask, “Excuse me, but do you want to get well?” It’s ridiculous! Almost laughable!!

But here Jesus when Jesus is asking the question it’s almost as if he is saying, **“I want to hear you say it.”** Tell me what it is you really want. I want to hear you say

it. And you know, there's something really important about that. Let me give you an example to explain why...

When Lexie and I got married a few years ago, I had this habit of telling her an idea or plan I had in my mind for us to do something together, but I would never just ask for it straight up. I would beat around the bush and say something like...

"You know I was thinking about how I really want to go to the park together and throw a frisbee around."

Lexie's response to that would be, "Okay...so what are you asking me?" Almost as if she was saying, **"I want to hear you say it."**

Then I'd finally ask what I was really thinking the whole time, "Would you please come to the park with me to throw frisbee?"

In this pursuit to not feel too "pushy" or needy, I would avoid the real question or request I had. But it's when I finally opened up with what I was truly thinking and requesting that it helped Lexie and I's relationship.

I think we often feel that same way when it comes to our prayer life, where we will beat around the bush and not ask what we are truly thinking, but it's here in John's gospel that we see Jesus challenges us by asking, "Do you want to get well?" As if he's saying, "Just be honest with me, and ask me what you really want."

I understand that this part of it can be hard. Asking and requesting can be hard because it means you need to be vulnerable. When you ask anyone for anything, you risk the possibility of rejection or at least disappointment, and that can be a little scary.

But the thing is, unless we ask God for something, he can't disappoint or surprise us! We can't build trust without asking, we can't relate to God if we never ask. Asking is the means by which we build the relationship with God that he designed us to enjoy.

This right here is why having Petition in your prayer life, a daily bread type of prayer life, is so important. It encourages us to...

### **Focus on the Little Things**

### **Fight Against the Temptation of Control**

### **Build Relationship with God**

Moving on now to our second “-ion” word for this morning’s message we reach...

## **I. Participation**

As we look to begin our discussion talking about Participation, I’m actually going to you back to English class. So pull out your textbooks to page 187 and... I’m just kidding. 😊

But in all seriousness, I want to explain something interesting about our English language. You see, in English we communicate using two different “voices”. The first is known as an **Active Voice** and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is known as a **Passive Voice**.

So what’s the difference you may be wondering?

Well, simply put, **the Active voice tells us what a person or thing does**. An example of this would be if I said, **“I give advice.”** I am the actor, I initiate the action. That is active voice.

On the other hand, **Passive voice tells us what is being done to someone or something**. So an example would be **“I am given advice.”** I am being acted upon, I receive the action. That is passive voice.

So here in our English language we speak in either the Active or Passive voice, but do you want to know something pretty funny? When we see examples of how Jesus prayed, he didn’t always pray in an active or passive voice instead he prayed in what is called...

### **A. The Middle Voice**

Now you may be thinking, “I just figured out this whole Active and Passive voice thing... now there’s something in between that?” Yes, yes there is.



You see, in the Ancient Greek language, the language of the original New Testament, they also used “The Middle Voice” in how they communicated. The middle voice can best be defined like this,

**“I am an active participant, but the action did not begin with me. I am *JOINING* the action of another.”**

If you went back to our examples from earlier, it would be something like, “**I receive advice.**” Do you see the difference? It’s involvement and participation!

That is the middle voice, and this is the voice that we also want to spend time praying in. As Eugene Peterson explains it,

**Prayer and spirituality feature participation, the complex participation of God and the human, his will and our wills...We are involved in the action and participate in its results but do not control or define it (middle voice).**

Now this may sound extremely complex, but simply put the middle voice means that while we are active participants, the action didn’t begin with us, it begins with God.

In the middle voice, we participate in the action and can reap the benefits of the action, but it’s ultimately God who is in control. We get to join God in his plan. This is a form of prayer that we need to look to adding in our prayer lives, one focused on participating with God in His plan, prayer based in the middle voice.

If you want an example of what a true prayer of participation and praying in the middle voice looks like, look no further than...

### **B. Mary’s Example**

Mary is a teenage girl who is smitten with a boy and dreams of a fairy tale life together. That is until she receives word from an angel that despite being a virgin, she is carrying a child, the son of Yahweh himself...

Upon receiving news like that, what do you think starts going through her mind? I suspect it was both unbelievable excitement, and unimaginable worry.

Because on one hand, Mary's getting the chance to see God fulfill his promises first hand! She won't be reading the story of the arrived Messiah on a scroll, but instead will get to raise him as her child. She will get to participate in the story! That's unbelievably exciting!

But then... on the other hand... There's the unimaginable worry.

Leviticus law says adultery is punishable by execution...Will I be killed?

If I survive, what will Joseph think? Will he leave me?

Will my family disown me and abandon me?

Will I be cast out of the town?

Nazareth is a small town, people will find out quickly...

So yes, what Mary has been told is some good news. It's THE good news, but it sure has come at a great cost. And as the angel explains this to her with all of these different thoughts bouncing around her mind she simply responded with these powerful words,

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."  
(Luke 1:38)

Wow. She responds with a prayer of surrender and humbleness. It's a middle voice type of prayer that focuses on participating in God's plan. It's acknowledging that our place in His world is to be the recipients of His action and respond to it humbly and willingly.

Earlier this week while swimming with my 4-year-old niece she asked to me to make a whirlpool, where you keep swimming around the edge until there's this fast current going in a circle. As she swam with her floaties she was doggy paddling her best with the current, swimming faster than she ever had before.

But then she wanted to try going the other way. She tried and tried, with limbs flailing trying to do anything she could to swim the other direction, while the whole time she was still being dragged along with the current.

When God has his plan set into motion, it's just like that whirlpool. That current is moving, and you have two options. You can glide along and swim with it, or you can exhaust yourself and flail your limbs around trying to fight it... but in the end, the current will always win.

When Mary heard the news from the angel, she had two choices. Swim with it, or try and fight it. And when she said those powerful words,

38 **"I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled."**

She chose to dive head first into the water. Because even with the hardships of three uncomfortable trimesters, traveling 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and laying her new born son in a manger... She wanted to do anything she could to participate within God's activity in the world. And the benefits of her doing that is exactly what she sang later on in Luke 1,

**"From now on all generations will call me blessed." (Luke 1:48)**

This is an awesome story, and when we read that we should all be saying...

**"I want that for my life!"**

**"I want to dive into the water and flow with the current of the whirlpool"**

**"I want to participate in God's work in a broken world!"**

**"I want the Spirit of God to work within me like an expert mechanic getting an old car back to running order like it was designed."**

If you are sitting here thinking any of that right now, thinking, "Yes I want to be a key part of the plan that God has for this world!" Then you need to start learning to pray in the Middle voice!

It means that while you pray you need to be asking God,

**"How do you want me to participate in your plan today?"**

**"How do you want to use me today? I am ready and willing."**

It's all about humbling yourself and opening yourself up so that the Holy Spirit can begin working in you and through you... Because that right there is participation!

### **III. Practice Rather Than Theory**

Alright, similar to last week, for the last few minutes of this morning's message I want to present you all with a challenge. As we go on this journey to dive into the wonder and mystery of prayer, breaking down Petition and Participation, it is absolutely crucial that we take time to PRACTICE applying these into our prayer lives!

Let's first talk about...

### A. Practicing Petition

As we look to get into the habit of Daily Bread types of prayer, I'd like to present you with this challenge for the week.

**At the beginning of your day, write down 3-5 specific needs and wants in your life for that day.**

With that, I'd like to challenge you to pray for the things you may sometimes feel are too small to actually pray about. For example,

Pray that the work meeting goes well that day.

Pray that you won't hit much traffic as you're running late for that appointment.

Pray for wisdom in how to answer that stressful email or text message.

Pray for energy after a rough night's sleep.

Pray for the little things and focus on giving up that desire for control.

And when you pray these things, ask God vulnerably, humbly, and boldly as you pray full of petition. I promise you he wants to hear each and every one of them.

Alright, let's move on now to...

### B. Practicing Participation

As you look to practice participation and praying in the middle voice, then I'd encourage you to use the same template that Mary provided us with Luke 1:38,

38 "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled."

Looking at that first sentence, **I am the Lord's Servant...**

We see that this is a statement of identity. It's saying, "I am just a background character appearing for that one single scene in this grand story about God." A story that is far greater than anything we could ever come up with on our own.

And you know... That is more than enough! You belong to the King of Kings. You are a part of a kingdom that will never fall. There is no voice, no force, and no condemnation that will ever make you less than who you are in Him.

So as you look to pray in the middle voice, first humble yourself and proudly proclaim who you are in God. Let go of your self-inflation and ego. Let go of your dejection, self-doubt, and insecurity. You are a servant, and you belong to the Lord himself.

The second sentence in this verse, **"May your word to me be fulfilled."** is a statement of participation.

It is where you consent to the Holy Spirit to be your guide as you jump into the water saying God, "I'm ready to be used by you and participate in what you have for this world." And it's then in those moments when you recognize the Spirit inviting you to act, say YES!

Commit to going, to giving, to forgiving!

Commit to hope, to believing, to sometimes slowing down and resting!

Commit to serving, to listening, to waiting, to speaking, and most importantly...

Commit to loving.

That is participation.

As we look to close this series I will just say that prayer is such a gift. It is wonderful and mysterious. We receive so many blessings from prayer, but it can also create many questions as well. And you know, that's part of what makes it so beautiful.

I hope you'll use that gift as you look to create prayer lives full of Adoration, Confession, Petition, and Participation.

**PRAY**