

Pray Like Jesus #2 - Pray Like Jesus

- Welcome to week two of the Pray Like Jesus series. It's a short five-week series. Free copy of the book for all of you, would encourage you to read. I'm gonna cover as much as I can. I have way more content than will fit in a sermon, and I'll cover the rest, whatever I can hit, for Real Men on Wednesday night. Last week, we looked at God as Father, and really the big idea for prayer is this, it's less about focusing on prayer and it's more about getting to know God as Father. And if you know that He loves you, you're more likely to have a conversation with Him, which is really what prayer is all about. Today, we're gonna look at Jesus' prayer life. Everything Jesus did while on the earth was perfect. What does the perfect prayer life look like? And Jesus needed to pray, we needed to pray. And if Jesus had to listen to the Father, we need to be listening to the Father, especially in the complicated times that we find ourselves in. And I was thinking about it, when kids are little, they need to learn how to communicate. How many of you are parents or grandparents? Kids come into the world, they don't know anything and they don't know how to do anything. They need to learn everything. And one of the first things that we teach our kids is how to communicate, which includes speaking and listening. Sometimes you tell your kids, hey, you need to be quiet now, you need to listen. These are both crucial for the relationship. The kid needs to learn when to speak and when to listen. And the same is true not just when we are physically born but when we're spiritually born again. And prayer is how we have a conversation with God as Father. It includes talking to Him and listening to Him. And so what we're gonna do, we're gonna look at that very practically today. Now, as we do, some of you are not yet Christians. We love you. This is something brand new for you, talking to God and listening to God. Some of you have been Christians for a while, but this is still not something you've really put a lot of energy into. And we don't wanna beat you down, we wanna build you up. We don't want you to feel bad. We want you to just start wherever you might be. So don't feel bad if you are someone who is a believer but hasn't spent a lot of time in Scripture and/or in prayer. And literally, we just want you to begin wherever you're at. One of the most exciting things that happened this last week for me was Real Men on Wednesday night. We had record attendance for men. And for the first time in their entire lives, many men actually prayed out loud in a group. And some of these men are older men. Some of these men have been Christians for a long time and this was something new to them. But I'm very proud of them because it's courageous to start something new, especially when you're older. How do I know it was their first time? Well, their wives told me, it was amazing. Guys are praying. No, this is a good story. This is a good story. So, the guys are all huddled up like a football team, praying, and the wives are coming in because the wives got done earlier, the men went late. When have you seen it that the men are praying longer than the women? Add that to the list of Jesus' miracles. So the wives come looking for their husbands, and they turn the corner, they walk into the room, they see their husband praying. There were multiple women who just burst into tears. First time in their... They have been praying for their husband for many years, they have never seen their husband pray. And they got to see their husband pray. So what I would say is this, if you're not someone who knows the Bible well or has spent much time in Scripture, it's okay, just start where you're at. We love you. And I'll tell you just a good news report last night as well, we

launched students for the semester. My son Zach taught. They had record students. They just ask the kids, how many of you don't have a Bible? I think they gave out around three dozen Bibles to students that never had one, okay? But the key is just listen to God and then speak to God. Then they asked the kids, okay, who's never prayed? There were a few kids there that were, they came as atheists. And they heard about us on TikTok. So if God can use TikTok, God can use anything. Amen?

- Amen.

- I think it's connected to China. Like, now you know the Holy Spirit's involved, okay? So, one of their friends posted about the Trinity Church on TikTok, which I think is the Greek word for waste of time for teenagers. So they said, hey, can I come with you? So they came. And they were talking about reading the Bible and praying. And the atheist kids were asked, do you have a Bible? No. If we give you one, would you read it? Yes. We gave them a Bible. Well, have you ever pray? No. Would you be willing to pray? Atheist kids said, yes.

- [Congregation] Wow.

- They say, well, what should I pray first? Pray for Jesus to forgive your sins and become a Christian. They said, that sounds good, so that's what they did last night. So what I'm telling you is this, some of you are very mature, some of you are non-Christians. All of us are somewhere on a spectrum. Let's not take it for granted that everybody knows the Bible or how to talk to God. And sometimes you can be in church for a long time and you're like, I still know how to read the Bible or pray. And you could feel a little embarrassed and think, I should do better than I currently am. And our point is just start where you're at. We love you, we wanna help you. Some of you have had very bad teaching on prayer. We wanna correct some of that. Some of you have had no teaching on prayer. Some of you have had great teaching on prayer. And those of you that are a little more mature, during this series, especially in our life groups, you're gonna be like the big brothers and the big sisters. You're gonna help the younger brothers and the younger sisters learn how to communicate, how to listen and how to speak. And we're gonna take our example from Jesus. So I'm gonna cover a lot. All of this is in the notes. You can find them every week at realfaith.com. If you try and follow along, you're gonna get a hand cramp. So we're gonna jump right in. Praying by the Spirit through the Son to the Father. The big idea is this, before you focus on prayer, you need to know who you're praying to. And if you ever left a voicemail, sent an email, or left a text to the wrong person, I had that recently. I won't say his name, he's probably watching. He's a friend of mine who's a pastor. I got a very explicit text. It was very amorous. I'm trying to pick my words carefully. And it was, I can't wait that we do this and that. And I was like, we don't have that kind of relationship. And we're not starting, for sure. And it was one of those, I was like, I don't think this one was for me. It was very, very specific. And it was that awkward, hmm, I was like, do I respond? Do I delete? Next time I see him, do I just give him an awkward glance? I don't know what to do. A few minutes later, he texts me back, he's like, sorry, that was meant for my wife. Phew, praise God. Okay, we can still be friends. When you pray, it's not just enough to compose a good prayer, but make sure you

send it to the right person. Amen? Okay, so here's where we begin, praying by the Spirit. Galatians 4:6, "because you are sons," we talked about God as Father, and we are sons. "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father." How did Jesus pray? Well, the Spirit of the Son of God is Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit lived in Jesus and powered His life and enabled His prayers. And then God, if we are Christians, gives us the same power of the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit actually teaches us to pray. Here's the good news, some of you are Christians, and some of you are brand new Christians, like, I wanna learn the Bible, I wanna pray. You know what that is? That's the Holy Spirit doing a tremendous work deep in you. He's giving you new desires and new longings, a new relationship with God. And God knows exactly how to communicate perfectly. The concept of the Trinity is unique to Christianity. The Father, Son, and Spirit is one God in three persons. Some religions believe in multiple gods, some religions believe in one god. Our biblical convictions throughout the history of Christianity is very unique, and that is that there is one God in three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. What that means is that the Father, Son, and Spirit, they have perfect union and communion. They speak to one another, they listen to one another, they do life together, relationally connected. And so when we receive the Holy Spirit, we're invited into the life of the Trinity, we're invited into relationship with the Trinity, which is a very sacred thing. Just think of some people that you really know, love, admire, respect, and then they invite you in to a warm relationship with them. That's what God has done for us in Christ. And the result is, when the Bible says "God is love," and it speaks of God's love some 800 times, it's saying that God is the source and definition of love, and that love ultimately comes from God. And so when extends His love to us and gives His Spirit to us, now we are invited into this loving relationship, and prayer is how we communicate in this loving relationship. And so I need you to know that we're gonna talk about here praying by the Spirit through the Son to the Father, which is Trinitarian prayer. But what this also means is that we don't pray to other gods and we don't pray with other religions. This is crucial. One of the great misnomers of prayer is that we're all speaking to the same God, we're just using different names. That's not true. The reason that there are different names is there are different people, right? My name is Mark, your name is something else. You know why we have different names? We're different people, we're different beings. Even recently in Congress there was a quote, unquote prayer given by an ordained pastor, and they said that they were praying to the God known by many names by many faiths. And they included Brahma. Brahma is a demon god in Hinduism. Allah is a demon god in Islam. There are powerful demonic beings that pretend to be gods. They will even hear and answer prayers because they like to deceive the elect, the Bible says. They are demons masquerading as angels of light. For everything that God creates, Satan counterfeits. God creates prayer for us to have a relationship with Him, Satan counterfeits with interfaith prayers and prayers to demon gods, who are pretending to be spiritual powers that are safe and trustworthy. So the point is this, we pray for people in other religions, we don't pray with people in other religions. Furthermore, if we are not praying by the Spirit through the Son to the Father, we are not doing a good thing, we're doing a bad thing. We're not doing a safe thing, we're doing a dangerous thing. And we're not doing a spiritual thing, we're doing a demonic thing. And I know some of you will say that's controversial, I'm warning you. Just like on the earth, not everyone is safe and trustworthy. In the spirit realm, not every being is safe and trustworthy. The way to have safe, secure relationship with God is by

the Spirit through the Son to the Father, and the Holy Spirit reveals to us Jesus, instructs us in the Scriptures, connects us to the love of God, and then teaches us to pray. And when we pray, we pray through the Son. So 1 Timothy 2:5, "there is one God." How many?

- One.

- One. One. My kids, when they were little, I had these questions I would ask them all the time. Lots of, how many books in the Bible, how many in the Old Testament, how many in the New Testament? Name five kings, name four angels, name seven miracles. They lived on the Bible Jeopardy set. That's where my kids grew up. The first question I always asked them was, how many gods are there? And one of my kids was a heretic for years, and they were like, 11. No, what the heck? No. Seven. They just threw out random numbers. 17. No, like... All the kids will be like, they're starting a cult, Dad. They're starting a cult. But eventually we got it nailed down. There is, how many gods? One. There is one God and one mediator. Not all religions lead to God. Not all paths lead to the same place. "Between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." So God is holy, we are unholy. God is in heaven, we are on earth. God is Creator, we are created. Our sin has separated our relationship from God. We can't go up to God, which is what a lot of religions teach. Instead, God came down to us, His name is Jesus.

- Amen.

- Okay? And so Jesus brings heaven down, and then He brings us up to heaven. So the connection point between us and God is not a holy place, it's a holy person. That's why we don't have a headquarters, we have a head. His name is Jesus. He mediates, so when we pray, we're praying by the Spirit through the Son to the Father. Next Scripture's in Hebrews 7:25, "He is able to save the utmost, those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Not only did Jesus come down, live without sin, take away our sin so we could be reconciled in loving relationship to God, He then conquered death, He ascended back into heaven, and Jesus is alive and well right now. And when you pray, He is already praying for you. This is mind-bending. Before you pray, know that Jesus was already praying for you. Huh. And when people talk about a ministry of intercession, that is, I'm praying for someone and interceding for them. Jesus has a perfect, unending ministry of intercession. And what it's talking about here is, Jesus becomes our mediator, our intercessor, and our advocate. He goes between us and the Father. I'll give an analogy that we use in the book that I authored with our oldest daughter, Ashley. When she was about seven or eight, we had this funny story. In our house, we love being generous. We have always been major, major, major givers. For us, 10% has always been a floor, not a ceiling. We love to give, it's one of our great joys. The Bible says that God loves a cheerful giver. And so we wanted to raise our kids to be exceedingly generous. So we told our kids, there is a certain amount of money set aside. It was usually a large amount, in addition to all of our regular tithes and offerings, and mission support, and generosity, and helping people in need, and funding single moms, and buying cars, and whatever else we can do, there was a bunch of money set aside, and you kids have the right to spend it. So we want you to be looking for opportunities to meet tangible needs so you could love people. So our kids

were always on the hunt for need. Well, my daughter came home, she was about seven or eight, and she said, "Dad, I'm gonna need some of that money." I said, "For what?" She said, "For an attorney." She's like seven or eight. And I'm like, what have you done? Or what have I done? Like, you know, do I need to lawyer up too? Are we there, sweetheart? You know? And she says, "No, no, no, Dad." She said, "I went to school," and she said, "my friend was crying," very upset. Her and her mom just became Christians at our church. And she said, my friend's dad is a very bad guy. He's very mean and abusive, and he's not been paying child support, and they're looking at not being able to pay their rent and make ends meet. This single mom and her daughter, they're really poor and he's not paying. And she said, so the mom called the deadbeat dad and said, "Hey you're not paying," and he said, "I'm not going to pay." And then the mom said, "well, we need you to pay." He said, well, you're just gonna need to live with no payment, and if you pursue any action, I'm gonna get a lawyer and I'm gonna fight you for custody, and I'm gonna take the daughter." So now the daughter's in a hostage negotiation and the single mom is looking at literally not being able to make ends meet and losing her small apartment or losing her daughter. The daughter is carrying this burden, brand new Christian, comes to the school, and tells my daughter. So my daughter says, "well, my dad says we have money, so I'll pay for it, I'll find, I'm sure my dad can find it attorney." And she's like, I'll cover your legal bills. So, I get a call from a distraught single mom. She's like, "I'm sure we misheard this, but my daughter's very certain that your daughter has a lawyer and is gonna cover all of our legal fees." And she said, "I just wanted to let you know, like, the crazy stuff your daughter's saying." And I was like, I looked, I said, "well, let me check." I said, "Ashley, what do you wanna do?" She's like, that's what I wanna do. I said, "well, I just talked to the boss, that's what we're doing." So Ashley hired the lawyer, paid all the legal fees, and then they won the case. They got their back child support and the mother got to keep custody. In that moment, the little girl had a need and there was a place that the need could be met, but she didn't have access. So what she needed was a mediator. What she needed was an intercessor. What she needed was an advocate to make her needs known and to bring the resources to bear into the situation that was beyond her ability. Jesus Christ is our mediator. Jesus Christ is our intercessor. Jesus Christ is our advocate. When you make a request to Him, He then brings that request to the Father on your behalf, and He brings resources to bear that you otherwise would not have access to. That's our Jesus. So we pray by the Spirit through the Son to the Father. It says this in, I think it's Luke 11, "Jesus was praying." If Jesus needed to pray, we all need to pray. "In a certain place." Sometimes you just need to shut off your phone and just go for a hike or a walk or a drive. "And when He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples.' And He said to them, 'When you pray, say,'" what's the big word? "Father, hallowed be Your name." We talked about it, but this is the first time that any Jewish leader in the history of the world, and perhaps any major religious leader in the history of the world, personally and publicly referred to God as Father. This changed everything. Jesus speaks to the Father 165 times. It's His favorite title for God. And the big idea is this, we pray by the Spirit through the Son to the Father, and that ultimately your requests are brought by the Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. Let me say this, dads, you and I could really help our kids learn a lot about prayer if requests make their way to us and we respond to them. The big idea is sometimes you just really need to get your dad involved. And the good news is, you and I have got a heavenly

Father that we can count on and depend on. He's gonna get involved. Now, what is shocking about this, I was praying for you this week. I was praying a lot for you this week 'cause I do love you. And I just... I don't know if it was a revelation or an illustration. Let me just tell you what I saw. I saw you praying and making a request, and the Holy Spirit gave you that request. And then that request went from your heart and your mouth and your mind and your lips to Jesus. And then Jesus took your request to the Father. And when you pray, you need to know that you're not just having a conversation with God, you're inviting God to have a conversation about you. The Father, Son, and Spirit, when we pray, they meet, and the Spirit says, okay, here's what they're feeling, here's what they're experiencing, here's what's going on inside of them, because I live inside of them. And Jesus says, well, here's the request, Father, and here's what they're asking for. And then the Father, Son, and Spirit, they meet and they have a conversation about you. Father, what should we do now? Should we relieve the burden or should we grow their character through it? Father, should we act now, should we wait a while? Should we deploy an angel to do something supernatural? Father, should we send a person to be a blessing or to be generous and to help in that circumstance and situation? They have a conversation about what is best for you. And you need to know that whatever decision they make or whatever plan they architect, it's best for you. Now, sometimes we can distrust or mistrust that, 'cause we're like, God, I know exactly what needs to happen. I'm gonna tell you. And He's like, actually I see a lot more of what's going on than you. I see the unseen realm and I see all the people that are implicated, and if we do this for you it affects them, and God loves and cares for everyone. And He's trying to work out all things for good. It's hard to be God, it's complicated. But you need to know that prayer is not just where you have a conversation with God, but you invite the Trinity to have a conversation about you. God loves you, God knows you, and God is not too busy for you, and you're not unimportant to Him. We pray by the Spirit through the Son to the Father. And I wanna look now at how Jesus prayed. Number one, He prayed scriptural prayer. Psalm 22:1 says, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When did Jesus say these exact words? On the cross while He's dying. And so ultimately there are times that Jesus' prayer is just quoting Scripture. So this is where Bible reading and prayer go together. Bible reading is how we listen to God, prayer is how we speak to God. And what I would encourage you to do is to be reading your Bible and then stop and talk to God anytime you need about anyone or anything that comes to mind. And some of you, you're dutiful and you wanna just read as much Bible as you can. It's less about how much you read, it's more about how much you retain. I would rather have you memorize a verse than forget a whole book. It's not about how much Scripture you get into, it's about how much Scripture you get into you. And Jesus has enough Scripture in Him that when certain moments happen in His life He prays the word of God. And I want you to learn how to pray the word of God. And sometimes it's just bringing to memory in the Spirit what the Scriptures have already said. You could pray scriptural prayer. Also praying warfare prayers. John 12:27-28, Jesus is facing death in betrayal. "Now is my soul troubled." It's not a problem to be burdened. It's not a problem to be frustrated. It's not a problem to be scared. It's not a problem to be overwhelmed. It's not a problem to be troubled. That's not a sin, but it's what you do with it that counts. You need to bring those requests to God. "And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour," get me around this. "But for this purpose, I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." What Jesus is saying is this, He said, I could pray, get me

around this. What He says is, I'm gonna pray, get me through this. How many of you, there are things in your life that you're not gonna get around, you're just needing to go through? That's praying offensively. If you read the Psalms, there are offensive prayers. There are defensive prayers, which you get hit and you pray. Offensive prayers are where you pray before you get hit and you pray for protection and God's presence and provision. Too oftentimes we wait for Satan to attack us and then we pray. We should pray so that ultimately God is attacking him before he declares war on us. That's what Jesus is doing here. He's praying offensive prayers. He's praying anticipatory and preparatory prayers. And prayer's a communication channel for God's children in battle. In war, they will tell you that it is crucial to have secure communication channels. I did little research. Alexander, Hannibal, and Caesar all had relay runners. They would have a note, somebody would run it this many miles, run it this many miles to get information from the frontline to the headquarters. And then Genghis Khan, he used homing pigeons. Last night I called them homecoming pigeons. I didn't know that until I went to bed. Grace and I were in bed, I was just falling asleep, and she remembered that I misspoke. She was like, "You called them homecoming pigeons." That's my wife. That's my wife. And I said, "Well, thank you, sweetheart." I said, "but they did have a cummerbund on." And she laughed really, really hard and woke me up. And so I'll never read homing pigeon again and not think of that. So Genghis Khan had homing pigeons, edit my last night, not homecoming pigeons. And then also when we started having wars at sea we put flags on boats, and then military units would use flags as a form of communication. Then we invented the telegraph, Morse code, radio. We had wired phones and then they cut the lines, so we created wireless phones. The printed telegraph, FM radio, TV, and Internet we're all military inventions trying to get secure communication channels. Prayer is between you and the war you have on earth. It is a communication channel with God's headquarters in heaven. It literally is where you're calling in for air support. I need the Holy Spirit. I need some angelic defense. God alone knows your mind, He knows your heart, He knows the unspoken. There are certain things in my life that are very, very sacred, and I will pray silently because I know that that is a secure communication channel between me and God. And it's a way for me to pray warfare prayers for God's protection and provision in the midst of otherwise harmful circumstances. Jesus also prayed thankful prayers. And all we're looking at is just Jesus. Next week, we'll deal with the Lord's Prayer, then the Gethsemane prayer, then the high priestly prayer. We'll look at three specific prayers. Right now we're doing a general overview of Jesus' prayer life. Matthew 11:25-26, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth," your dad rules all, "that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children." This is, what we call at our house, a thankful prayer. The prayers that have been prayed most in my children's life are thankful prayers. My kids will tell you at dinner, I always ask questions, and we have really great conversations. Every Sunday night, we get together as a whole family, and once they're married, they bring their significant other, it's my favorite time of the week. And one of the things I always ask is, what are your thankful prayers? Oftentimes in prayer, we're telling God what we need, but we're not thanking God for what He's already provided. And let me say, the surest way to gain momentum in your prayer life is thankful prayers. I did it this week. I had an hour that I was supposed to do a phone call to coach a pastor and it fell through. He had to cancel last minute, so I had a free hour in my schedule, it was really sunny out. I'm glad to be in Arizona.

And I decided I'm gonna go for a prayer walk. And as I started walking, I thought, well, I'm gonna start with thankful prayers. And then when I'm done with those I've got some requests to make known to God. An hour later, my walk was over and I was still praying thankful prayers. And it just changed my whole day. I was suddenly aware of all that God had been doing in my life very recently and in our family and in our church family. And as I started thinking of all the people and things I was thankful for, I just blew an hour. And you know what? I could have blown a week, and it wouldn't have been a blown, it would've been an investment, okay? How many of you, you struggle with sort of a sour-dour attitude? The glass is always half empty. For you, you're burdened by things. Maybe the key is not to ignore those things, but to precede those things with thankful prayers. Before you get to the things that are causing you difficulty, start with the things that are causing you delight. So at our table, this is the conversation all the time, what are your thankful prayers? And then we just listen. And as the kids open their heart, what they're doing is they're opening their life. And you realize what God is doing for them and teaching them, and then we get to celebrate that together. One of the things that we did in our household growing up with the kids, and I wanna honor the kids in this. I've got five incredible kids who all love and serve Jesus, and it's the great joy of my life, is we would keep a prayer journal, starting when the kids were little. For years, we had one on the dining room table. We had a Bible and a prayer journal, because we wanna hear from God and we wanna talk to Him. And so in the prayer journal we would pray thankful prayers and also requests. And we would journal them out. I'd write them out. And then any of you have that firstborn, dutiful checklist child? Okay, we had that child, and they were always like, all right, the prayer journal, what has been answered, they wanna check things off. Okay? And so we would check things off. Before we started this church, we had very specific prayers for a facility for God's provision and for nice people. Okay, the key to planting a church, you can't just pray for people, because Satan will answer that prayer. We prayed for nice people. Right, baby? And God answered that prayer. God answered that prayer. You are an answer to prayer. And so what would it look like for you to have thankful prayers, even at your dining room table? Our oldest daughter, Ashley, shares in the book, she was struggling through one of the hardest seasons of our family life and her personal life. So she got three-by-five cards, and every day she wrote a thankful prayer. And she did that every day for 2 1/2 years. Okay? Thankful prayers. How about this, pray in song? "When they had sung a hymn," Mark 14:26, "they went out to the Mount of Olives." The context here is during the Passover feast. During that time, they would sing and pray Psalm 113 through Psalm 118. That was the Jewish tradition. And what Jesus does here, He sings with the men a prayer. When we sing, you guys need to know this, it's not a concert, it's a prayer. In a concert, the band performs for the crowd, in prayer we engage with the King. Okay? So when the band comes up, they're not performing for you, they're leading you to pray to Him. It's not a performance, it's a prayer. Okay? This is why the people who lead worship here, they're Christians who love Jesus. They're part of our church family. And they worship through their life and they lead us in worship through their skills, but it's all prayer. And so some if you peace out right after the sermon, my encouragement would be, stay and pray. And singing is how we pray. And the Bible says in Revelation that right now Jesus is alive and well. We just looked that He is interceding for us. And the Bible says that departed saints and divine beings surround Jesus right now and together the children of God are singing the praises of God in the presence of

God. And when you and I sing and pray, the Bible has this clear revelation that what we are singing and saying, it goes beyond the roof and it goes into the presence of God. Here's what I'm telling you right now, angels and departed saints are singing. And when we sing, we join them. That's why sometimes there are supernatural breakthroughs and spiritual miracles and healings that happen in worship, because ultimately it connects the seen in the unseen realm, and it brings the people of God into the presence of God. And I believe that that's why there is such a war going on in our country right now to keep churches closed and to keep worship from happening. I believe it is not just political. I believe it is also, at least in part, spiritual. And I believe Satan knows if people are struggling and if they cannot gather and sing that ultimately he will do more damage and harm to them because he's keeping them away from the place that God could heal them. So we're honored to have you, and we're glad to have you. And we believe that if anything is essential, prayer is. And singing is one form of praying. Lastly, Jesus prayed with His last breath. As He is dying, "Jesus, calling out with a loud voice said this, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' Having said this, He breathed His last." As a pastor, one of the great honors that I have is to be present for a person's last day. What they say or do on their last day tells you who are what they love the most. What did Jesus do with His last breath? He prayed. What that means is, it's His highest priority. You and I don't know what our last day will be, but what I am saying is that we should pray every day so that we'll be prepared for the last day. The person who prays every day is prepared for the last day. And Jesus prayed. That means that the most important thing that we can do is pray. Is pray. How can I pray like Jesus? I'm gonna give you some real practicals. Pray in faith. Matthew 21:22, "Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith." Now, let me tell you what this doesn't mean. This doesn't mean something called the Word of Faith movement. The Word of Faith movement is, it's false teaching. And it is basically that your faith can make God do things. Let me say this. If you can make God do things, you're God. If God is God, He does what He wants. He doesn't do what I make Him do. So the Bible says to humbly make your requests known to God. It doesn't say boldly give your demands to God. In the same way, my kids can make requests of me, but as their father, they can't make me do what they want. I am still free to say no. The Word of Faith movement teaches that if you have enough faith, you can make God do what you want. Some of you come from prosperity teaching and faith teaching, and I'm telling you that it's false teaching. And to me, it leads to an abusive relationship with God. And it basically says, well, you're sick, if you have enough faith, God has to heal you. Oh, God didn't heal you, you didn't have enough faith. My daughter was taught that. My daughter's had some chronic health problems. She writes about them in the book. At ASU, they had a 24/7 prayer tent, at Arizona State University, and she was one of the leaders of it and would take shifts. And people would come in and she would pray for them. And many met Christ and some were healed, and they had great conversations about Jesus. And she loves the Lord. And there were always some faith kids that would come in, which really is faithless. And they would say, it's too bad you're not healed. If you had more faith, you wouldn't be sick. What that does is that takes a person who is hurting and it hurts them. It takes a person who is struggling and it adds to their struggle. I couldn't imagine walking up to Jesus while He's dying on the cross and saying, it's too bad you didn't have more faith. He didn't die because of a lack of faith, He died in faith, trusting, trusting the Father's will for Him. We're gonna deal with that in the Gethsemane prayer. What it does

mean to pray in faith is to believe there is a God. He does love me. He is listening. That He ultimately will respond. That He does care. That my prayers are going beyond the ceiling and they're going into His presence. And praying is an act of faith. How many of you, at certain points, you've wondered, God, are you listening? God, am I talking to the ceiling? God, is this Your day off? Let's be honest, we've all had those thoughts that we've prayed, amen? Faith is know what heaven has opened, God is listening, and my prayers are going into His presence. So pray in faith. In addition, pray succinctly. And if you have that person in your family that they act like they get paid by the word for prayer. You know, and they intend to make a good income. They pray so long. We've all got someone in our family, when it's Thanksgiving, they're like, I'll pray, you're like, no, no, no. We don't wanna eat this turkey for breakfast, we wanna eat it for dinner, Pray too long. "Beware of the scribes," religious leaders, "who like to walk around in long robes," fancy clothes, big hats. You always know who the holiest people are. Their hats are closest to heaven The big hat. "And greetings in the marketplace and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses." What this is, publicly they're very, very pious, and then privately they're very, very dangerous. Some of the most dangerous people are the most outwardly, overtly religious people Okay? "Who devour widows' houses for a pretense. And they make, what? Long prayers. I liked that. Long prayers. He says, "they will receive the greater condemnation." And what's happening is, if you're praying to impress others rather to engage heaven, you're not doing anything good, you're doing something bad. And you're actually incurring greater wrath and condemnation. Some people don't pray to God, they pray for an audience and the approval of others. To me, there's not a sin with praying long prayers. We'll see where Jesus did that. But if you're praying publicly and not privately, and if all your prayers are sort of a show and it's not really about the relationship, what God says is, well, everybody's impressed by what they see, but I'm not, because I see the unseen. I see the heart. The Bible says that man looks at the outward, oh, look at them, they dress very religious, they act very religious. Boy, they pray really good, long prayers. Wow, they use big words. Religious people love Latin words and Greek words and Hebrew words. When they're praying you hear all these words you've never heard before. Shekinah hallelujah. Bring the glory. You know, like, what, what the, what, you, what, huh? what are you talking about, man? And they sound like fancy holy words, right? But sometimes it's just to impress people. Sometimes it's to deceive people. You can trust me, I'm godly. No, I bet you Judas was really good at religious jargon and chat. I talked to a guy recently, he came up, he's like, "Pastor Mark, I learned a lot about the Shekinah." I was like, is that your girlfriend? Who's Shekinah? Who's Shekinah? No, I know it's the word for glory. He could've said glory. Instead he wanted to impress me, like, Shekinah. Like, Shekinah? Like, my dad hung drywall. I drive a truck, I wear boots. I say crazy things. I can't be impressed with Shekinah. If you could take a punch, I would be impressed. But if you say Shekinah, I'm not impressed. I'll punch you if you wanna impress me. One of the best prayers my kids ever prayed, they were really little, it was bedtime, they're like, "Dad, can I pray?" I said, "Yeah," this was one of my sons. Here's what they prayed, I kid you not, "Jesus, You rock! Amen!" That was Shekinah. Okay. Pray in God's will John 16:23-24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, He will give to you. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full." Pray in God's will. So praying in Jesus' name is literally praying in God's will. Here's what happens, we tend to pray and tell God what our will is.

Prayer is where we ask God what His will is, we don't tell Him what our will is. We don't go to God and say, okay, God, I know what You need to do. He's like, yeah, first thing I need to do is remind you that you need to do what I tell you to do. Some of you are praying for things and you're wondering why God doesn't answer. It may be that the request is not in God's will. I had a single guy come to me recently. You single guys, I love you. Thank you for all the preaching illustrations. He's Pastor Mark, could you pray for me and my girlfriend? I said, sure, what would you like me to pray about? He said, "That we'd they just have a better relationship." I was like, "Do you live together?" He's like, "Yeah." I said, I'm not gonna pray that God will bless that. I said, "If you wanna have a better relationship, move. Move out." He said, "Well, we're struggling." I said, "Yeah, because you're fighting God." That's His daughter. If you're violating what the Father says to do with His daughter, don't expect the Father to bless you. How many dads get this? I got two daughters, and if you're like, well, I'm abusing your daughter, could you help? Oh gosh, okay. Yeah, I'm gonna do prison ministry from the inside now. That's what I'm gonna do. I'm not gonna help you hurt my daughter. We will ask things of God that are against His will. And here's the big idea, God doesn't bless you, God blesses this. If you wanna be blessed, just live under this. God blesses those who are obedient to His Word. And some people think, why is God not blessing me? Well, if you're living out from under His Word, why would He bless rebellion? Why would He help you do that which is ungodly? Are you living in His will? Some people are like, God, bless my finances. Are you a giver? God, bless my marriage, but do you repent of your sin to your spouse? God, bless my business. Are you operating by biblical principles? God, bless my family. Are you leading it and loving those people with your last name? See, God is very happy to bless those who are trying to obey, but it would be wicked of Him to bless those who refuse to obey. In addition, pray humbly. This is a parable, which is a little story that teaches a big truth in Luke 18. And these are not their real names, but I call them Religious Ricky and Larry the Loser. Okay? And if your name is Larry, I apologize. Okay, so they walk into the temple, which is their version of the church. Two guys pray, and Jesus uses this as comparison and contrast between relational prayer and religious prayer. Relational prayer is very humble, religious prayer is very proud. So the first guy, Religious Ricky, he literally stands up and out loud prays basically this prayer, God, thank you that I'm better than everybody else. And God, thank you, especially, I'm not like this guy. Well, this guy's sort of bummed. Larry the Loser, we're told that he can't even look up. He's just totally embarrassed. He knows that he's wrecked his life. He knows he did it wrong. He made mistakes. He's not gonna excuse himself. He's just like, God, I'm a sinner. I have wrecked my life. I'm asking for mercy. And what Jesus says is, "I tell you that this man, and not the other, left justified in the sight of God." The point is this, in prayer, we look up to God and that keeps us from looking down on others. People who look down on others are not spending enough time looking up to God. When you look up to God you're not worried about their stuff, 'cause you're so aware of your stuff. You're like, I thought I was awesome till I met Jesus, and I'm like, oh boy. When we're in prayer, it should cause us to be more humble. And let me say this, religious prayers are where we pray for other people, not for ourselves. That we confess their sins and not our own. This is really popular in America right now. We got a whole culture that's talking about what everybody else has done wrong. Nobody's talking about what they've done wrong. That's a religious disposition and spirit. It's demonic. And let me say this, it's not a problem to pray for

other people, but if you're mainly praying for other people and not yourself. I talked to Grace about this, at the beginning of every quarter, my wife Grace, she leads women's ministry here. She tells the women, we are not getting together to complain and gossip about our husbands. 'Cause sometimes even in prayer what it becomes is gossip and maligning. Pray for so-and-so. You have no idea what they did. That's gossip disguised as prayer. That's not a prayer. That's gossip. How many of you right now, most of your prayers are, God, fix my spouse, God, fix my kids, God, fix my boss? And you never ask, God, is there anything that needs to be fixed with me? It's not that we shouldn't pray for others, but we should start with our own shortcomings and seeing any ways that were part of the problem, not the solution, and ask God to deal with us first. So it's praying humbly, and then it's praying fervently. "He told them a parable," Luke 18:1, "to the effect that they ought always pray and not lose heart." How many of you have been asking God for the same thing for a really long time, and you're pretty convinced it's in as will? Okay. And it's still not happened. God answers prayer in the same way that a parent, they answer a request of a child. Yes, no, later. Okay? So let's just do a little survey with the parents. Kid comes up to you, it's the middle of the afternoon. Can I have a glass of water? Yes, no, or later, which one? Yes. Okay, kid comes up middle of the afternoon, can I have a glass of whiskey? No. If you said yes, you need a parenting class, okay? My son turned 15 yesterday. Guess what he wants to do? Drive. What's the answer? Later. Answer is not whiskey, it's later. As a kid makes a request, the answer is yes, no, later, because not only do we need God's will, we need God's timing. Some of you, you're in God's will, but you've not arrived at God's timing. This is where I say we follow the compass, not the clock. Some of the biggest mistakes I've made in my life, I knew God's will, but I got ahead of God's timing. As a young man, God said be a pastor. So I did. And I wasn't ready. I wasn't ready, I was 25 years of age, I'm a brand new Christian, I'm a senior pastor. Senior's ridiculous. Nobody's senior at 25. You're not even junior. You still got training wheels on your life. It would have been good for me to wait, but I got ahead of God's timing. So when we hit the eject button on our last ministry, God actually called us out, spoke to us audibly. Before we started this ministry, I took 18 months off. I traveled the country, I met with significant leaders, I did homework and research, I spent time in prayer and fasting, and time with the family. I didn't wanna just have God's will, I wanted to have God's timing. Some of you are single and you're still praying. And it's not that you're not praying in God's will, it's just not yet God's time. And some people are like, why has God not brought my spouse? Well, He may be still working on them. It may have nothing to do with you. They're just not ready yet. I'll give you one fun story. There was a woman in our women's ministry with Grace early in the church. She's no longer living in Arizona. She's moved, I'll tell you why. Her whole life she wanted to get married. She loved Jesus, she was adorable. Just sweet personality. And it was like, why is she single? She's amazing. She got married in her 80s for the first time. She was still a virgin. Okay. That's praying and not giving up. Amen? Amen, amen, right? She's got, like, a wedding dress and a walker. And she's like, Lord, that is curious timing. But the guy that she married loves Jesus and adores her. And her testimony is, she's like, you know, I got married late, but at least my husband loves Jesus and loves me. And whatever time we've got together is good time. Amen? Pray and don't give up. It's okay to keep asking. Last few things. What and whom can we pray for like Jesus? Pray for sinners. "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so your Father who is also in heaven may forgive your

trespasses." Forgiving people is one of the most powerful things that you can possibly pray. Not only did Jesus teach us to pray this on the cross, He actually prayed this prayer, "Father, forgive them." Jesus not only prayed for us to be forgiven, He died to answer His prayer so that we could be forgiven. Some of you, the reason that your life is hard is because your bitterness is present. When you are sinned against, when you are the victim, when something wrong is said or done to you, you only have two options, forgiveness or bitterness. And when all is said and done, there will only be two cultures remaining for all eternity, the culture of heaven and the culture of hell. The culture of heaven is a culture of forgiveness, the culture of hell is a culture of unforgiveness. That when we forgive, we're inviting the Holy Spirit and the kingdom culture of God to come down. Jesus says, "When you pray, pray, thy kingdom come, thy will be done." Let me say, when you forgive, you are inviting the kingdom come. You're inviting the kingdom culture of Jesus into your life. When you don't forgive, you are pulling the culture of hell up into your life. The reason why Satan doesn't want you to forgive is because he wants to ultimately have a foothold that becomes a stronghold that becomes a death hold. Some of you, the key to your future is forgiving things from your past. It's one of the most powerful things you can do is pray to forgive. They came to Jesus and they asked, "how many times do we need to forgive?" He said, "70 times 7." What that means is, sometimes you can forgive somebody and then they do it again. Sometimes you can forgive somebody, it comes up again. Sometimes you can forgive somebody, and then life sheds new light on it, or new information comes to bear regarding it, and you need to forgive again. Who do you need to forgive? What do you need to forgive? And I've got scheduled coming up, I think it's in June, the best book I've read on forgiveness is called "Total Forgiveness" by R.T. Kendall. He was the senior pastor at Westminster Chapel in London for a few decades, took over for one of the greatest preachers in the history of the world. And he's gonna come preach his life message of total forgiveness for us here at the Trinity Church. Okay? But if you wanna read in advance his book, "Total Forgiveness," it's incredible. It's incredible. And I've sat on his couch at his house, and his insights, unbelievable. Some of you really, the key is just you need to forgive. And forgiving someone is not letting them get away with anything, it's letting you getting away from everything. And what it is, it's saying, I'm not gonna hold this. I'm gonna hand this to God. And I'm gonna let God deal with them, not me. It doesn't mean that you are not letting the situation be dealt with. It just means you're letting Jesus deal with it, which quite frankly is praying in faith. When you pray to forgive someone, you're having faith that Jesus will deal rightly with them as He has dealt graciously with you. Second two things, pray for your needs. Matthew 7:7-8. Let me ask this, how many of you have no problem praying for other people, but you feel weird praying for yourself? Or you feel selfish. Don't. God loves them and God loves you, and they need God and you need God. Every aspect of your life needs God. Nothing in your life works without God. Prayer is where you invite God in to every element and aspect of your life, and God is willing to meet practical needs. How many of you are parents? And most of the requests from your kids are very practical. I need something to eat. I need something to drink. I need something to play with. Right? We are the children of God, and our Father is very happy to receive from us very practical requests. "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." Practical. Give you an example. People come to faith in Jesus

Christ, I believe, primarily in one of two ways, persuasion and power. Persuasion are those of you who live in your head. You're like, I got a lot of questions. I got a lot of objections. I'm gonna need some footnotes. Do you have any books written by dead guys? I trust those more, okay? How many of you, that's you? Okay? That's why you're here. That's me. I'm your nerd friend. I came to faith in Jesus Christ through persuasion. I had a lot of objections. There was a philosophy professor at a state university, I think he had a PhD in Hebrew. I think now he's a department chair at a secular university, and he loves Jesus and believes the Bible. And he met with me for months and answered all my questions and objections and assigned me all the best philosophers to have all my questions and objections answered. So I came to God through persuasion. My mom came to God through power. When I was a little boy, my mom was in a prayer meeting and God healed her. And my mom just was like, that's it, God's real. He showed up. I'm in. That was my mom. My mom's always been that way. She prays. And God hears and answers her prayers. I'll give you one example. The kids call her Grandma Debbie. And Mom's probably watching, and love you, Mom, and thank you for praying for me. I think one of the reasons I came to faith in Christ is my Spirit-filled mom prayed for me when I was a little boy. And she kept praying. And she prayed in faith and she prayed fervently and she didn't give up. So my mom had heart trouble. There was an artery to her heart that a ceased pumping blood. And they told her, you need to do some diet and exercise. We need to get your body healthy enough. You're gonna need to go in for heart surgery. And we're gonna need to put in a new line to save your life. My mom, this was recent. And so I did FaceTime with my mom, we did, and she's like, "I'm just praying." That's my mom. My mom's like, I'm just gonna ask Jesus to give me new artery. I was like, that doesn't happen a lot. Right, like... So they took, like, a CT scan or an MRI, and they showed the damaged artery. Before she went in for surgery, they said, "Well, we're gonna take another look, make sure your heart's strong enough for the surgery to get the new artery." Then they come out and they show her the picture, they're like, you got a new artery. Your body grew a new artery in the exact place as the old artery and replaced it. You're fine, you don't need heart surgery. Okay? Here's what I'm telling you. The Bible says that God is a great physician, and sometimes when you pray, the great physician shows up. The doctor was not a Christian. The doctor is like, this is unexplainable. My mom's like, no, it's not. It's prayer. That's my mom. She's like, Jesus, doesn't have a copay. He fixes stuff, that's what He does. Pray for your needs. Okay? Pray for your needs. And then lastly, pray for your burdens. "Come to me," Matthew 11:28-30. Don't you love that Jesus welcomes you? How many of you, when you have burdens, people don't welcome you? How many people will be like, how are you doing? Like, I have so many burdens. They're like, great, can we hang out? I would love to hear about them. No. Okay? "All who labor." How many of you right now life feels like labor? It's just painful. You ever seen a woman in labor? It's a thing. It's a thing. Okay? How many of you, life feels like a labor? "And are heavy laden." How many of you right now, you're like, I can't go anymore, I can't do any more, I can't carry anymore? I just can't do it. I'm dying. Right now, that's America. Everybody's worn out, beat down, exhausted, frustrated. That's why people are self-medicating and self-destructing. They don't know how to carry the burden. Men are the worst at this. This is why men die of heart disease. This is why men self-medicate with alcohol. This is why men end up raging. Say, well, is there any option? Only for the Christian. Okay, so what this means is that prayer is a gift that God gives you that no one else really has the

opportunity to enjoy apart from Jesus Christ. "Come to me and I will give you," what? "Rest." Doesn't that sound amazing? What if the burdens don't go away? And let me say this 'cause I love you and I'm your pastor. What I think is happening right now, we have so many economic, global, health, political, burdens that we're ignoring individual personal burdens. We're so busy talking about elections and economies and stock markets and controversies that we're not asking people, hey, in addition to all the big burdens, do you have any individual burdens? And let me say this, many of you, in addition to all the big burdens, you've got your own burden. And Jesus says, "Come to me, you're gonna find rest." This is the peace that surpasses understanding. This is a supernatural gift of the Spirit. Jesus then continues, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." You know what, this is something that we don't just know, we have to learn. I went to school, I went to college, I got a master's degree. I'd never took a class on what to do with a burden. You can only learn that from Jesus. That's why a lot of people have degrees and are still burdened, right? 'Cause they've not learned this lesson. "Learn from me, for I am gentle, lowly in heart." He's like, I'm here to help, I'm here to serve. "And you will find rest for your soul." You know what? When your soul rests, your mind can rest. When your soul rests, your body can rest. Some of you, the reason that you're restless is because your soul can't rest. The part of you that only God has access to, psychologists can't touch it, medication can't cure it. Only God has access to the soul, and He'll give you rest in your souls. When your soul is at rest, your mind can rest. When your soul is at rest, your body can rest. When your soul is at rest, you can sleep. "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The analogy here is in that day, they got their work done by oxen. And an oxen could carry a very heavy burden, but if you gave it too much weight it would simply be incapable of going anymore. So they would yoke oxen together, and one oxen could carry its body weight. Multiple oxen yoked together could multiply the weight that they could carry. And what Jesus is not saying is, life has no burdens. But what He is saying is some burdens are too much for you. So I'm gonna come and I'm gonna yoke with you and I'm gonna carry your burdens with you. And I'm gonna walk with you, never leave you nor forsake you. And sometimes God does this, the Holy Spirit brings to mind Galatians. It's weird when I teach, it's just kind of a verbal process in the Spirit. But in Galatians, it says to bear one another's burdens. Let me say this, that sometimes when we bear one another's burdens it's Jesus in us bearing their burden. It's Jesus through us bearing their burdens. Sometimes Jesus just carries the burden with us, and sometimes He sends one of His people in whom He dwells by the Spirit to carry the burden. When my wife and I were in the hardest season of our whole life, reputation attacked, finances wrecked, safety at an all-time high, people committing crimes against our family, I mean, just horror. It was horror. I was not doing well. I had hand tremors, I had a nervous eye twitch. I'm burdened. We met with a godly counselor, pastor, filled with the Spirit, like a spiritual father, for about 18 months. And there were times that we would meet, and he would ask, "Okay, what's going on this week?" And I'd tell him. And he would just be like, "We need to pray." What I appreciate it is he didn't say, well, tell me who they are and I'll seek vengeance on them. What he didn't say was, well, let me jump on social media and argue and fight with them. What I appreciate is he didn't say, well, how about we start a group text and we light them up? What he didn't say was, well, you just need to vent, get it all out, let the world know what's going on. And what he didn't say was, here's how you fix it. 'Cause you know what, some things can't fix. Here's what he said, "That is a real

burden." He said, "You can't carry that. We need to pray and transfer that burden to Jesus." There were times that we spent our whole hour in prayer, and he would literally walk over to us and he'd lay hands on my wife and I as we're praying together, and we would name, he said, "Okay, name the burden," we'd name the burden. And then he literally would pretend like he was lifting it, he would walk over, old guy, to a garbage can, and he'd throw it in. I was like, "What are you doing?" He's like, "We gotta get rid of those burdens." My question to you is, what burdens do you need to get rid of, friend? The reason that some of you are so burdened is you've not learned to transfer the burden in prayer. Prayer is where we transfer the burden to Jesus. At that season, Pastor Jimmy Evans, who's one of our overseers and one of our pastors, we love him very much, he asked me, he said, "Mark, how are you doing?" I said, "I'm struggling. I'm burdened." He said, "Well, how's your prayer life?" I said, "It's really good. I'm talking to the Father all the time." He says, "Well, if you're talking to the Father, why are you still burdened?" He said, "You're not praying, you're complaining to God. It's not prayer until you transfer the burden." I was like, okay, well then let me edit my assessment. I'm not praying a lot, I'm complaining a lot. My complaining life is very solid. How many of you right now, there's a burden you need to transfer? Let's do that. Let's spend some time singing together in prayer. Father God, thank you. We don't have words big enough, we'll just say thank you, Father, that You're our Father. God, of all the names You could have chosen to reveal Yourself to us by, Father is perfect. It means that You're powerful and loving and present, that You're active and involved and wise and caring. And I pray for all of us men, Lord, who have the honor of sharing Your title, that we would be good fathers who reflect the Father's heart to others, starting with our own family. And God, I pray for the Holy Spirit to take anything that I have shared and apply it to the lives of the dear people who give me the great honor of teaching them the Scriptures. And Jesus, if You needed to pray, we need to pray. If You needed to listen, we need to listen. And we thank you for sending the Holy Spirit, so that He could teach us to pray and listen. And God, we come right now for a sacred meeting. We don't come to just an event, but we come to an encounter with a God who is alive. And Holy Spirit, we invite You into this place and into the lives of the people who are listening. And we invite You to give revelation, to lift burdens, to release forgiveness, to provide humility, to bring us the life of the Spirit that we need to be healthy and to have a healthy relationship with God and others. And so God, as we come to our time of song, please open the heavens, please send the Spirit down, so that our prayers can go up. in Jesus' name, amen. Love you.

Q&A: How does unity help reach people for Christ

- So Jesus prays a lot for oneness and unity so that more people can become Christians. How does unity help mission and evangelism and reaching more people for Christ?

- Yeah, so this is something that I had a really big heart for when I was going into college at ASU because there were so many different church groups and missionary groups on campus and everybody was trying to reach different people, and it was really hard as a freshmen to figure

out like "What group do I fit in? Am I allowed to go to multiple groups? Are these people okay? Is this even a Christian group or is it some weird group of people that I don't really like?" It was hard to like figure all that out. And so I had a really big heart for like unifying and not having different, you know, factions and fighting and gossiping between groups. And so I started a prayer gathering and it was funny, 'cause my husband was doing the exact same thing in San Diego at the same time, we didn't know each other. But I brought a bunch of different Christian groups together and we would all pray together. And it was a way that the leaders got to know each other and we got to pray for each other's ministries. And I think what we all realized was that we're all trying to reach different people. Like there was a specific group that literally just reached Asian-Exchange students. And I was like talking to a bunch of Muslims. A bunch of other people are going to the frat houses and to the sports teams, and the more that we were unified in sharing the vision that God had for our different ministries and our different walks, the more we could actually support each other and not like fight over who was getting what territory or using what part of campus or talking to what students, we were all able to come together and say, "Great, you go reach those people, I'll reach these people. There's plenty of people that need to be reached and if we all do our part and actually like do God's calling for our life, then we accomplish way more than if we fight about it."

- So what do you think happens when the Christians are fighting and the non-Christians are watching?

- Yeah, I mean, it's just a really bad witness because I mean, who wants to be a part of a family that's constantly fighting? I mean, it's pretty terrible. So if you can see that there's unity within believers that even if people go to different churches, they're able to speak well of other churches and other people from different backgrounds or denominations or whatever that says a lot about the fact that they have the same thing in common, that Jesus is motivating them. Versus if there's gossip or I don't know, if there's just bad reputations or some people have church-hurt maybe, that they speak out of and they speak badly of other Christians, or they like some groups and not others, it makes it really hard for a non-Christian to think, "Okay, well, like, are there bad guys and good guys. Like are there good Christians and bad Christians? Like, where am I supposed to go to church? Where do I fit? I've heard these things about this church", and it's not exciting to try to sort through all that. If you don't know Jesus, and you don't know who to talk to, and you don't know where to start, if all you hear is like division and confusion and different opinions getting thrown around and you don't have discernment, you're not gonna know where to start. You're not gonna know how to trust anybody.

- In Genesis, I think it's 11, God looks down and they're building the tower of Babel and it's all these different nations. And it's all these people groups working together trying to create heaven on earth. And God says, they've come together and they're unified and now nothing will be impossible with them. What that means is that unified unbelievers are stronger than divided believers, okay? So Jesus here is praying that we would be united because let me tell you this, oftentimes on Satan's team, they hang together, okay? And what I say is offensive, I don't, you're not gonna be surprised, you grew up with this, but you know, you don't see a lot of

Muslims attacking Muslims. You don't see a lot of transgender or gay rights advocates attacking gay and transgender advocates. You tend to find that certain groups stick together, even if they're wrong, and then we get divided, and we know that Jesus is right. Not that we're right, but Jesus is right, okay? And so why would it be important for us as Christians not just to align and agree or associate and unify with those who say they're Christians, but distinguished between what I like to call the open and the closed handed issues, maybe explain that theologically.

- Yeah, so there's things, I mean, we have a whole doctrinal statement on the church website of things that absolutely have to be believed in order to be a Christian. What would be some of those things that you would put in the closed hand?

- One God, three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit. The Bible is from God. It's perfect and true in the highest authority. Jesus is fully man, fully God, born of a Virgin, lived without sin, died on the cross, rose from the dead, is coming again to judge the living and the dead. We're all sinners and without Jesus, we go to hell and with Jesus, we go to heaven.

- That was pretty good answer.

- Thank you.

- And then there's things. So those, that's what it means to be a Christian. That's the close hand, that's what it is, and if you don't believe that, that's what the Bible says, so you're disagreeing with the Bible. So either you need to change the Bible or change yourself like you said, which, you know, there's kind of only one option there. But then, there's open-handed issues like style of worship, homeschool versus private versus public school, types of baptism, different things that we might disagree about. And it's not straight, super clear in the Bible. There might be different people that do it different ways, but it's a matter of what God has called that specific person or a church to do that might look a little bit different based on the principles of the Bible and those main characteristics and convictions that are based in the Word and based on what Jesus taught. And so, yeah, there's differences in different churches and denominations and things, but it doesn't mean that, yeah, it doesn't mean that there has to be division. We don't have to fight. We shouldn't fight over those open-handed things, so they're not salvation issues.

- And there's this, so the closing or the primary issues and then there's secondary issues. So at 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, "What I received I hand to you a first importance." What he's saying is we can argue about speaking in tongues or baptism or when Jesus comes back and we could debate and dialogue and discuss, but we don't need to divide, 'cause those are not a first importance. And so, and how many of you, if you're a Christian, you believe something and then as you've learned the Bible, you've changed your position, okay? So what you say, if you put everything in the closed hand, you're fighting over way too much, and you're not allowing people to study the Bible and change their mind. If you put everything in the open hand, now you've gotten rid of the things that really matter, you've actually lost Jesus in the Bible. And so it's these are the things that hold us together. And maybe talk a little bit about this issue of oneness and

unity. I don't know if you're fully aware of it sweetie pie, but just the love and the support we've gotten from the church in the Valley, even here at the Trinity church, it's been supernatural. We've been the recipients of this love and unity.

- Yeah, I remember when we moved here, I was living in Costa Rica, but you and mom would send me little updates about what you were doing and things. And you would be getting lunch with like all these random pastors in the Valley that somehow got your cell number, not really sure how that happened, but they would call you.

- I put it on Craigslist.

- Oh gosh.

- Yeah, pastor seeking employment, yeah.

- That's good. And so people would call you and ask to hear what you were doing in ministry. If you were looking for a building, if you were trying to plant a church, if you needed a job, if you needed a worship guy, whatever, they were trying to help. And like big churches and small churches all over the Valley. And that was really different than where we came from, and remember you and mom just saying, you felt really welcomed here. And like there was unity amongst the churches, and that's something you always pray for, but if nobody's actually doing anything about it, it's not gonna happen. Like you have to pray for it and also act and be unified, and get to know other pastors and other ministries and things. And I remember you have a lot of great friends now all over the Valley that you guys call each other and you figure out, I mean, talk about all the gifts that we get from all the things around campus that have been given.

- Yeah, so before we moved here, we flew down and I met with a lot of the, I call them the godfathers of the Valley, all the different teams and tribes. And they're not really the godfathers, it's not "Ice them", they're not like that. But they they kind of lead the teams in the tribes, and so we flew down and we had a private meeting with them to answer any questions and just to ask them "If God called us to the Valley, would you welcome us?" 'Cause I don't wanna go where God's people and godly leaders that have been serving faithfully don't welcome us. So I wanted to submit and honor their spiritual authority and they asked great questions, we had great conversation. They all prayed over me and welcomed us to Arizona, said "We would welcome your family to Arizona, and if God calls you to plant a church, we would support that." I was like, "That's incredible." So then we went to plant and 40 plus churches around the Valley and world sent gifts unsolicited, we didn't ask. And then the churches in the Valley, they gave us kids stuff and gear and chairs and volunteer, I mean, it was crazy. They're all like, "We're all on team Jesus, if you're on team Jesus, you're on our team." I was like, "Wow, that actually sounds like John 17 to me." And at that point we were the recipients. And, and so now we're growing and we're gonna add another classroom space, hopefully I've got a God story to tell you guys soon of a miracle underway...

- We're working on that.

- Working on that. And, but we're running out of space. And so, four of the big godfathers in the Valley contacted me in the last week, "So we're praying for you in the church. We're so excited for you. We're looking for opportunities for multi-site and big buildings. We are actively scouting for you." I got a call from the largest church in the Valley, I'll just say it publicly Christ Church of the Valley, they baptized more new Christians than any church in the history of the Southwest. And they called this week, they're like, "You're growing, you're doing great, we're praying for you, what do you need? Can we come help you figure out the load capacity on your property? Do you need a new building? Can we help train your staff? We want you to keep going, how can we help you?" That's new for me.

- Yeah, I don't think that's normal in most places, yeah.

- But we've received so much love and support, we wanna be loving and supportive. We wanna continue that culture and environment. Let me, and so I just wanna publicly honor my brothers and sisters at churches all over the Valley, we're in the fastest growing city and County in America. And let me tell you there's not enough churches to reach all the people and there's more people coming, so we need all the churches to be healthy and strong and we need more churches to get planted. That's our heart. Maybe just close with this, how your experience helping lead the Prayer Ministry at Arizona State University, one of the biggest universities in the country, how really praying for someone is part of evangelizing them. So Jesus here in John 17, He's praying about reaching people that aren't Christians yet. How does prayer and evangelism go together?

- Yeah, so you talked about how we're all missionaries. I love traveling, I've been on mission trips all over the world and that's awesome, to like have a dedicated time to go somewhere and really just have a week or whatever set aside to minister to people. But in our day-to-day lives, like you said too, when you go to work, when you're with your kids, when you're with your friends, you're also supposed to be a missionary and evangelize and be set apart from the world. And for me in college, that was kind of like an enlightening thing that I was around, mostly non-Christian, surprisingly ASU mostly non-Christians would you believe it? Not like all of the best people in the world all in one place, it was kind of, you know, crazy, but I would be around a lot of non-Christians all the time. And then I would go back to my dorm and it was, I was living with non-Christians and that was like brand new for me. And so I learned kind of two different types of evangelism. One was just like straight evangelism, like we'd go and pray for homeless people, and people on campus, the prayer tent was right in the middle of campus and people would come to get prayer. And I would like to go on prayer walks, like I like to walk while I'm praying. And so I would walk around campus and I would just like ask God to show me people to pray for. And so I would just stop people randomly, or I would go up to a group of people and like ask to pray for them. It was really fun, it was great. It was just like randomly go up to a table with people and be like, "Hey, can I pray for you?" And they're like, "Well, who are you?" Like, I'm not an angel, I'm an actual person, don't worry. But sometimes they really did take it as a

sign from God, and they were like, "Wow, I need to like go back to my faith", which was cool. But so I prayed for a lot of random people and that was awesome. And I had one lady that was like a security guard that I prayed for, and she was crying and crying 'cause like her daughter got diagnosed with cancer or something that morning. And it was like the perfect timing, and we became friends and I kept ministering to her and she ended up going to a different church like going back to her church and just really cool, how like God showed me random people just to pray for. And then there was the other side of it, my dorm mates that my first semester, well, both of my semesters on campus I didn't have any Christian roommates at all. Like there was nobody on my floor really that was Christian. And I had one roommate in particular that I really felt like I was supposed to talk to her about Jesus. And so I did, and I invited her to church and Bible studies and I was like, I was a freshman, I just came out of Bible college and I was like so excited. And she was like, "Nah, not really interested." And over and over and over, she just said no. And I kept praying for her. And I stopped talking to her like moved out and everything and then come to find out like three years later, I ran into her at a wedding of one of my friends that I knew at the prayer tent. And I was like, "What are you doing here?" And she's like, "Oh, I'm like a leader with this other Christian group now, and I got saved like two years ago." And I was like, "Oh, so I didn't like make that happen." But like me praying for her and like introducing her to that, eventually somebody else connected with her and was able to share the gospel with her, and she was open to that in that time with that person. And so it was really cool to see like there were certain people that I prayed for and right on the spot, they would feel like God was talking to them, and this was like some crazy moment that God was showing up in their life. And they would, I mean, there are people that literally just got saved randomly in the prayer tent. They'd be like walking to class and stop by and wanna get prayed for, and then be like, "Oh, okay, Jesus is cool. Like I'm receiving Jesus now." We're like, "Okay, you should probably like go to class." But that was awesome. There was that and then there was like the intentional relational walk of a two or three-year journey for this girl, and for lots of my other friends, and people I knew that I thought were just rejecting me. And I was like, "Okay, well I guess it didn't work." And then a couple of years later they'd come back around 'cause you know, God had a different plan but I try to keep praying for them. And they're still people that I pray for from college that still don't know Jesus, but we have to be perseverant. And like Jesus says that "He made the Word known to them and He will continue to make it known." Like a lot of the time it takes more than just one time of somebody hearing something to just totally accept it and change their life, unless it's like a super offensive sermon from you than a lot of people just kinda break down right away. Nice, but a lot of the time it takes a lot of perseverance and you can just be one step in that journey for someone that they can point back and say, "I remember that person praying for me, and that was a big moment." So even if it doesn't seem like it changes everything all right then, just that persistence and interceding for them is really important.

- That's awesome. Thank you for writing the book with me, doing the series with me, I'm super proud of you, it's an honor to be your daddy. Maybe we step forward, let them set up for worship. And is it okay if I hold your hand?

- Sure.

- I'll ask your husband, is that okay?

- All right, dear Lord thank You so much just for this final sermon and the Pray Like Jesus Series. I pray that everyone here would just glean some things from this series, from this sermon Lord to continue to take steps forward in their prayer life, Lord, that they would not be afraid or ashamed to pray for themselves. If you needed to pray for Yourself, we do too Lord. And I pray that we would know how to do that, how to approach you as Father, as You're just an amazing loving Father, Lord, and we thank You for that. And for those of us that don't know how to pray for fellow believers or don't know how to live in unity, I pray that You would help us to grow in that Lord expose areas of our heart that might be divisive or just living apart from community or even isolated or just church-hurt, Lord that we would be healed and that we would live in full unity in the way that You intended for Your church to be Lord. And that we would, as a result of all of that, be able to minister to those around us that don't yet know You. And I pray that if there's anyone in this room Lord that they would not, that doesn't know You, that they would not leave without asking someone about You Lord, that they would meet You today. We thank You Lord for all that You're doing in our lives, and thank You for prayer, Amen.