Addressing God Personally

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[0:00] Good, let's turn to God's Word. And we're in Matthew's Gospel this morning, and Willie's going to be beginning a little series on how we pray.! Matthew 6, beginning at verse 1.

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people, in order to be seen by them. For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.
Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.
But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.
And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.
[1:34] But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
Pray then like this. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
[2:43] Well, amen. And may God bless to us his word this morning. Well, good morning, everyone.

Do turn with me, if you would, to the passage that we read there, Matthew Gospel, chapter 6. And as Paul said, we're thinking about how we pray.
Back in July, one of the projects I was working on during my time of writing leave was a sequel to the little book, Why We Pray, which we republished last year in Tron Books.
And we hope that it will be out before Christmas this year under the title of How We Pray. Now, why we pray is really the foundational question. Because unless we've got a clear understanding of what prayer actually is and why we can pray at all, and above all, of course, to whom and through whom that we can truly pray, unless we understand that, then actually we're just in a fog of darkness, aren't we?
Ignorance. I often think that when I see it, and perhaps you've seen sometimes on the buses, the banners saying, try praying. Well, what does that mean?
[4:02] What can it mean except some sort of conjured up human effort or some religious exercise, some divine concoction of our own imagining that we're speaking to?

And really, when you think about it, if that's the state of ignorance we're in, you might as well say, on the post, and we'll try anything. You see, it's only when we think rightly about the one true God and the one true mediator between man and God, Jesus Christ, it's only when we begin to think about that that we can even begin to think about praying meaningfully at all.
And the truth is that we can only pray, we can only speak to God because God has first spoken to us. Prayer is not something that we initiate.

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Prayer, real prayer, is a response. It's the response to God's call to faith through the Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer, in that sense, is just the audible manifestation of real faith.
It's the manifestation, isn't it, of a relationship with God that God has given us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can speak back to God in prayer because God is a speaking God who has first spoken to us His saving word in Jesus so that we can respond to Him.
[5:22] Which, of course, is what we were created to do. We were created as human beings for fellowship with God. That's our purpose. But our rebellious hearts broke that relationship.

And yet the wonder of the gospel is that in God's mercy, through Jesus Christ, He has brought us back, brought us back into His own family, adopted us to be His true children.
And that's why we can pray. That's why we can communicate with God our Father because we know Him, because we love Him, because He first knew and loved us. So once we understand that, of course, the gospel, once we understand the joy, the wonder that we can pray to our Heavenly Father, well, of course, we want to pray.
But we might find ourselves then asking a different question. Well, how do we pray? And that, I think, is a question that many Christians seem to struggle with and need help with.
So I thought it would be good for us to spend a few weeks on that this autumn. And then, well, perhaps afterwards you can get the book and read it with a bit of a head start and recap the things that we've learned together and perhaps help one another with that.
[6:37] So, to answer this question, how we pray, we're going to seek guidance from the best place, from the Lord Jesus Christ. And from what we call the Lord's Prayer that we find here in Matthew chapter 6.

And it's a very simple pattern that Jesus gave to His disciples to teach them how to pray. And it is indeed the epitome of a pattern of simplicity. It's a wonderful contrast to so much in our modern world, isn't it?
I'm told that the tax guide in the United Kingdom has expanded exponentially. It now covers tens of thousands of pages. And it doesn't look like getting any shorter any time sooner.
We've got a budget coming up. Tens of thousands of pages to teach us how to pay tax to the government. But just a few lines from God the Son to teach us how to pray to God our Father.
Isn't that wonderful? It's a great relief to me. I'm sure it is to you. But some Christians actually seem to want to make prayer very complicated. Not so with Jesus.
[7:42] It is a pattern of simplicity. And it's given us to help us, those of us who have this privilege of prayer, to help us in the practice of that prayer.

Now in Luke chapter 11, where we also find the Lord's Prayer, it comes directly in answer to a question from the disciples who say to Jesus, Lord, teach us how to pray. But we're going to look at it here in Matthew chapter 6, in Matthew's Gospel, where the context, of course, is the very full context of what we call the Sermon on the Mount.
And of course, the context is always the key, isn't it, to us understanding what God is saying to us in His Word. And the context here is vital to help us understand what Jesus wants us to grasp about real prayer.
Because the theme of the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, and you folks, you students, young workers who are studying Matthew's Gospel in Release the Word, you'll come to this, I guess, later on in this term.
But the theme of the whole Sermon on the Mount is righteousness. That's what's essential, that's what's essential, says Jesus, for entry into the kingdom of heaven. That's what's essential for progress as kingdom people.
[8:53] Look at chapter 5, verse 20. Do you see? Righteousness. Your righteousness, Jesus says, must exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees, the most apparently pious people of all, and unless it does, you'll never even enter the kingdom of heaven.

In fact, if you look to the very end of Matthew chapter 5, the last verse, verse 48, Jesus says, you must be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect. So how on earth are we as sinful people going to have that righteousness that Jesus is talking about?
the heavenly morality he describes all through Matthew chapter 5 that loves our enemies, that shows total faithfulness, total honesty in dealings with people, that repays evil only with good.
Well, of course, the answer is that if we're going to have that heavenly morality that Jesus speaks about there, we must have the heavenly mentality that Jesus goes on to describe here in Matthew

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chapter 6.
We need the mentality that can only come through a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Look down to chapter 6, verse 33, a bit later on from where we read, seek first the kingdom of God, says Jesus, and seek his righteousness and all these things will be added to you.
[10:19] See, in real Christian faith, everything always comes back to that. Righteousness is never, ever about mere religion, far less religiosity.

Righteousness, according to Jesus, is all about relationship, relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son. And you see, therefore, the first four words of the Lord's Prayer just encapsulate everything that that means.
Our Father in heaven. How do we pray? Well, real prayer begins when we do that, when we address God personally.
Prayer begins in a reflection of that real, live, wonderful relationship that we have with God through Jesus our Savior. And once again, what that relationship means and will mean for us will inevitably flow from our understanding of what kind of God this is that we're speaking about.
What kind of God this is to whom we're united, to whom we're praying. And all through Matthew chapter 6, not just here in verse 9 that we read, our Father in heaven, but all through this chapter, I'm sure you noticed as we read it, all through it we're being reminded that this God, the true God, is our Father in heaven.
[11:41] Twelve times or more Jesus uses that phrase in this chapter. Our Father in heaven is the great rewarder of those who know Him and who pray to Him.

Do you see how it is all the way through? Verse 1, the reward from your Father who's in heaven. Verse 4, your Father who's in secret will reward you. Verse 6, your Father who is in secret, your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
Verse 8, your Father knows. Verse 9, your Father in heaven. Verse 14, your Heavenly Father. On and on it goes. Verse 15, verse 18, all the way down to verse 26, all the way down to verse 32. Your Heavenly Father knows what you need. Are we beginning to get the message? Who is our God? He's our Father in heaven. So that's what we need to remember above all Jesus is saying if we're going to think about how to pray.
It's all about who it is to whom we're praying and that our God is in heaven, not merely on earth and that He is our Father.
[12:53] He's not some hidden fiend that we need to fear. And so just as the Sermon on the Mount teaches us plainly that real righteousness is actually the antithesis of any kind of earthly religious sort of righteousness, while so real Christian prayer is the very antithesis of any kind of earthly religious prayer.

And you'll see that that is why Jesus begins His teaching on prayer with two huge negatives. We call them necessary negatives. We constantly find them all through the Bible, don't we? negatives that clarify the positive.
But Jesus begins by telling us by what prayer is not, how not to pray before He shows us how we as followers of Christ should pray. So look first at verses 5 and 6.
There's a first negative. Real Christian prayer, Jesus says, is not, is not the fraudulent prayer of pious religiosity. When you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites.
For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners that they may be seen by others. And truly I say to you, they have received their reward.
[14:05] But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Don't treat your prayers like a theatrical production. That's how one vivid translation puts this. But you see, that is what pious religiosity does.
This so-called prayer is actually about manipulating the attitudes of people on earth. It's all about seeking a reputation on earth for piety, isn't it? So it's not real prayer that engages with God.
It's a pious fraud. Jesus calls it hypocrisy. It's very religious. Verse 5 is clear. It goes on in places of so-called worship, in synagogues, in churches, in public.
Of course, first century Judea was a very religious culture and ostentatious religion like that was very much admired as it still is in many parts of the world. In fact, if you go to Israel today, you'll see exactly that sort of thing down at the Western Wall at the beginning of the Shabbat and so on.

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[15:17] You see it in many Islamic countries, don't you, with great public displays of piety. You'll see it, I suppose, in Roman Catholic countries, less so than in the past. Today, in our Western secular culture, it's much different to that, really.

And we are actually very quick, aren't we, in our culture to jump on any kind of religious hypocrisy. Well, in a sense, that's right, isn't it? when there are dreadful abuse scandals that are exposed in the, well, as have been multiple times, for example, in the Roman Catholic Church, but not just there, sadly.
Although, there's a perverse delight, isn't there, in our society, our secularist rulers. They love lashing out. They love lampooning and exposing anything to do with hypocrisy when it involves the Christian church, not so much, perhaps, in other religions.
But it's ironic, isn't it? There's plenty of hypocrisy in political life, in the media life, all sorts of pious platitudes we get from our politicians while they're taking their backhanders from their supporters, while they're swanning around with their expenses claims, or their motorhomes and the rest, or all the media journalists who love to expose things wherever they possibly can.
It involves the Christian church, church, and they go home on their fat salaries that come out of the public purse. Very easy to point the finger merely at Christianity, and of course, that is what our culture does.
[16:47] But, we've got to be honest. It's very easy for religion, for religiosity, and perhaps especially for Christianized religion, it's very easy for that to truly begin to eclipse the reality of a relationship with God.

And that is exactly what Jesus is confronting here. It's what he was facing in Israel. This was a people of the Bible. But their real relationship with God had actually become choked.
It had become overcome by ritual, by religiosity, and even by deception. Jesus is saying, you're deceiving yourselves. Because what they were really doing was to impress others.
It was to be seen and heard by others. And that actually is still just the same today. There's so much misguided religiosity and institutional Christianity, pomp and ceremony, robes and choirs and color and all sorts of things.
Sometimes it looks very, very impressive in earthly terms. Some of you might remember, I certainly do remember, watching on television the funeral of Pope John Paul II.
[18:05] I think it was about 20 years ago, wasn't it? It was April. I remember it because we were on holiday in Spain. It was Easter holidays and it was raining. And we had nothing to do but sit and watch the television.

And the only thing that we could understand on the television was this broadcast of the Pope's funeral. But it was very, very impressive to the watching crowds. Vast numbers of people in great robes and colors in St. Peter's Square in Rome.
Great processions and grandeur. Pomp and ceremony. You get the same type of thing sometimes, don't you, with the great displays of TV evangelists.
I suppose it particularly comes into our minds in the United States but also in many parts of Africa. Is that the sort of thing that God is impressed with?
Great earthly displays? Is he sitting in his box in the theater watching all of this performance and applauding? Well, not according to Jesus, verse 6.
[19:07] Our Father actually sees in secret. He sees what's really aimed at him and he sees what's really just self-promotion to impress the crowds.

And we have to be honest that we can look at that and see the faults in those kind of things. But we have to be careful, don't we, with our own evangelical piety.
We can easily also have a sense of self-righteousness, can't we? I mean, I'm always at the prayer meeting in our church. Not like him and not like her.
Well, bully for me. Why am I at the prayer meeting? Am I really there to pray with God's people to the Lord in heaven who sees in secret or am I actually there to impress other people?
Do you know, somebody once told me some years ago that the numbers at our prayer meeting went down quite considerably when I was known to be on holiday. I don't think that's true anymore and I sincerely hope it's not.
[20:13] But if that were true, it would say something, wouldn't it, about why people might come to the prayer meeting to impress the minister. Whose eyes and ears are we drawing with our prayers?

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And whose praise are we seeking? Is it God in heaven? Or we have to ask ourselves, don't we? Is it the praise of our fellow Christians? Are we seeking to impress them?
Are we seeking to impress a minister? Are we seeking to impress somebody that we think it's important to impress? There's nobody so annoying, is there, as the name dropper.
Do you know name droppers? A name dropper is the sort of person who wants to spend time with somebody so that they're seen to spend time with that person or so that they can tell other people about how they've spent some time with that important person.
I had somebody I used to know who used to quite often phone me up and the real purpose of his phone call wasn't to talk to me but it was actually to tell me things about who he'd seen recently who I thought might be quite important.
[21:24] That's what religious prayer is, you see. It's just like that. It's all about being seen and heard by others and impressing others. But look what Jesus says in verse 5.

If that's the way you pray, you've already had your reward. You've got your reputation. People think you're very pious. But Jesus says it's all fraud.
It's just religious prayer. Real prayer is quite different. Real relationship means you just want to be with somebody because you love them, because you love their company.
Just being with them in secret, even if nobody knows about it, is the reward in itself. A bridegroom has just got married.
He doesn't need to receive a reward for going away on honeymoon with his wife. That is his reward. That's their reward. Just being together away. Nothing else they want.
[22:24] And you see, that's the problem with the prayer of pious religion. It forgets that we're dealing with heaven, not earth, and that God is in heaven.

And that it's heaven's praise and God's praise that we need, not earthly. That's the only thing that matters. And Jesus, you see, says you can't have both of those things.
Look down to verse 24. You can't have both. It's one master's praise or the other. You can't serve two masters. You've either got treasure in heaven, he's saying in verse 20 there, or on earth, but not both.
And that's hard for many of us, isn't it? Because deep down we crave recognition. But no, says Jesus, real prayer, if you want to know about that. It's the antithesis of pious religiosity.
It's not about having an earthly reputation with God. It's about having a real heavenly relationship with God. So that's the first negative. And the second's there in verses 7 and 8.
[23:26] You see, real Christian prayer is not a pious fraud of pious religiosity. It's not fraudulent. But neither is it the frantic prayer of pagan religion.

When you pray, don't heap up empty praises as the Gentiles, as the pagans do. They think they'll be heard for their many words. Don't be like them. For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.
You see, if the Pharisee's religiosity seeks to manipulate people's attitudes on earth to gain a reputation for godliness among men, well, pagan religion is about trying to manipulate God's attitude in order to gain the rewards that we want on earth.
It's desperately trying to get God to give us what we want or what we think we need or what we think we deserve, perhaps. And do you see how all through this chapter it's very striking Jesus is actually showing us that on the one hand hyper-religiosity and on the other hand total paganism are actually in essence both exactly manifestations of the same thing.
They're all seeking to use God to give us what we think what we need. The pious Pharisee, you see, wants a reputation for righteousness and morality and piety among people.
[24:50] That's his treasure on earth. But the pagan Gentile wants riches, wants the liberty, the autonomy, the things that he thinks God can give him.

One is seeking the praise of men and the other is seeking the possessions of men. Jesus says that then in verse 32, Gentiles seek after things.
Well, that's our culture, isn't it? That's why today, right now, all the vast car parks of the shopping centers out of Tyne are filling up, aren't they? Because those are the great pagan temples that people are going to.
Our Gentiles seeking things. And everyone in the world falls into one of these two camps, really. We're either desperate for reputation or we're desperate for riches.

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And Jesus says both of these things are the exact antithesis of a real relationship with God our Father in heaven. Not the frantic prayer of pagan religion all around us.
[25:55] It can look very religious, but it can equally look very secular. You go to India, as I do every year, and you see that frantic prayer of verse 7 everywhere. There are shrines, there are offerings, there are endless words, there are holy men, there's wailing, there's rituals, all sorts of things to manipulate the gods to bring me luck, to bring me better karma, to bring me wealth, to bring me whatever it is.

But our secular culture isn't very different. In a crisis, it's amazing, isn't it, how many people want to discover prayer. Well, the saying's true, isn't it?
There's not many atheists in a foxhole. When there's a disaster, when there's an atrocity, some kind of national tragedy, it's what we see, isn't it, outpouring of what increasingly looks like that kind of sort of pagan religion, or a sort of Christianized paganism.
I guess these public displays probably began in earnest way back when Princess Diana died, some of you will remember. The vast flowers all being thrown around Buckingham Palace and Kensington Palace and all the way up the route of the funeral, the vigils, the candles, all of these things.
People revert, don't they, now, to that sort of traditional folk Christianity. Or, alternatively, they seek after other kinds of things, New Age religions, mantras and chants and various types of trendy religions, or dramatic signs and wonders ministries.
[27:31] People looking for those personal miracles, desperate in a crisis for something, for healing, for change, whatever it is. But all of these different things, they're all just forms of the same things.

It's trying to manipulate God to get Him to give us what we want. Earthly treasure, the things that we set our hearts upon, the things that we simply must have, that we must have now.
And if we're honest, it's easy for us to think that way, isn't it? When a crisis hits our own life, healing for cancer, suddenly we discover earnest prayer, many, many words, endlessly.
Or it may be the marriage that you dream of, or it may be the career that you're desperate to have, or any number of things. And we're seeking, by our many words, to manipulate God, to give us the answer to our prayers and what we want.
But you see what Jesus is saying? No, no, no, that kind of prayer is a thousand miles away from the prayer that flows out of real relationship with God, our Heavenly Father. Because it just forgets.
[28:48] Or perhaps we've never even understood that God is our Heavenly Father, that He knows already what our needs really are. And that He cares about us.

so that we really can trust Him. Look down to verse 32 again. Pagans, Gentiles seek after these things.
And your Heavenly Father knows that you need them. So seek first the Kingdom of God. And seek first His righteousness.
And all these things will be added to you. Real prayer knows that we really can depend upon our Heavenly Father to provide for all of our needs.
All of our needs. Not necessarily all of our wants. Your little children would love to have nothing but chocolate and sweets for breakfast every day, wouldn't they?
[29:47] You're a loving parent. You're not going to give them what they want. You're going to give them breakfast cereal. Actually, you're far better giving them eggs. But anyway, that's another matter. But you give them what they need.

Not what they want, because they don't know, but you do know. And frantic pagan prayer like that forgets that God is a Father.
He's not a fiend. He loves us, and He knows what we need. We don't need to manipulate Him to get Him to do good to us. And we can forget that, can't we?
That must be the case, or else Jesus wouldn't have to tell us not to. Have you ever found yourself in frantic prayer like that at times? I confess I have.
And it so often happens, doesn't it? Let's have a special prayer marathon, an all night of prayer, so we're utterly exhausted for the rest of the week. Because God will be really impressed, won't He, with our stamina.
[30:51] Don't heap up empty phrases like people who think they'll be heard for their many words. That's what the pagans do.

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Don't be like them. So Jesus says to us, don't be fraudulent Pharisees with a high view of your own righteousness and an eye on your earthly reputation with others in the church.
No, no, no. Be a humble seeker after heaven's righteousness. And your father's praise, even if nobody else sees, he sees in secret. And don't be a frantic pagan with high hopes for your riches, for your rewards on earth that you can get God to give you with the right words and the longest words.
Be a contented child. Seek heaven's treasure. Seek your father's provision. So that's a double negative before we come to this wonderful positive in verse 9.
And the contrast there in verse 9 is much more striking in the original Greek than it is in our English Bibles here. You could read it like this. You then, by contrast, you then, pray like this.
[32:06] Our father in heaven. You see, Jesus is saying that real Christian prayer is the familial prayer of real personal relationship.

We pray as sons to our father in heaven. Eugene Peterson puts it like this. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply.
I think that gets it very well. You see, the simplicity of real Christian prayer just reflects the simplicity of a real personal relationship that we have with God, our loving father.
father. When you know somebody very, very well, you don't need very many words, do you? You get a letter for the first time from somebody you don't know asking you to respond.
You'll probably write back quite a long and formal letter. You'll be careful with what you say because you don't want to be misunderstood. So you maybe need quite a lot of words, a lot of careful thought.
[33:06] But if you're having an exchange with one of your best friends who you've known for a very long time on email or maybe even on text message, you don't need many words, do you? You're not worried that they're going to misunderstand you.

They know you. You know them. I've got a very good friend that we often exchange messages and it's often just a very few words. Sometimes it's just one word.
In fact, sometimes it's not even that. He'll send me one word and I'll send back an exclamation mark and we know exactly what we mean. Well, that's right, isn't it? You know that. If you've known somebody all your life, you know them inside out.
You've been married to somebody for 50 years. You don't need to write epistles to one another. Sometimes you don't need to talk at all. Just a look conveys an enormous amount.
A raised eyebrow. And that's the simplicity, isn't it, of deep relationship. relationship. As you know, before we came to Glasgow, we were in London for a number of years when I was working for the Proclamation Trust.
[34:12] And I was often away for three or four nights at a time because we had a lot of conferences for ministers. And I usually get back quite late. Our kids were very small and they were always in bed by the time I got home.

And I'd been away for a few days and I missed them. And I'd like to go up into the room and just see them. And I would go up to the room and I'd just bend down and kiss their forehead and say, good night, sweetheart. And sometimes they would stir in their sleep and just turn over and throw their arms around my neck and just go, dad, and just turn back over and go to sleep.
And that's all I needed. It was enough. Told me all I needed to know. And that's what our Father in Heaven says to God, you see.
Especially when it comes from the heart. Even if we're too tired to say anything more. I remember years ago, and some of you will remember, our dear brother David Early, who passed away.
David had cancer and he was in the hospice. And he was very near to death. Very full of morphine and drugs and things. And I remember going to see him and he was quite distressed.
[35:21] And I said, what's wrong? And he said, I'm so confused and I'm so tired, I can't even pray properly anymore. And I said, what do you mean? And he said, I'm trying to pray the Lord's Prayer and I get to our Father and I can't even remember the rest.

And I said, David, that's the bit that really matters. That's the bit that matters. There's a lovely story about the 18th century evangelist George Whitefield who was traveling with John Wesley and they were preaching to vast crowds all over the place and traveling all around the country and sharing lodgings together.

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And after a long day of preaching, they went up to the room and George Whitefield apparently just threw his boots off, lay down on the bed, said, Lord, everything's all right between us, isn't it? Good night. And rolled over and went to sleep. That's real prayer, isn't it? Simplicity, real relationship. That's the joy of real communication with our Father in heaven.
William Still once put it like this. He said, real prayer means that all my thought life is tinctured with his presence. All my thought life is tinctured with his presence.
[36:41] It just meant that every thought and every word of God our Father is filling our minds and every thought of ours is responding with a resounding yes.

Our Father in heaven, yes, I am devoted to you alone. It's for your honor that I want to live. And everything I need is dependent on you alone from your hand.
It gives me everything I need and I trust you. See, according to Jesus, that's real prayer. It's just the vocalization of something that's real between us and our Father.
I wonder if you know that kind of simplicity, that kind of joy in prayer. I mean, really, that's just another way of asking, do you really know our Father in heaven through the Lord Jesus, his Son, do you?
I hope you do. If you don't, I hope you soon will. And you can. Let me finish with Eugene Peterson's translation of verses seven to nine.
[37:56] Look at those verses and listen. Jesus says, the world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques, forgetting what you want from God.

Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you're dealing with. And he hosts better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply like this.
Father in heaven. Amen. Well, let's pray. Our Father in heaven, who is in secret and who sees in secret, who sees deep into our hearts and who knows the genuine voice of one of your own children saying to you, Father, how we thank you, Lord, that it's to you that we come.
Now we thank you for your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who shows us the way. And in every word of his, in every work of his, has shown us who you truly are and how wonderful you are and how much you love us.
So help us, Lord. Help us not to drift into being Pharisees or pagans, seem to manipulate other people or to manipulate you.
[39:34] that draw us to yourself, Lord, that we might love you and rejoice in you and enjoy you forever and ever.

Because that's why you made us. And that's why you've called us back to yourself. So help us, we pray. And help us to pray.
For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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