

IN JESUS' NAME

Jesus pled for the cup of suffering to pass from him. But what happened? Jesus himself knew the sting of “No.” However, this became an eternal, sweeping, swelling “Yes” for us. Had Jesus escaped the cross, we would still be slaves to sin.

But Jesus taught us to pray in his name, saying that what we ask will be given to us (John 14:13–14). Isn't this a foolproof formula for the answer we want? To ask in Jesus' name is to establish the framework for a surrendered heart, to ask for his will. When a king's name is stamped on something, it is a sign of his reign. If his name is on it, then his authority is over it. In the same way, when we pray in Jesus' name, we ask according to the ways of his kingdom. We fix his name over our prayer and place our prayer under his jurisdiction. To pray in his name is to pray in line with the overall framework of his heart for us. We ask for what we want but trust that he will give us what we need.

Prayer is a further mystery. But Jesus invites us to live into our questions and live out the answers as we follow him into the discoverable mysteries of God. Even if that takes the rest of our lives and longer.

Excerpt adapted from 'Awakening Grace: Spiritual Practices to Transform the Soul' by Matt LeRoy and Jeremy Summers.



*living out the
answers to our prayers*



PRACTICE: PRAYER

Wendell Berry is a poet and farmer, both of which require the careful cultivation of living things. Some of his best fruit is found in a novel called *Jayber Crow*. While in college, the story's namesake finds himself wrestling with universal questions. And it feels like a losing fight. He unloads his burden at the feet of a wise professor. The two share the following conversation, beginning with the professor:

"You have been given questions to which you cannot be given answers. You will have to live them out—perhaps a little at a time."

—"And how long is that going to take?"

"I don't know. As long as you live, perhaps."

—"That could be a long time."

"I will tell you a further mystery," he said. "It may take longer."

HOW TO PRAY

Prayer is a further mystery. And in his revolutionary Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did more than simply give us answers about prayer. He taught us how to live them out. In the thick of radical ideas about loving our enemies and reversing the order of the blessed, he offered a simple and humble approach to prayer. In Matthew 6 he said, "This, then, is how you should pray." With those words, all of our attempts at defining and explaining prayer grind to silence as we lean in and listen.

OUR FATHER

In a profound move of grace, Jesus begins this teaching with an earth bound concept of a vibrant family relationship. Prayer is not an attempt to win over a far off deity, but trusting our hearts to a good and loving Father. For some, this image opens prayer up, infusing the practice with a new sense of freedom, security, and hope. But for others, imagining God as a father instantly shuts off and strangles any desire to relate to him at all.

Failure by a father is deeply painful and scarring. We know it should be different. The ache is there because something inside whispers to us what a father should be like.

But herein lies the beauty of Jesus' gift. He connects us with a father that cares, protects, stays, believes. He is everything we've ever hoped for. He has the power to heal all the scars and restore the broken places. He is the best kind of father, brimming with goodness and mercy and love. Jesus, in kindness and grace, frames everything else he says about prayer with this foundational thought: we can approach God like the good and loving father we've always wanted.

YOUR WILL BE DONE

Jesus continues by instructing us to ask for the Father's will in Matthew 6:10. Having been shown his heart, we should now trust his design. This is an invitation into submission, a humble posture that signals surrender to the wisdom of God.

It is easy to imagine Jesus teaching on the hillside of Matthew 6, astounding the crowd with his authority and eloquence. To hear him say "your will be done" in this setting is one thing. But now look ahead to the night covered garden. On the last night of his life, he was burdened with the weight of his mission. The reality of the cross was moving over him like a gathering storm. Broken, he pled with his Father to let this cup pass from him. Then, with resolve and surrender he prayed, "Yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

From the comfort of the hillside Jesus told us how to pray. But beneath the shadow of the cross he showed us. Out of a heart of submission, he asked for and embraced the Father's will above his own. In this dark scene, we see how Jesus prayed. But we also catch a glimpse into how God answers.