



# *Growing Closer to God*

Changing Lives

*Relax in My Love*



# Growing Closer to God: Jesus

Theme: Learning to Pray



# Why Pray?

Because Jesus did; we can trust it's the right thing

*Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

**Lk 5:15-16**

Frequently

And he was the closest of all to the Father

*"I and the Father are one."*

**Jn 10:30**

# Why Pray?

*“your kingdom come”*

Will it come?

Will it come if I *\*don't\** pray for it?

Will it come if I pray for it *\*not\** to?

So why pray?

- **Changes the speed**
- **Changes us! Increases desire by making our vision more tangible**
- **Changes us! Desiring the kingdom more makes us more suitable!**

*“Remember Lot’s wife.”* **Lk 17:32**



# Lord, Teach us to Pray

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Mt 6:9-13*

Things About God

Things About God's Plans

Things About Us

Our prayers should have the same structure: 1, 2, 3

*“1 You shall have no other gods before me. 2 You shall not bow down to [idols]... 3 You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God...*

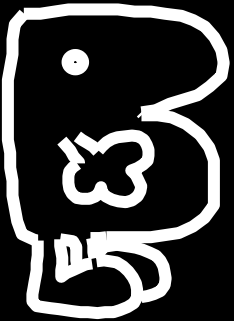
*4 Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 5 Honor your father and your mother...*

*6 You shall not murder. 7 You shall not commit adultery. 8 You shall not steal. 9 You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. 10 You shall not covet.” Ex 20:3-17*

**Pray Directly**

**Indirect Request**

**Actual Goal**



**Happiness**

**Fulfillment**

**Save lives**

**Be proved right**

**Be closer to God**

**Indulge myself**

**Protection for  
loved ones**

**Be transformed**

**Feel secure  
about future**

**Look superior**

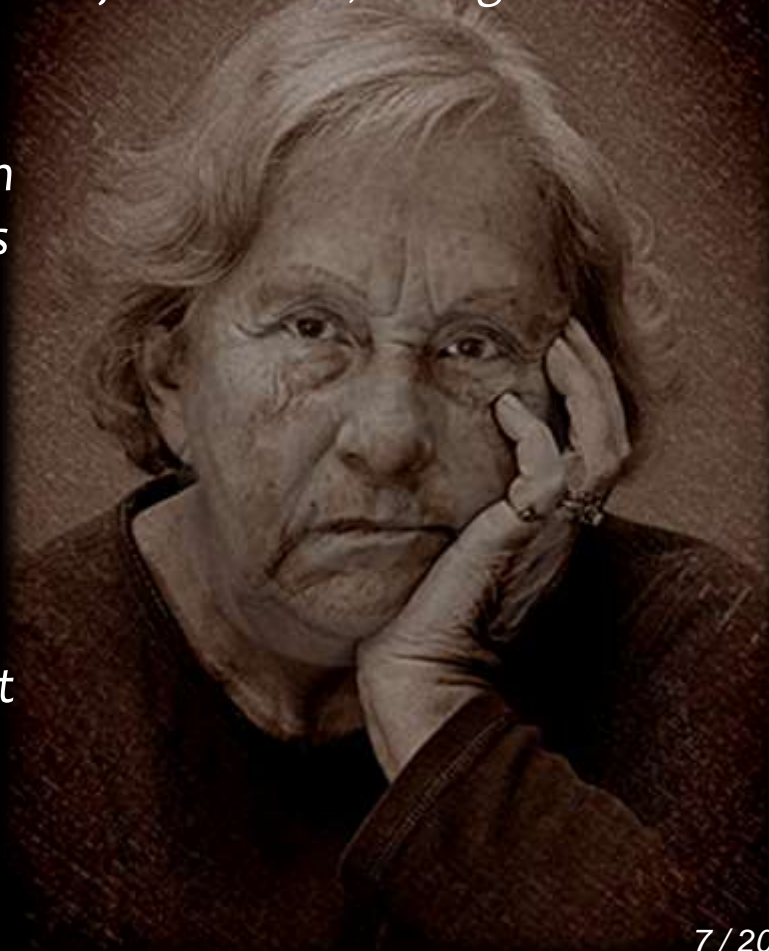
**Peace of mind**

## “Still Waiting”: Joanne

*‘If you had asked me as a young Christian whether I believed in prayer, I would have quickly said yes. I would have told you about the time I spun out in the snow and didn’t get hurt, or the time I dropped a house key somewhere in my ‘74 Dodge Dart and couldn’t find it for hours, until I prayed. Maybe God takes care of [new] believers, I don’t know. He doesn’t seem to take care of old-timers, though.*

*I could list probably a hundred prayers that haven’t been answered. I’m not speaking of selfish prayers, but important prayers: God, keep my kids safe, keep them away from the wrong crowd. All three ended up in trouble with the law, abusing drugs and alcohol.*

*I’ve got to say, Jesus’ story of the persistent widow sours. Thousands of people pray for a Christian leader who has cancer, and he dies. What did Jesus mean by the parable – that we keep beating our heads against a wall?*



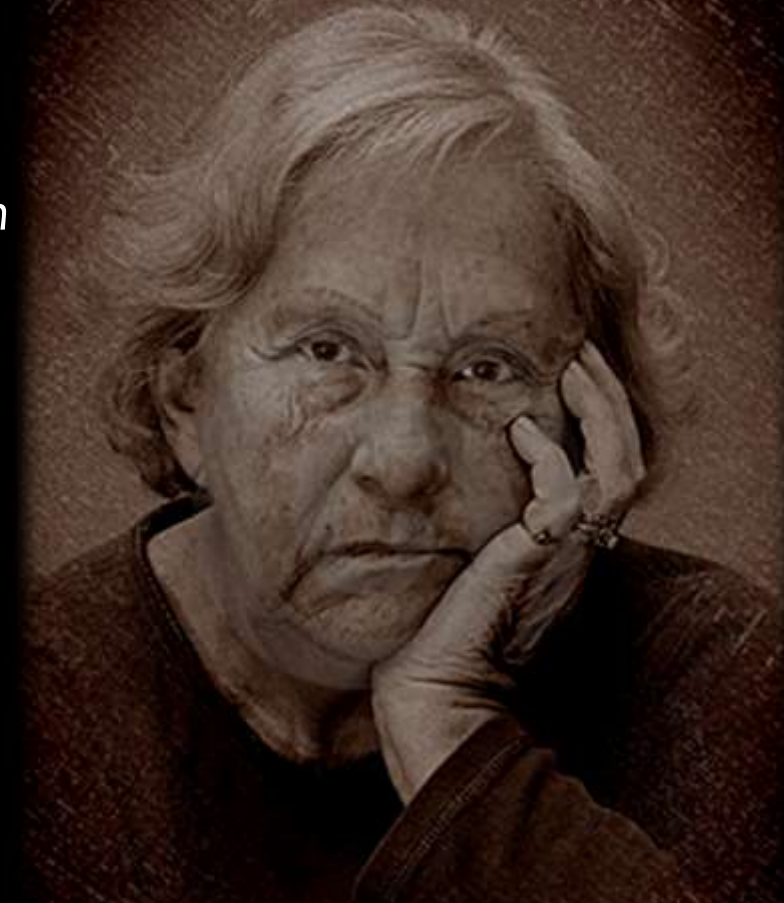
## “Still Waiting”: Joanne

*I'd guess maybe 20% of my prayers get anything like the answer I want. Over time, I give up. I pray for those things I believe will happen. Or, I just don't pray. I review my journal and see God doing less and less. I get mad. Like a child, I stop talking. I'm passive-aggressive with God. I put him off. Maybe later.*

*I went to a mentor and poured out my soul, describing in detail all I've been through in the past few years with my health and especially with my kids. “What do I do?” I asked.*

*He sat there for the longest time and said, “I don't know, Joanne.” He sighed. I waited for words of wisdom. None came. That's how it is with prayer, too.'*

**Prayer life was a bad experience  
What had gone wrong?**



*P. Yancey, “Prayer: Does it Make any Difference?,” 2006, Zondervan, p64-65*



## “A Prostitute’s Prayer”: Hilda

*‘My family in Costa Rica had no money, and so when I was four years old my mother sold me into sexual slavery. Men pay a lot of money to have their way with children. So while other kids my age went to school, I worked in a brothel, turning over all my earnings to my mother. All my life I felt ugly and dirty, ashamed. I learned to drink alcohol and use cocaine very early, as a way to dull the pain.*

*When I was a teenager, I had two children of my own... From then on I worked harder to earn money to support my children. It was the only way I could show my love for them.*

*One day a customer got furious when I wouldn’t do what he asked. He pulled a knife on me, then hit me with a baseball bat, splitting my head open. They took me to the hospital and I lay in that bed plotting to kill myself.*



## “A Prostitute’s Prayer”: Hilda

*Finally I got down on my knees beside the bed and pled with God. I wanted somehow to escape prostitution, to become a real mother to my children. And God answered that prayer with a miracle. He gave me a vision. I actually saw the words “Look for Rahab Foundation.” I was barely literate and didn’t know the word Rahab. It’s not a Spanish word. One of the nurses helped me find their number, though, and I called.*

*The phone rang and rang, and I prayed, “Lord, if you really exist, make somebody answer that phone.” At last a woman named Mariliana answered. Turns out, she was the Director of Rahab, which was closed for the day, but she had stopped by to pick up some papers.*

*“I need help,” I told Mariliana, “I’m dying. I can’t take it anymore.” She told me that God loved me and would not leave me alone. She would help me get away from prostitution and start a new life.*



## “A Prostitute’s Prayer”: Hilda

*A few days later she brought me to her home, bruised and bandaged, fresh from the hospital. She welcomed me with a huge hug and said, “You’re safe here, Hilda.” She told me Rahab was named for a prostitute in the Bible, one who became a heroine.*

*I couldn’t believe the hope on Mariliana’s face. It felt like a dream. She gave me a clean bed, flowers in the room, and a promise that no men would harass me. She introduced me to other women who had left prostitution. She taught me how to be a real mother, and now I am studying a trade to live for the glory of God.’*

**Prayer life was a good experience  
What had gone right?**



## Two Prayers

*“There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said... ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’” Lk 15:11-12*

**“Father, Give me...”**

**“Father, Make me...”**

*“When he came to his senses, he said... ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’” Lk 15:17-19*

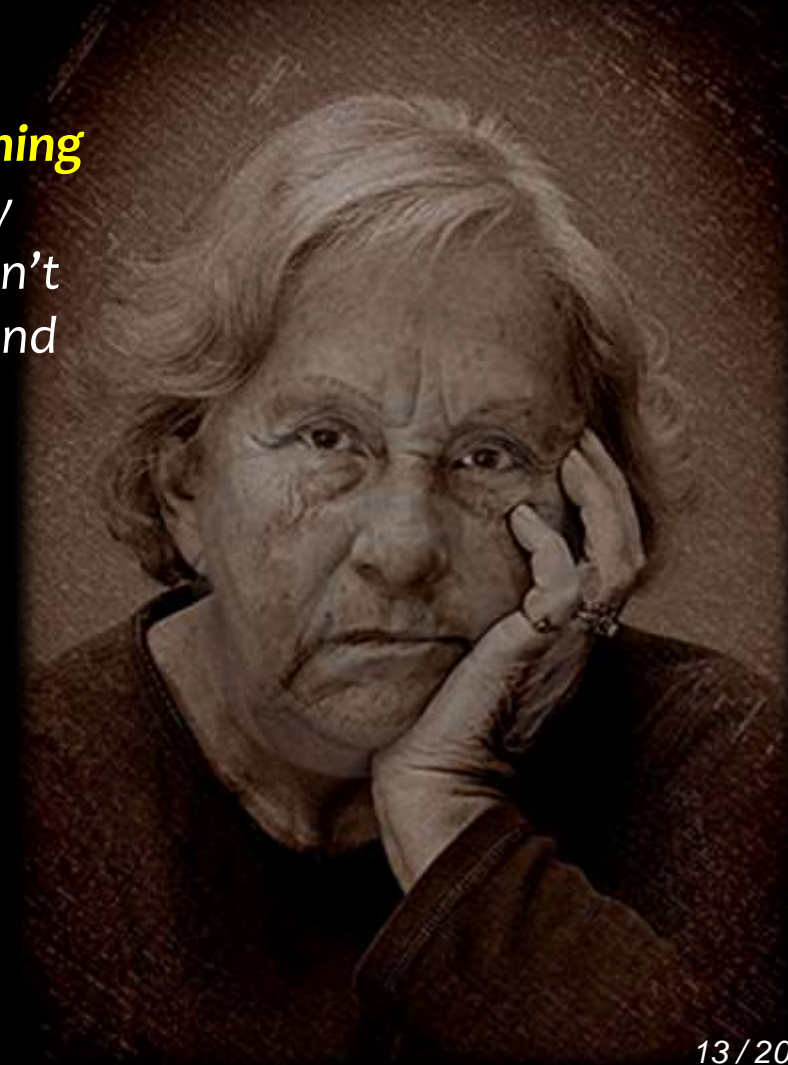
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**I’d guess maybe 20% of my prayers get anything like the answer I want.** Over time, I give up. I pray for those things I believe will happen. Or, I just don’t pray. I review my journal and see God doing less and less. I get mad. Like a child, I stop talking. I’m passive-aggressive with God. I put him off. Maybe later.’



**“Father, Give me...”**



# The Cosmic Slave

We pray to God, but insist on retaining control of what the outcome must look like

⇒ All prayers become orders issued to God for Him to perform

**“Father, Give me...”**

⇒ Consequences:

- 1 God is reduced to a Cosmic Slave
- 2 Any contradiction of our predetermined outcome can induce a ‘faith crash’



**THIS ‘GOD’ MUST FAIL**

## “A Prostitute’s Prayer”: Hilda

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“Father, Make me...”



**Which is my most common prayer?**

**“Father, Give me”**

**“Father, Make me”**





# The Difference Between Entitlement and Hope

**Entitlement** **Hope**

*He gave me a vision...  
I couldn't believe the  
hope on Mariliana's face.*

*Finally I got down on  
my knees beside the  
bed and pled with God.*

**Demand**

**Plea**

**'We have a  
right to see this  
man healed'**

**'I desperately  
desire to change'**



*I review my journal  
and see God doing less  
and less. I get mad.*

*It felt like a dream...  
I am studying a  
trade to live **for the  
glory of God***

**Bitterness  
& Anger**

**Joy, Praise  
Motivation**

## Do we invite God to be present?

*“...for years we’ve been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman that He is, I believe that He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand that He leave us alone?”*



# God accompanies **only** when invited

*“You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you.” ...*

*“If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”*

*And the LORD said to Moses, “I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you.”*

**Ex 33:5,15-17**

# Jesus accompanies **only** when invited

*As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. **Lk 24:28-29***

*Have I invited Jesus  
to reside with me?*

*Have you?*

## Growing Closer to God

**Ruth**

*“Spread your wings (provide mercy) to fly closer to Heaven.”*

**Jacob**

*“No wrestling. The end never justifies the means; wait upon the Lord”*

**John Baptist**

*“Take care of the poor.”*

**Jesus**

*“Pray more. Invite me into your heart”*

*...End*

